

Postcolonial Accommodations: Hospitality and Performance in *The Tropical Breeze Hotel and Pantomime*

The Tropical Breeze Hotel ve Pantomime’da Misafirperverlik ve Performans

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Abstract

This article focuses on the relationship between performance and hospitality as a framework for thinking through postcolonial dynamics in the work of two Caribbean playwrights. In Guadeloupean Maryse Condé’s *Pension les Alizés* (The Tropical Breeze Hotel) and St. Lucian Derek Walcott’s *Pantomime*, ideas of hospitality, as well as the broader notion of accommodating others in a space one figures as one’s own, are central to illustrating issues of diasporic cultural identity, legacies of racialized sexuality, and resistance in the face of neocolonialism. Furthermore, both plays link the phenomenon of hospitality to that of performance, such that exercises in hospitable gift-giving and interpersonal accommodation are made manifest in both literal and figurative *acts* undertaken for the consumption of others. Ultimately, the relationship between performance and hospitality reveals a key postcolonial dynamic: whereas the legacy of Francophone and Anglophone colonialism in the Caribbean pre-scripts the roles of host and guest, the relationship between performance and hospitality dramatizes the ambivalence with which both Condé and Walcott approach the figures of host and guest, as well as the process of accommodating oneself to the seemingly renewed codes of conduct structuring a postcolonial polity. This article begins by briefly tracing the analytical trajectories of the terms “performance” and “hospitality” in postcolonial criticism, then explores their connection in the work of Condé and Walcott. In doing so, it argues that a focus on the question of *postcolonial accommodation* sidesteps the familiar tendency to study Caribbean literature through the binary framework of resisting or reifying colonial legacies.

Keywords: Maryse Condé, The Tropical Breeze Hotel, Derek Walcott, Pantomime, Postcolonial Cultures, Performance, Hospitality

Öz

Bu makale performans ve misafirperverlik olguları arasındaki ilişkiyi bir çerçeve olarak kullanarak iki Karayipli oyun yazarının çalışmalarında sömürgecilik sonrası toplumsal dinamiklerin rolünü incelemeyi hedefler. Guadeloupe’lu Maryse Condé’nin *Pension les Alizés* (Tropikal Esintiler Oteli) ve St. Lucia’lı Derek Walcott’ın *Pantomime* (Pantomim) isimli oyunlarında misafirperverlik olgusu, ve daha geniş anlamda bireyin kendisinin olarak algıladığı bir mekanda başkalarına yer temin etmesi ve onlara uyum sağlama süreçleri, diaspora kimliklerinin, ırksal ve cinsel kimliklerin ve neo-sömürgeciliğe karşı durmak gibi konuların işlenişinin merkezindedirler. Buna ek olarak, bu oyunlarda misafirperverlik olgusu performans olgusu ile bağdaştırılır, ve misafirperver hediye alış-verişleri ve kişilerin birbirlerine uyum sağlama süreçleri gerçek ve mecazi *oyunların* sahnelenmesi yoluyla anlatılır. Nihayetinde, misafirperverlik ve performans arasındaki ilişki önemli bir sömürgecilik sonrası toplumsal dinamiği ortaya çıkarır. Her ne kadar Karayip’lerdeki Anglofon ve Frankofon sömürgeciliğin kalıntıları evsahibi ve misafir rollerini önceden belirlemiş olsa da, misafirperverlik ve performans arasındaki ilişki Condé ve Walcott’ın bu figürlere ve daha genel anlamda sömürgecilik sonrası toplumsal dinamiklere uyum sağlama sürecine olan

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yaklaşımlarındaki kararsızlıklarını gözler önüne serer. Bu makale “performans” ve “misafirperverlik” kavramlarının sömürgecilik sonrası toplumsal eleştiri alanındaki analitik rollerini kısaca ele alarak başlar ve iki olgunun Condé ve Walcott’ın çalışmalarındaki ilişkisini inceler. Bu şekilde, makale, sömürgecilik sonrası toplumsal hayata uyum sağlama meselesi üzerinde odaklanmanın, Karayip edebiyatının analizinde sıklıkla kullanılan ve sömürgeciliğin kalıntılarına karşı koyma veya kabullenmeden oluşan ikili çerçevenin ötesine geçmeyi hedefler.

Anahtar sözcükler: Maryse Condé, Tropikal Esintiler Oteli, Derek Walcott, Pantomim, Sömürgecilik Sonrası Kültürler, Performans, Misafirperverlik

The title of this article plays on the dual meanings of the term “accommodation”. On the one hand, accommodation refers to the physical lodgings in which a traveler stays; on the other, it implies the process of adjustment and adaptation that such an experience inevitably requires of a person in transit. Indeed, accommodation implies both that the traveler/guest mold themselves according to the dictates of the space that receives them, and that the hotelier/host adjust to the presence of a welcomed yet at times inconvenient person. As a wave of recent scholarship has shown, these dynamics of travel, arrival, compromise and integration are all present in contemporary uses of the term *hospitality*. Whether considered a social practice or a metaphor for ethical imperatives, the notion of hospitality embodies the basic provision of space while gesturing towards a broader notion of care and generosity, an adaptation of the self/host in the presence of another/guest.

In this article, the relationship of accommodation between host and guest, in other words, the practice of hospitality, is considered as a framework for thinking through postcolonial dynamics in the work of two Caribbean playwrights. In Guadeloupean Maryse Condé’s *Pension les Alizés* (*The Tropical Breeze Hotel*) (1988) and in St. Lucian Derek Walcott’s *Pantomime* (2001), ideas of hospitality, as well as the broader notion of accommodating others in a space that one figures as one’s own, are central to illustrating issues of diasporic cultural identity, legacies of racialized sexuality, as well as resistance in the face of neocolonialism. The principle of selection however, rests on more than shared themes or geographic origins. Both plays explicitly link the phenomenon of hospitality to that of performance, such that exercises in hospitable gift-giving and interpersonal accommodation are made manifest in both literal and figurative *acts* undertaken for the consumption of others. In *The Tropical Breeze Hotel* and *Pantomime*, the relationship between hospitality and performance reveals a key postcolonial dynamic: whereas the legacy of Francophone and Anglophone colonialism in the Caribbean (as well as its ongoing residues in their respective metropolises) pre-scripts the roles of host and guest, performance provides a venue that reveals different possibilities for the accommodation of others. In doing so however, it neither proves a space of un-problematic resistance, nor leaves received categories of hospitality untouched. Rather, the relationship between performance and hospitality dramatizes the ambivalence with which both Condé and Walcott approach the figures of host and guest, as well as the possibility of a *postcolonial accommodation*, the process by which individuals accommodate themselves to the seemingly renewed codes of conduct structuring a postcolonial polity.

Performance, Hospitality, Accommodation

Now, to state that issues of impersonation, mimicry or performance have a significant connection to colonial sociality is nothing new. Indeed, as Homi Bhabha’s (1994) seminal work has shown, performance has been a key dimension of the relationship between colonial authority and the

colonized subaltern. In Bhabha's work, the mimicry beckoned by Western European colonialisms' varied civilizing missions produces a "partial presence" (1994, p. 126), in other words, a colonial subject that is both shaped by the "narcissistic demand of colonial authority" but also belies a certain excess, slippage or difference that is then imagined to destabilize or "menace" that same authority. These dynamics of partiality, difference and ambivalence have been significant in the Caribbean context: as Graham Huggan has shown, Caribbean references to the issue of colonial mimicry have been varied, from V.S. Naipaul's much-circulated references to "mimic men" imitating European literary and cultural traditions (Huggan, 1994, p. 643) to Derek Walcott's own ambivalence in the face of accusations that he has produced a "derivative" (Jay, 2006, p. 548) Caribbean literature. Huggan, following Bhabha, draws attention to the potentially resistant features of colonial mimicry, a framework that has been replicated even as it has come under scrutiny for hiding the potentially ambivalent features of resistance itself. It is here that the debate on Caribbean literary mimicry dovetails with a broader discussion on postcolonial expressive cultures, especially performance. Where the history of the African diaspora in particular is concerned, bell hooks (1995) has suggested that *performance*, writ large, contributes to individual self-realization and community ritual, yet it is indelibly linked to relationships of racial oppression and exploitation. Understanding black performance, in other words, requires paying attention to the interplay of agency and authority, resistance and reification.

Whereas the connection between performance and colonialism has been much explored, the notion of hospitality has also acquired renewed value in postcolonial studies. Embodied in the work of scholars like Mireille Rosello (2001), hospitality has emerged as a lens to consider changing immigration policies in 21st century Europe, if not the broader connections between nationality and citizenship. Concentrating primarily on the discourses surrounding immigration and national identity in the French context, Rosello argues that the metaphor of immigrant *as* guest triggers lengthier traditions of philosophical contemplation around the issue of hospitality and points at two irresolvable problems. First, when the model of individual hospitality is metaphorically applied to the relationship between states and migrants, the dynamics of personal generosity that structure the former are applied to the latter: in other words, political rights and international conventions are subsumed beneath a language of *moral* responsibility (Rosello, 2001, p. 9). Second, when states begin to intervene in definitions of hospitality, there emerges an inevitable distinction between models of private, unconditional hospitality (the ethical imperative to host an other) and public, conditional hospitality (the politics of who can be host and who can be guest, a politics regulated by the state) (2001, p. 35). Here, Rosello's references to finite vs. infinite hospitality in fact refer to a framework utilized by Jacques Derrida (2000), as the philosopher re-reads biblical and classical Greek hospitality conundrums via contemporary immigration debates.

In Derrida's work, hospitality encapsulates a set of questions regarding the process of individuals' accommodating one another, opening their doors to strangers, and thus creating an entryway that connects their interior personhoods to their public selves. Whereas this article will not pursue some of the more detailed dimensions of the image of the door (for example, how Derrida links it to notions of sincerity in language use (2000, p. 67)), what it borrows from Derrida and Rosello is the idea that hospitality brings the interior and the exterior into contact, thereby triggering a broader set of dynamics regarding accommodation in postcolonial cultures. As the following sections will relate in detail, both *The Tropical Breeze Hotel* and *Pantomime* have been questioned for reifying colonial stereotypes, even as they have been celebrated for dramatizing the consequences of these stereotypes

and for cultivating their audiences' critical consciousness. Their depiction of performance in particular stands at the center of these debates. I suggest that conjoining the question of performance with that of hospitality eases some of these tensions, walking us away from the binary of resistance and reification and instead showing the deep ambivalence with which both Condé and Walcott dramatize the relationship between hosts and guests in postcolonial landscapes.

Emma and Ishmael's Invitations

The Tropical Breeze Hotel centers on the story of Emma Boisgris, a Guadeloupean woman who travels to Paris to attend medical school in the 1940s and soon finds herself dancing in a nude revue in the red-light district of Pigalle. In the play's opening scene, Emma is seated before a mirror in her "middle-class Parisian apartment" (Condé, 1988, p. 119), recalling the days when she was christened "the new Josephine Baker" (1988, p. 119) while pausing to recollect the Guadeloupe of her childhood, a home to which she has not returned since her departure. As Emma's monologue lengthens, it depicts the central conflict that structures her relationship to performance. She proudly remembers the days when "men were bowed down in front of me like sugar cane swaying in the breeze" (1988, p. 120) yet she balks at the memory of having been asked to wear a banana belt and repeatedly refers to herself as "a dignified black woman" (1988, p. 119). Emma's relationship to performance thus exemplifies hooks' dialectic understanding, emphasizing both self-realization and exploitation. Indeed, Emma's awareness of these dual registers permeates the play, resulting in her ever-present desire to return to Guadeloupe, while managing her simultaneous fear of being rejected by her childhood home. By 1986, the play's present, this home's imagined warmth and her irreversible process of ejection from it are symbolized by her desire to "crawl back into her [mother's] womb" (1988, p. 147).

If Guadeloupe remains an ambivalent origin, feared and yet filled with what Stuart Hall would call "an imaginary fullness or plenitude" (1990, p. 225), Emma's Paris apartment is likewise permeated by remnants of the past. Condé's opening stage directions describe "a thousand and one knickknacks" (Condé, 1988, p. 119) lit by dim lighting that reveals a broader atmosphere of "filth and slovenliness," an atmosphere that is in turn dominated by a large portrait of her younger, performer, self. It is in this space that Emma hosts Ishmael, a young Haitian man who has sought political refuge in Paris after what appears to be an ambiguous involvement in anti-government activities. The image of Emma's youthful beauty, as well as the "knickknacks" accumulated through her relationships with men, set the tone for their interactions. Yet Emma has already established the connections between home, hospitality and performance by the time her doorbell rings. Recalling her initial days in Paris, Emma remembers:

I had to climb seven flights to a freezing maid's room. I used to sell my landlord the coffee Mama sent. The family would drink it right in front of me without offering me a cup! Things like that show you how selfish some people are! When I was hired at the New Venus, I sent them an invitation so they could see what had become of me. You think they might have thanked me? No, I doubt they even bothered to come. For people like that, going to a neighborhood like Pigalle is like taking a trip to hell! (Condé, 1988, p. 120-121)

In the lines that precede this brief passage, Emma recalls her father, a doctor whose profession serves as the impetus behind her own arrival in Paris as a medical student. The references to “a freezing maid’s room” and Emma’s need to re-purpose her personal gifts as items of exchange are meant to speak back to this memory and underline the difficulty of surviving in an inhospitable landscape. Yet Emma’s references to her unnamed landlords are equally important: not only are they the ultimate recipients of gifts intended for her, they exclude her as they consume these comestibles, establishing their lack of hospitality as a basic fact of her existence in Paris. In consuming the goods of her homeland before her eyes, the landlords mimic legacies of colonial exchange and consumption that Emma hopes to over-turn through the offering of performance, thereby figuring the Pigalle stage as her newly acquired home, and her performing self as the newly empowered host. The differently figured social exchange imagined by this invitation however is circumscribed by norms of middle-class propriety and Emma is reminded of the limits of her ability to transform from a Parisian guest into a Parisian host. The possibility of this transformation is permeated by anxieties regarding Emma’s race, gender and sexuality and this instance of failed hospitality underlines the fragile status of performance.

What is unique about Condé’s depiction of performance in *The Tropical Breeze Hotel* however is the fact that this fragility (or performance’s dual ability to both empower and subjugate) resists over-determination. If Emma’s memories of her early days in Paris reveal the failed link between performance and hospitality, her ability to host Ishmael is entirely dependent on a home furnished by her performance career. By 1986, Emma has become a financially comfortable host, and her ethics of hospitality fluctuate between the finite and infinite registers that Rosello has in mind when she calls hospitality “a polymorphous individual practice” (Rosello, 2001, p. 6). When Emma first welcomes Ishmael into her home, her generosity is premised on the fact that Ishmael is a friend of her friend Max, an unseen character with whom Emma’s own connection is slim. Ishmael himself further complicates Emma’s ability to place him in the world:

Emma: Who are you? First of all, what’s your name?

Ishmael: Call me Ishmael.

Emma: Ishmael? What kind of name is that? Where are you from?

Ishmael: I’m Haitian.

Emma: I knew a man from Haiti once. He was an ambassador and he used to invite me to his home. I never knew a man who spoke French like he did. He told me...

Ishmael: Well, as for me... I’m the opposite of an ambassador. (Condé, 1988, p. 122)

In this brief passage, Ishmael repeatedly thwarts Emma’s desire to establish his identity, thereby highlighting the extent of the risk Emma has taken in opening her home to a stranger. Ishmael’s intertextual humor and his depiction of himself as “the opposite of an ambassador” underline the fact that he remains an open signifier, origin-less, unwilling to represent any particular identity or entity. Emma’s generosity in the face of this un-knowing is considerable, yet the infinite hospitality with which she showers Ishmael sits uneasily alongside the suggestions of inhospitality that Condé sprinkles into Emma’s conversation, such as her reference to “all those illegal Arabs and Africans” (1988, p. 145) in the immigrant-heavy neighborhood of Barbès. Condé is clear that Emma’s status as a Parisian host brings with it a whole new ethics of (in)hospitality that allow her to casually mark new generations of immigrants as unwelcome guests, despite memories of her own difficult integration.

Ishmael himself wanders around the margins of this lack of hospitality, and Condé's stage directions underline this by stating that "he is young and dressed like an immigrant worker, though he looks like an intellectual" (1988, p. 121). Ishmael's fluctuating identity provides Condé with an opportunity to probe the limits of identification, gesturing towards the question of cultural identity that Stuart Hall illustrates with reference to the African diaspora. Indeed, the precise nature of the knowingness or familiarity that characterizes Emma and Ishmael's relationship is a theme that permeates the play, wavering between references to "a sort of collective 'one true self'" (Hall, 1990, pg. 223) and a model of identity premised on Derridean deferral, "subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power." On the one hand, Emma and Ishmael's connection is secured with reference to the legacy of slavery in the Caribbean and the shared racial consciousness this experience is imagined to guarantee. Ishmael presumes such shared-ness when trying to persuade Emma to move back with him to Haiti: "Guadeloupe, Haiti, isn't it all the same? Aren't we the same people come out of the same bellies of the same slave ships?" (Condé, 1988, 153) The image of the shared origin or "belly" structures Ishmael's frequent images of Pan-African solidarity, a shared global condition such that "from Africa to the Americas, we are on our knees" (1988, p. 142). On the other hand, such connections sit uneasily with Emma, despite her own investment in references to "wombs" and an ambiguously framed "one mother" (1988, p. 128). For Emma, revolutionary solidarity can cut across racial or ethnic lines, stemming instead from experiences of marginalization that bring together "paralytics in wheelchairs, invalids in hospitals. Whores and homosexuals..." (1988, p. 143) Neither party in this conversation is willing to pursue or nuance their varying visions of political struggle but what Condé underlines in such instances is the precarity of racial/diasporic recognition and the contrasting experiences and expectations of hospitality with which it endows both Emma and Ishmael.

One such contrast centers on the notion of hospitality as a *sexual contract* and the manner in which both Ishmael and Emma perceive their co-habitation as one that implicates their sexuality. Emma's career as a nude dancer looms large in Ishmael's imagination, and he both desires her (financial and emotional) care and ultimately imagines *himself* as an emasculated "slave" (Condé, 1988, p. 137), a sexual object who makes "love on command" (1988, p. 151) in return for his accommodations. Emma, for her part, states that she has "always dreamed of having a man who would be all mine" (1988, p. 137), and uses her powers as host to pamper Ishmael with comestibles. Indeed, when Ishmael attempts to steal from her, her reproach consists of a list of luxury food items that have failed to secure his love: the pink grapefruit, Columbian coffee, verbena tea and "nice filet" (1988, p. 151) cannot ultimately shield her from the precarity and ambivalence of hospitable exchange.

As Emily Sahakian has pointed out however, the tense, uneven and ultimately failed nature of Emma and Ishmael's sexual contract is far from arbitrary, instead re-creating stereotypes of "slavery's sexualized system of subjection" (2014, p. 387). In Sahakian's reading, Emma and Ishmael's relationship plays out a series of tropes surrounding what she calls "the female body of slavery's legacy" (2014, p. 387), that is, the manner in which Caribbean women's experience of sexual violence under slavery continues to manifest in images of black women's imagined complicity in slavery's domination (through sexual relations with white men) and black men's emasculation (at the hands of black women empowered through interracial sex). Indeed, in Ishmael's imagination, Emma's repeated references to "men who loved me" serve to confirm her racial betrayal, whereas his own, imagined emasculation (first at the hands of his rich white wife in Haiti, and later as Emma's cloistered lover in Paris) is only resolved when he entreats Emma to move back to Haiti with him, a

world where *he* will be the empowered host, and *her*; the guest. Sahakian notes that Condé's portrayal of Emma and Ishmael both repeats these sexualized stereotypes, and beckons the audience's critical distance, asking us to consider the manner in which the duo are forced to play out slavery's legacy. I will return to the precise nature of this critical distance momentarily, but the salient point in the context of hospitality is that the imagined familiarity of racial/regional recognition between host and guest is further compromised by the sexual stereotypes that both Emma and Ishmael associate with Emma's performance career.

Ultimately, *The Tropical Breeze Hotel* ends on a note of reverse hospitality. Ishmael, who had fled Haiti in an effort to avoid the reprisals of anti-government militias to whom he had promised aid and ultimately brought destruction, is outfitted with a new passport. Emma's final role as host is to render her guest's departure possible: Ishmael's passport, as well as the tickets and the money necessary for his return trip to Haiti are all furnished by Emma's connections. In the final instance however, Ishmael re-frames Emma's generosity through an invitation of his own, entreating her to return to Haiti with him, well aware of Emma's tormented relationship to the idea of a Caribbean homecoming. It is in their final exchange that the fraught connections between hospitality, sexuality and performance once again become clear. When Emma inquires as to what she would do in Haiti and how precisely Ishmael would host her while there, Ishmael suggests that she could run a "family hotel" called "The Tropical Breeze Hotel" (Condé, 1988, p. 158). Emma replies:

"The Tropical Breeze Hotel"? (*She bursts out laughing.*) How corny can you get! You might be a good doctor, but you have zero imagination. "The Tropical Breeze Hotel." It's like the people who wanted to christen me "Silver Moon!" (*She laughs, then stares at him.*) You never believed I'd come with you, did you? (Condé, 1988, p. 158)

This passage is important for a number of reasons. On the one hand, Ishmael's promise of future hospitality immediately morphs into an image of *Emma* as host, running a hotel that will welcome others, render hospitality into a financial agreement, and deny her the unconditional experience of being cared for, being a guest. On the other, Emma once again links hospitality to performance, suggesting that the "corny" title that Ishmael has come up with is no different from the variety of stage names that have been used to appropriate her racialized sexuality. Whereas Emma herself opens the play by positioning the Pigalle stage as her home, by the end she is well aware that hospitality, like performance, pivots on tropes of race, gender and sexuality that are pre-scripted. As Ishmael continues to list entrepreneurial opportunities that might render the Caribbean attractive for her (including a dance school like Katherine Dunham's or a restaurant), Emma repeatedly interrupts with semi-humorous suggestions that she could run a "brothel" (1988, p. 158) or a "whorehouse" (160). For Emma, receiving others within a space that one figures as one's own is a deeply fraught act.

It is thus not surprising that the final scene of *The Tropical Breeze Hotel* probes the meta-theatrical dimensions of this insight. Emma is once again seated in front of her mirror, and this time, her recollections of Guadeloupe are interrupted by a call from Max, informing her of Ishmael's arrest and likely execution. As she hangs up the phone, Emma notes:

After all, what does all this have to do with me? Why am I so worried? (*She returns to the mirror and starts making herself up. Slowly at first, then faster and faster, transforming her face into a clown's face.*) None of this is any of my business! Just a little bit more! Fine, that's it. I'll stick on my false eyelashes and the show can begin! (Condé, 1988, p. 163-164)

Christiane Makward takes these statements of resourcefulness as evidence that Emma “knows better than [her namesake] Emma Bovary” (1995, p. 685), whereas Sahakian writes that “the whiteface in performance may call attention to the system of racialized and sexualized subjection that delineates Emma’s body” (2014, p. 403). Indeed, Sahakian reads this meta-theatricality as an instance of Brechtian *gestus*, where the audience is invited to consider the historical projections that have resulted in this literally *made-up* body. I would add that the heightened theatricality of this scene has as much to do with Emma’s audience as with Emma herself: inviting the audience to consider themselves as guests in Emma’s home/stage, Emma’s stage make-up underlines the painful preparation required of the host, as well as the demand that has already been made by the audience/guests.

Jackson and Harry’s Accommodations

If *The Tropical Breeze Hotel*’s ending underlines a note of ambivalence with regards to both performance and hospitality, both phenomena appear as sites of anxiety at the beginning of Derek Walcott’s *Pantomime*. Indeed, *Pantomime*’s setting could very well be the “Tropical Breeze Hotel” of Ishmael’s imagination: the play is set against the backdrop of a small guest-house on the island of Tobago, run by the retired English actor Harry Trewe, and maintained by his servant, the retired Calypsonian Jackson Philips. Yet Walcott’s description of the pointedly named “Castaways Guest House” is a far cry from the soft breezes of Ishmael’s tourist fantasy, as “the action takes place in a gazebo on the edge of a cliff” (2001, p. 132), emphasizing the fact that the relationships that unfold within are doing so at the edge of a precipice, constantly aware of the possibility of an irrecoverable fall. Walcott references this precarity throughout the play, introducing the elusive figure of a carpenter who never seems to arrive to *fix* this space. Harry’s opening lines, which consist of his rehearsing a Christmas pantomime for the hotel’s guests, are decidedly ironic when contrasted with this rundown background: “We’re awfully glad that you’ve shown up,” he tells an imaginary audience, “it’s for kiddies as well as for grown-ups” (2001, p. 132). Whereas Emma positions performance as a physical space that serves as her *offering* to others, Harry’s turn to performance is motivated by the absence of an actual offering, and performance consists of a pleasing routine that will obscure the basic lack of safety that characterizes his commercial hospitality.

Performance, we soon find out, is both the cause of Harry’s misery, and the vehicle to which he clings as a way out of his current crisis. Harry has traveled to Tobago to run the Castaways Guest House after abandoning the theatre, leaving behind a career overshadowed by the more successful one of his ex-wife Ellen, as well as the memory of their deceased son. At the beginning of the play, Harry’s volatile emotional state is signaled through reference to performance history: the stage directions tell us that Harry walks the gazebo’s precarious ledge “arms extended, Jolson-style” (Walcott, 2001, p. 133), while crooning the famous lines of blackface actor Al Jolson, “Hold on below there, sonny booooy! Daddy’s a-coming” (133). As the play progresses, we recognize that these lines both refer to the death of his son, and signal the complicated racial politics that structure his own relationship to the theatre. Well before this relationship unfolds however, Walcott, like Condé, introduces a connection between Harry’s new career in commercial hospitality, and his old career in performance:

Harry: I’m rotting from insomnia, Jackson. I’ve been up since three, hearing imaginary guests arriving in the rooms, and I haven’t slept since. I nearly came around the back to have a little talk. I started thinking about the same bloody problem, which is, what entertainment can we give the guests?

Jackson: They ain't guests, Mr. Trewe. They's casualties.

Harry: How do you mean?

Jackson: This hotel like a hospital. The toilet catch asthma, the air-condition got ague, the front-balcony rail missing four teet', and every minute the fridge like it dancing the Shango...brrgudup...jukjuk...brrugudup. Is no wonder that the carpenter collapse. Termites jumping like steel band in the foundations.

Harry: For fifty dollars a day they want Acapulco?

Jackson: Try giving them the basics: Food. Water. Shelter. They ain't shipwrecked, they pay in advance for their vacation.

Harry: Very funny. But the ad says, 'Tours' and 'Nightly Entertainment.' Well, Christ, after they've seen the molting parrot in the lobby and the faded sea fans, they'll be pretty livid if there's no 'nightly entertainment', and so would you, right? (Walcott, 2001, p. 133)

Harry, like Emma, positions performance *as* a space of hospitality, a proper greeting for the "imaginary guests" arriving in the night. Unlike Emma however, whose hospitality includes the provision of basic lodgings and comestibles, Harry cannot recognize performance's inability to paper over a crumbling infrastructure. Jackson's language, which turns the guests into "casualties" and the hotel into a "hospital", plays on the term hospitality and points at the ambivalent connection between hosting those who arrive willingly, and those who are "shipwrecked" against their will. In doing so, Jackson draws attention to the broader ambivalence patterning Harry's image of himself as a latter-day Robinson Crusoe, a castaway or "casualty" who constantly negotiates the colonial grandeur that is part of that self-image while using his position as hotelier to perform a postcolonial critique.

In fact, the ambivalent connections between performance, hospitality and colonial race relations underlie the core action of Walcott's play: Harry proposes that he and Jackson rehearse a pantomime in which Jackson will perform the role of Crusoe and Harry will be his Man Friday. "We could work up a good satire," he tells Jackson, "you know, on the master-servant – no offense – relationship. Labor-management, white-black, and so on... Making some trenchant points about topical things, you know" (Walcott, 2001, p. 136). Shortly thereafter, Harry references his scheme's connection to commercial hospitality yet again, noting:

Harry: I want to make a point about the hotel industry, about manners, conduct, to generally improve relations all around. So, whoever it is, you or whoever, plays Crusoe, and I, or whoever it is, get to play Friday, and imagine first of all the humor and then the impact of that. What you think?

Jackson: You want my honest, professional opinion?

Harry: Fire away.

Jackson: I think is shit. (Walcott, 2001, p. 136)

The lines that follow this brief exchange are perhaps some of the most famous of the play, as Jackson notes that the duo's relationship already contains a "pantomime," one featuring Harry the

“boss, bwana, effendi, bacra, sahib” and Jackson the “shadow” (Walcott, 2001, p. 137), thus calling attention to the dynamics of partial presence that Bhabha (1994) outlines. Jackson’s postcolonial critique soon envelops the very language on which Harry’s imagined pantomime would stand, as he suggests that the proposed role reversal would involve re-christening the duo’s entire stage set (Walcott, 2001, p. 137), if not re-thinking the “director” of this show. The significance of Jackson’s critique has been studied at length, and I do not wish to re-explore how Jackson and Harry “reappropriate the Crusoe myth for a progressive conception of Caribbean identity” (Gilbert, 2001, p. 129). Rather, my interest is in how Harry frames his desire to pursue questions regarding postcolonial race relations as an ongoing interest in commercial hospitality, in up-ending the hierarchies of the hotel industry, in re-thinking the relations between labor and management. On the one hand, one might take these comments as part of a broader Caribbean critique that considers tourism as the vehicle for transitioning colonial power relations into a postcolonial world. One need only consider Jamaica Kincaid’s critique of neocolonialism in *A Small Place* to place Walcott’s work within such a genealogy. On the other, it is possible to consider Harry’s emphasis on the relationship between performance and hospitality as evidence of the key postcolonial dynamic Walcott wishes to underline: how the history of Caribbean colonialism pre-scripts the roles of host and guest, rendering the act of *receiving others in one’s home or space* into a fraught practice that requires prior rehearsal, inter-personal experimentation and flirtation with failure.

Indeed, as Harry rejects Jackson’s postcolonial critique and his proposal for a reverse-pantomime falls flat, the audience is soon confronted with the fact that Harry’s interest in both the hotelier business and nightly entertainment masks a relatively banal existential crisis:

At the beginning it’s fine; there’s the sea, the palm trees, monarch of all I survey and so on, all that postcard stuff. And then it just becomes another back yard. God, is there anything deadlier than Sunday afternoons in the tropics when you can’t sleep? The horror and stillness of the heat, the shining, godforsaken sea, the bored and boring clouds? Especially in an empty boarding house...I daresay the terror of emptiness made me want to act. (Walcott, 2001, p. 143)

Harry, it turns out, has “sunk” everything he owns into the Castaway Guest House, and his obsession with performing for imaginary guests is merely a remnant of his theatrical past, haunting the lonely, off-season nights he is forced to spend in his empty hotel. Ultimately, it is Jackson who proves capable of offering Harry what he actually desires: the ability to welcome others, through performance, into a space that will prove both hospitable and conducive to self-reflection, both warm and holding out the possibility of recognition. Not surprisingly, Jackson’s formulation of this invitation is filled once again with the language of performance:

All right. Stay as you want. But if you say yes, it go have to be man to man, and none of this boss-and-Jackson business, you see, Trewe... It would be just me and you, all right? You see, two of we both acting a role here we ain’t really really believe in, you know. I ent think you strong enough to give people orders, and I *know* I ain’t the kind who like taking *them*. So both of we doesn’t have to *improvise* so much as *exaggerate*. We faking, faking all the time. But, man to man, I mean... that could be something else. Right, Mr. Trewe? (Walcott, 2001, p. 144)

Jackson's reference to a "man to man" communication is important here. It is in fact Harry who (repeatedly) introduces this rhetorical formula, as he seeks to diffuse what he perceives to be the effeminizing dimensions of their earlier theatrical improvisations. Jackson, however, de-genders the term "man", instead endowing it with the fully-rounded recognition of humanity implied by (M)an and suggesting that this pre-performance state would cleanse their relationship of the "fake" roles and "exaggerated" types that their futile "improvisations" have thus far produced.

What Harry and Jackson will soon discover however, and what Walcott hints at throughout his play, is that the phenomenon of performance serves a dual function in the fraught space between "man" and "man". Whereas Jackson argues that performing the roles of boss and worker (as well as the linear reversal of these positions), has thus far ensnared the duo in a broader chasm from which both have suffered, attempting to be "just me and you" entails an equally robust exercise in improvisation. Indeed, the ultimate improvisatory performance that ends *Pantomime* not only allows Jackson to render performance into a healing space, one in which he accommodates Harry's loss and mourning, but also allows him to reposition the dynamics of race, gender and sexuality that pattern their relationship.

Pantomime's climax is embodied in what David Leahy has called Jackson's "burlesque queering" (2015, p. 32), a brief episode of parodic pantomime in which Jackson assumes the role of Harry's former wife, Ellen ("the dame in the pantomime is always played by a man, right?" (Walcott, 2001, p. 149)) and seeks to exorcise Harry's ongoing resentment and anger towards the past, including the elusive circumstances that led to his son's death. Holding a photograph of Ellen next to his face, Jackson ventriloquizes the imagined voice of a nurturing wife, ready to fling herself from the edge of the gazebo/cliff in return for Harry's forgiveness, while Harry chases Jackson/Allen, wielding an ice pick. In Leahy's reading, this "strategic transvestitism" (2015, p. 33) lays bare the dynamics that underlie the duo's relationship, manifesting the manner in which Harry's seeming willingness to surrender his class and racial privilege in fact masks the broader anxieties of masculinity embodied by the Crusoe-Friday dialectic. Harry, we are told in not-too-subtle fashion, was Friday to Ellen's Crusoe, and his experimental fascination with the Defoe story masks anxieties regarding his gender and sexuality that are inevitably made manifest in colonial hierarchies. This climax, as Leahy has rightly pointed out, leaves audiences with a rather compromised vision of colonial resistance, ultimately figuring Jackson as a black fe/male whose emotional energy and performance labor serve to "heal" the gender anxieties of white expatriate neocolonialism. Indeed, the density of Harry's psychological history contrasts with the lack of historicity that characterizes Jackson's portrayal, rendering his character into a "dramatic and ideological cypher" (Leahy, 2015, p. 35) that perhaps reveals Walcott's own blindspots with regards to Caribbean gender cultures.

Leahy's trenchant critique outlines *Pantomime*'s possibilities as well as its limitations, yet my goal here is once again specific: whereas Jackson's closing pantomime is indeed central to establishing the contradictory dynamics of race, gender and sexuality, I would contend that this scene is equally important for manifesting a dynamic of hospitality that Walcott structurally sets up earlier in the play. While rehearsing their Crusoe-Friday pantomime, Jackson announces that he will take a pee break, a relatively mundane moment that turns into an extended conversation as Harry insists on knowing how long this will take, whether allowing Jackson to use his own quarters would lessen the amount of time involved, and whether in fact such a "privilege" is one that he is willing to extend his "servant." As Leahy once again points out, this exchange is permeated with queer undertones, as well as Jackson's awareness of colonial images of black sexual perversity:

Jackson: I want to get this. You giving me permission to go through your living room, with all your valuables lying about, with the picture of your wife watching me in case I should leave the bathroom open, and you granting me the privilege of taking out my thing, doing my thing right there among all those lotions and expensive soaps, and... after I finish, wiping my hands on a clean towel?

Harry: Since you make it so vividly horrible, why don't you just walk around to the servants' quarters and take as much time as you like? Five minutes won't kill me.

Jackson: I mean, equality is equality and art is art, Mr. Harry, but to use those clean, rough Cannon towels... You mustn't rush things, people have to slide into independence. They give these islands independence so fast that people still ain't recover from the shock, so they pissing and wiping their hands indiscriminately. You don't want that to happen in this guest house, Mr. Harry. (Walcott, 2001, p. 147)

Many of the dynamics that emerge in Jackson's later embodiment of Harry's familial history are in fact already present in this brief exchange and made manifest once again through reference to commercial hospitality, to the relationship between hosts and unruly guests. Jackson's references to the seeming obscenity of his nudity in the presence of Ellen's image prefigures the intimacy that he will later experience in relation to her personhood. Meanwhile, in Jackson's vivid portrayal, post-independence Tobagoans are theoretically able to appreciate their ability to enter luxurious white homes/hotels as purchasing clients, yet unable to conduct themselves among the "lotions and expensive soaps" and "clean, rough Cannon towels" in a manner that befits this environment. As a result, they urinate indiscriminately and cleanse their hands indiscriminately, creating a circular image of chaos and uncertainty made manifest at the level of the body. Ultimately, decolonization is mockingly figured here as the inappropriate over-use of the infrastructure of a pristine guesthouse, with neocolonial hoteliers as unprepared hosts and formerly colonized subjects as unruly guests. Given the strong link between hospitality and performance that permeates the play, it is not surprising that Jackson's reaction to Harry's inability to receive and host him, is to show him how this is done, using his own logic of performance-as-offering to create a space of hospitality that will undo the chaos of the past, if not suggest a pathway for a different future.

Conclusion

In this article, I have suggested that the relationship between performance and hospitality allows Maryse Condé and Derek Walcott to utilize the figures of host and guest and explore the dynamics that structure the idea of accommodating oneself to a postcolonial world. In *The Tropical Breeze Hotel*, performance is what renders hospitality possible, in so far as Emma's career as a nude dancer is what affords her the financial stability to maintain herself as a Parisian host. Yet as the arrival of Ishmael, the guest, clearly shows, Emma's ability to receive others in an "interior" realm she calls her own is fraught with issues of diasporic recognition and cultural identity, if not the sexualized stereotypes associated with the legacy of slavery and made manifest in her racialized performance career. In *Pantomime*, the link between performance and hospitality is central to the play's dramatic fulcrum: Harry's re-casting of the Crusoe-Friday relationship is presented as nightly entertainment for

the (imaginary) guests of the Castaways Guest House. Over the course of the play however, Jackson shows that the relationship between host and guest points at a far greater dynamic of accommodation. Performance becomes the space through which Jackson embodies the ambivalent dynamics of race, gender and sexuality that structure his relationship to Harry, and hospitality emerges as the broader metaphor through which he formulates his critique of neocolonialism.

Ultimately, the relationship between performance and hospitality allows these Caribbean playwrights to depict the ambivalence with which they approach the possibility of accommodating oneself to a postcolonial landscape, where the fact of receiving another in a space that one has marked as one's own, and of integrating one's interior and exterior selves, is fraught with the legacy of colonialism. Whereas scholarship on Caribbean literature, as well as on these two plays more specifically, often studies these issues through the binaries of resistance and reification, I suggest that a focus on the tropes of performance and hospitality sidesteps the question of mimicry, pushing us towards new frameworks for the study of postcolonial dramatic literature.

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