Contesting Cultural Citizenship? The East Indian "Big House" in Trinidad's Nationalist Discourse

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> Why are certain thoughts unthinkable and not others in particular historical moments? Why do certain visions become imaginable and not others? (4)
>
> —Viranjini Munasinghe, *Callaloo or Tossed Salad?: East Indians and the Cultural Politics of Identity in Trinidad*

Introduction

Nationalist and orientalist discourses "have become thoroughly imbricated with each other in the making of modernity" (Kaiwar and Mazumdar 3). Both discourses either co-operate or oppose each other within modernist projects, producing crises of representation, which affect the contours of cultural identity politics, i.e. terms of authenticity and belonging. According to Renato Rosaldo "we need to understand the way citizenship is informed by culture, the way that claims to citizenship are reinforced or subverted by cultural assumptions and practices" (35). Aihwa Ong's notion of cultural citizenship refers to

> the cultural practices and beliefs produced out of negotiating the often ambivalent and contested relations with the state and its hegemonic forms that establish the criteria of belonging within a national population and territory [. . .] [It] is a dual process of self-making and being—made within webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society. (738)

This dialectical process is simultaneously both macro and micro, as Flores and Benmayor underscore the need to understand cultural citizenship not only as embracing acts of political contestation in the form of social movements, but "rather include more subtle cultural practices that nonetheless play an important part in creating social and cultural identity [. . .] from everyday life activities to broad social drama" (13).

WORKS AND DAYS 47/48, Vol. 24, Nos. 1&2, 2006

Writing on the Caribbean, social anthropologist M.G. Smith opines that nationalists seeking autonomy rely on cultural homogeneity and distinctiveness and thus rely on an ideology of culture to legitimate their movement (2). This ideology requires the "availability of certain symbols and of a certain symbolic universe [which] is determined [. . .] by groups who hold political-economic power and those who are able to legitimate this power and prestige that accompanies it [. . .] and it is contested by the subordinate groups" (Yelvington 10). Munasinghe states that the "dominant group controls the legitimate interpretations for the selected cultural appropriations" (42). In so doing, when ethnic groups imagined outside the nation attempt to renovate these interpretations, their means of doing so are made invisible, unspoken and illegitimate in the public realm. Two questions arise in relation to a competitive model of cultural citizenship. How have certain societal groups been historically positioned to set up an economy of signs and the power to manipulate these cultural markers in the interest of retaining claims to authenticity? By extension, how do symbolically marginalized groups attempt to draw from the repertoire of cultural signs to invent, reinvent, subvert, invert, reflect, and deflect their powers in the hope of exerting alternative, though not unproblematic gestures of self-determination?

This article is a preliminary gesture to open up a discursive space for illuminating and critiquing the terms of belonging and authenticity in contemporary Trinidad by reading the emergence of "big houses" in Trinidad's East Indian community in relation to nationalist discourse. This "big house" architectural style is what would be referred to in places other than Trinidad by the label, "monster house" not only because of its seemingly extravagant size but also by its unconventional architectural designs (color and aesthetic features).[1] I contend that the Indo-Trinidadian big house is a site of contested representation (self-making and being made) produced as a result of the co-presence of nationalist (Afro-Creole) and ethnic scripts which blur and solidify at particular moments and which potentially obscure the terms of belonging. The article begins by historicizing the co-presence between ethnic and Afro-Creole nationalist discourse in Trinidad to make the case that these discourses have in fact historically constituted notions of cultural citizenship and ethnic identity. I will then draw upon visual and interview sources to specifically focus on the big house as a site of cultural production and consumption that illuminates the complexities of re-imagining national consciousness.

Historicizing Cultural Citizenship in Trinidad: The East Indian as Alien

> The African and the Asiatic will not mix, and the African being stronger will and must prevail in Trinidad as elsewhere in the West Indies. (65)
>
> —James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies or The Bow of Ulysses*

Colonial history has played a significant role in determining the complex meanings of the terms "ethnicity" and "nation" in the Trinidadian context. Both these terms are framed about a discourse on cultural in/authenticity and cultural citizenship (distinct from legal citizenship) that remains problematic to the investigation of colonial and post-colonial projects in the Caribbean. The project of nation-building in the post-colonial period, however, relies on historically contingent postures and imaginations of mainly Afro-Creoles and East Indians, to embark on a process of creating cultural citizenship. The majority of Trinidad's colonial population were not citizens (in all senses of the term) until political independence from Britain (1962) conferred legal citizenship in terms of granting political rights and state protection. This gain in the political domain however did not necessarily guarantee that the cultural projects of all groups would be equally endorsed by the state in the creation of national culture, despite the inclusion of all groups as legal citizens. As such, one group's culture was selectively elevated and canonized as national culture based on certain criteria, while relegating the cultural projects of other groups to the realm of ethnic culture on the grounds of these same criteria. Yet Kevin Yelvington, an anthropologist on race and ethnic identity in Trinidad, claims that Trinidad's ethnic stratification[2]

> is as much the consequence of colonial divide and rule policies as of an incomplete hegemony (whether by the holders of colonial power or their inheritors) that gave "space" for group agency and strategies to ascendancy. (3)

What he is asserting is not only the historical complexity of what he labels "Trinidad ethnicity," but that nation, ethnicity and cultural citizenship are categories of consciousness that are fluid, prone to reformulation and potentially competitive.

According to Asian American studies cultural anthropologist, Vijanjini Munasinghe, the "material and ideological coordinates" for positioning East Indians in Trinidad emerged from the existing colonial context even before they began arriving in 1845 (43). Following the British emancipation of Negro slavery in the region (1838), plantations began to decline as a result of fluctuating sugar prices, increasing competition from alternative sources of sugar, and most of all, the increasing shortage of labour as plantation economies shifted from free to wage labour. Unable to discipline a free labouring Negro population, British colonial administration decided on the importation of approximately 144,000 indentured labourers from India to Trinidad between 1845 and 1917 (Laurence; Look Lai; Ramdin). While British colonial discourse re-constructed a pejorative Africanist discourse that vilified Negroes as indolent, incapable of industry (Munasinghe 51; Wahab 190) and "having a penchant for conspicuous consumption" (Yelvington 9), the incoming East Indian labourer was scripted as industrious (Wahab 222). The elevating image of the hard-working coolie[3] was carefully countered by orientalist scripts, which naturalized the East Indian population as criminal, morally degenerate,

self-sacrificing, clannish, heathen, traditional and miserly. Moreover Smith claims that Indians were viewed as transients and cultural aliens by Trinidad's Afro-Creole[4] society, which was derived from both European and African cultural forms.

In this period of differential freedoms Afro-Creole and Indian segments of the population maintained exclusive relations within the confines of plantation society. Spatial, legal and occupational segregation, as well as the expansion of negative colonial stereotypes of Negroes and coolies served to establish a plural setting in which each group sought to use these markers of divisiveness to compete for ranking in the social hierarchy. These stereotypes also mobilized feelings of self-affirmation and negation of the other and continued to keep both groups more or less spatially polarized and socially separated well into the post independence (post-1962) era.

Post-independence Trinidad was re-organized on these historical divisions which became increasingly manifest in political parties and constituencies identifiable as either Afro-Creole or East Indian patronage groups. The ability of the Afro-Creole segment[5] (embodied in the People's National Movement [PNM] political party) to secure the state for six successive elections spanning a period of thirty years not only intensified a sense of Creole hegemony, but frustrated the psyche of a contained and alienated East Indian segment. The struggle for national culture was intricately wrapped up with these political struggles. Munasinghe claims that the movement for self-determination involved the "deployment of a particular culture history," for example, the development of a national literature that appealed to urban lower-class Creole lifestyles (194). In the context of assembling an incipient national culture, the need for the Creole upper and middle classes (nationalist movement) to look to the lower Creole class for indigenous culture resulted in the formulation of a Creole cultural referent that *appeared* congruous with decolonization. In fact, political decolonization was accompanied by what one of the leading historians on Trinidad—Bridget Brereton—refers to as a "cultural renaissance" during which a new cultural identity was produced: one that was "Creole and national in orientation" ("A History of Modern Trinidad" 223). Although her scripting of East Indians into this cultural identity process at best represents token participation, their absence as true creators of culture[6] is testimony to their peripheral status in this formative period. What was formulated as a decolonizing project of significant import, therefore relied on colonial orientalist strategies to constitute a narrative of indigenous homogeneity.

In the race to inscribe a national cultural referent African and Creole symbols such as steelband, calypso and carnival, were formally translated into a patronage politics that favoured blacks. While these cultural forms were originally honed within the lower tiers of the black working class, they were appropriated and domesticated by the upper Creole national elites as symbols of anticolonial sentiment to bolster claims to indigeneity and their place as the rightful architects of the postcolonial project. The effect of elevating and canonizing black working class culture as a

national cultural referent served to grant cultural citizenship to this specific marginalized group, while it excluded the cultural symbols of other groups and masked continuing class divisions even within Afro-Creole society. According to Yelvington,

> The PNM's brand of nationalism [. . .] consisted of putative attempts at erasure of ethnic differences in the forging of a new "nation." [Eric] Williams (Prime Minister) always maintained that the PNM was multi-ethnic and a few East Indians and other minorities were given prominent (but token) posts within the government. On the one hand, Trinidad was politically depicted as a melting pot [. . .] on the other hand, ethnicity became implicated in the PNM's nationalism as the symbols of this melting pot were constructed as national symbols which were interpreted as Afro-Trinidadian-derived. (12)

This initial model of nation building was therefore premised on assimilationist principles despite claims to be multicultural. The prominent Trinidadian political scientist, Selwyn Ryan states that:

> Williams became a strict and uncompromising majoritarian; any ethnic group which did not rally behind the PNM was either recalcitrant, treasonable, or obscuranist. Despite his genuine intellectual commitment to multiracialism, he refused to concede minority communities the right to elect their own kind, or to articulate their own version of the national community. (375)

Furthermore Eric Williams and the PNM took up the banner of creolization as an indigenizing cultural referent, but this ideology constructed the categories "Trinidadian" and "national" as derivative of Afro-Creole culture and labeled practices (such as "East Indian culture") which deviated from such a process as traditionalist, racist and unpatriotic. In the struggle to define a coherent national narrative of nativeness, Eric Williams in his *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* made the following controversial statement: "There can be no Mother India for those whose ancestors came from India [. . .] There can be no Mother Africa for those of African origin [. . .] The only Mother we recognize is Mother Trinidad and Tobago, and Mother cannot discriminate between her children. All must be equal in her eyes" (279). Cultural studies critic Shalini Puri argues that Williams' Trinidadian nation required him to produce it as both hybrid and homogeneous at once ("Canonized Hybridities" 16). She charges him with deploying the same rhetoric of the colonial modular nation, i.e. based on a selective racial hybridity.[7] Mohammed posits that the specificity of the term "creolization" is synonymous to a process of assimilation, where one becomes Creole at the expense of the erasure of East-Indianness. This celebrated attempt at decolonization was "somehow incapable of recognizing the same creative impulses that motivated the Indo-Trinidadian to establish local connections in ways that were indelibly Creole (in the analytic sense)" (Munasinghe 196). As a result of the

co-presence of Afro-Creole nationalism and strategically-reinvented orientalist scripts, Munasinghe states that thirty years of Afro-Creole rule produced two legacies: the metonymy between state and the culture history of Creoles, and a "proclivity to mute" ethnic differences in the interest of a homogeneous national imagination (220). She continues that Indo-Trinidadians were not so much "anti-nationalist," as they were "unable to create a viable and legitimate" cultural referent for nation, based on their structural positioning (222).

It was only when the strong assimilationist project of the PNM was disrupted by the rise to state power (1986) of the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR), which was perceived to represent Creole *and* East Indian middle class interests (under the banner of "One Love"), that a more multicultural stance was taken to include East Indians. Yet this political configuration sought to re-construct the image of the pure East Indian as an additive to what the term "Trinidadian" meant (Munasinghe). The subsequent fracturing of the "One Love" party along ethnic lines served to re-nourish ethnic consolidation and rivalry, allowing the Creole-based PNM to regain power (1991). Caribbean sociologist, Rhoda Reddock claims that in 1990, for the first time, the Indian population was marginally larger than the African and that this "proved a major psychological boost for Indo-nationalists." In 1996, the factions of the NAR reunited, though now symbolic as predominantly East Indian, (but with token Creole participation) as the United National Congress (UNC), resulting in the first East Indian prime minister of Trinidad and symbolically, the first East Indian Trinidadian government. During this time a multicultural ethic was privileged, but with increasing prominence of East Indian culture being brought into the boundaries of Trinidadian culture. According to Munasinghe the East Indian government privileged the pluralist model of nation building, and thus sought to change the category Trinidadian by adding on to it's metonym, Creole, the category "East Indian" (277). This meant emphasizing the contribution of Indian culture *rather* than contesting the givenness of the category Creole. It was however a time when blacks and Afro-Creoles felt they were being materially and symbolically disadvantaged and what was under way was an "East Indianization" of (Creole) Trinidad. The competition between both the assimilationist model of the Afro-Creole PNM and the later pluralist model of the Indo UNC has implications for the different cultural gestures of each group and how these enable their own strategies for competition in the national arena. Munasinghe argues that

> The Trinidadian nationalist narrative that emerges out of the dialectical interplay between the two narratives inscribed in the colonial idiom of race distinguishes between the two types of purity that are differentially positioned in relation to national identity: the purity of ancestral groups [East Indians] that never passed through the cauldron of mixture, and the purities that constitute parts of a mixture [Creole]. The latter type never represents a whole in and of itself; it is the purity that is created through the calibration of mixed

> instances. In contrast, the purity supposedly embodied by ethnic groups who never mixed, such as the East Indians, constitutes wholes, and it is this type of purity that the Trinidadian nationalist narrative defined itself against, thus positioning such groups at a considerable ideological disadvantage with respect to claiming native status in the New World. (88)

According to Segal and Munasinghe this historical positioning of Afro-Creoles *vis-à-vis* Indians continued to inform opposing constructions of the "native Creole" versus the "culturally saturated" oriental alien[8] despite the fact that "Indians" constituted roughly 35% of the total population as early as 1921 (Singh 229). The marker of cultural saturation served to construct and fix the category "East Indian" as an ethnic one, which directly bolstered Afro-Creole ascendancy to state power in the early independence period of the 1960s and 1970s.

Munasinghe frames the 1960s nationalist project as a Creole elite's struggle for state power, which was premised on a historically contingent and naturalized metonymy between Creole culture (steel band, calypso, carnival, literature) and national identity. This national construct aimed to formulate a homogeneous Creole Trinidadian identity based on creolization or assimilation of East Indians into native status. Smith claims that East Indians had to "learn elements of Creole life if they wanted to be accommodated within the cultural framework of Creole society" and that the prospect for Creolization was poor for Indians intent on preserving Indian heritage and solidarity (7). Despite their symbolic positioning as ethnics peripheral to the nation, Brereton states that as early as the 1880's Indians began to assert that they had contributed to the Colony[9] and also began to voice their resentment of the Colony's disregard for Indian culture and the derogatory implications of the term coolie ("Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad" 191). The response to a seething national orientalist discourse was however two-fold. While a substantive group of "traditional Indo-Trinidadian elites" advocated for a renewed pride in Indian culture, which reified ideas of "cultural persistence," (Klass) Brereton ("Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad") and Singh also identified the emergence of a "modernizing Indo-Trinidadian elite" in the run-up to independence. This group encouraged East Indians to participate in political activities, convert to Christianity, and develop sentimental allegiances to Afro-Creole cultural symbols such as steel band and calypso.[10] Implicit in the ideology of this group was that for East Indians to be viewed as modern and authentic in the national imagination, they were expected to self-Creolize in ways that were decidedly Afro-Creole at the expense of the erasure of East Indianness (Mohammed). That segment of the East Indian population that identified with the "Traditional Indo-Trinidadian elites" was viewed through orientalist eyes as backward and incapable of becoming truly Trinidadian. Despite the strong survival of the image of the East Indian as unassimilated and primordially alien, Segal warns that this does not imply that Indian culture per se has

been effectively preserved. He emphasizes that there is "ample evidence of both loss and syncretism" and that the image of the contained, unassimilated East Indian is more a product of the erasure of moments of cultural diffusion (97).

Yet Munasinghe claims that the increasing visibility of Indo-Trinidadians in the political realm is symbolic of an intensifying struggle to have their ethnicity recognized at the same time they contest Afro-Trinidadian cultural hegemony.[11] In doing so, Indo-Trinidadians aim to deploy a cultural referent that is different, though legitimate, but inclusive of themselves. Yet, it is their option for a pluralist nation that reproduces colonial narrations of differentiation between "East Indian/Indo-Trinidadian" and "Afro-Trinidadian." Hence, Indo-Trinidadians struggle to reconstitute a national cultural referent by emphasizing the *contribution* of "Indian" culture, rather than seeking to make visible the ways in which Indianness has historically been reconstituted in colonial/post-colonial contexts (Munasinghe). It is even more ironic that by choosing the pluralist model, Indo-Trinidadians (previously seen as traditionalist) re-script the geography of the modern nation—to some extent, unhinging the categories "Creole" from "modern." It is to this ironic subversive maneuver that this article now attends, focusing specifically on vernacular residential housing as one particular realm of contesting and remaking national cultural identity.

Recasting National Culture? The East Indian Big House

It is important to historicize the transition in housing designs as East Indians in Trinidad moved from transients to settlers. Historian Bridget notes that Indian Indentured immigrants lived in wretched physical conditions Brereton ("A History of Modern Trinidad"). The barrack ranges as they were called were similar to those used in slavery. Brereton describes the barrack ranges as follows:

> Each range contained several rooms, which measured 10′ by 10′ x 12′ to accommodate a married couple and all their children, or two to four single adults. The partitions between the rooms never reached the roof and there was absolutely no privacy or quiet for occupants. Cooking was done on the front steps. Latrines were not general on the estates until the twentieth century and the water supply was usually poor. (25)

Colonial administrator James A. Froude commented in his segment on "a coolie village," that "a roof that will keep the rain out is all that is needed [. . .] the houses, when we came upon them, seemed merely enlarged packing cases loosely nailed together and raised on stones a foot or two from the ground" (66). The barrack range represented the colonial containment of East Indian labour and by extension, their primitive and alien status. East Indians' transition from the transient icon of their mud and wooden houses to more permanent two-storey brick and concrete structures in the

[post]independence period, has been documented by several anthropologists (Neihoff and Neihoff; Klass; Miller; Munasinghe) as an instance of their efforts to respond to their symbolic positioning as ethnics in very concrete ways.

Despite their symbolic positioning on the periphery of the nation, the oil boom of the 1970s did much to address economic inequalities. Before this period, Afro-Trinidadians monopolized the public service, whereas East Indians were still largely agricultural workers. Henry claims that the Indian community was a major beneficiary of the boom period and that there was a convergence in the levels of incomes of blacks and Indians (74). He furthers that it was during this period that the East Indian community made the greatest advance to correct their negative status *vis-à-vis* other groups. Although this economic transformation cannot be confused with their pending symbolic transformation as cultural citizens, it must be acknowledged that the oil windfall in the 1970s ushered in a catalytic modernity for Trinidad: one which East Indians were poised to take advantage of, but which they would engage in very specific ways that were not necessarily congruent with the expectations of Afro-Creole nationalism. One of the main changes according to Henry was the establishment of new housing in the private and public sectors. With the increase in incomes, members of all ethnic groups sought to improve the quality of life, including residential quality. The increasing emphasis on material culture and hyper-consumptive behaviour by the *nouveaux riches* placed considerable symbolic import on residential designs. According to Munasinghe the Indo-Trinidadian rural masses emerged as "*nouveaux riches* (emphasis added) par excellence" in this period, although the contrasting urban character of Afro-Trinidadian made it possible that both groups attached *different* symbolic values to particular objects.

With the emergence of *nouveaux riches* and their emphasis on material culture, the building and design of residential structures is of increasing symbolic import. Jon Goss' call for a critical architectural geography that views built structures as part of a "language, based on an ideology, concept, or social relation" is quite apt (397). This article is concerned about reading the multiple, contestatory and disjunctive ways residential structures perform a cultural landscape that is [re]imagined in the ambit of ethnicity-nation. I would like to suggest that the icon of the big house in Trinidad is a form of representation that encapsulates and engages the above debate on nation and ethnicity in the realm of contemporary cultural production. The big house, as a housing category, is not only physically large but its façades are also extravagantly ornate. This might include concrete-balustraded porch banisters and external staircases, intricately designed iron-grilled windows, permanent icicle lights cascading off the eves of the house, decorative posts that emulate curvilinear columns, ornate arches, etc. These are just some of the general features. The front porch of the house (locally referred to as the gallery) is usually a key showpiece of the house's originality. Berthelot and Gaumé state that the gallery is a link

between *extra muros* (outside) and *intra muros* (inside). It is a decorative showpiece and an interface that represents legitimate ownership and particular claims to social status. The struggle for individuality in the housing façades is also evident in peculiar concrete lattice works, uniquely designed iron gates, and in some cases religious symbols such as the Hindi peace sign or trident or the Muslim sign of moon and star on external walls. However, by far the most pervading commonality about these houses is the tendency either to paint them in various hues of pastel colours—one of the most popular colour being pink.

The houses are stylistically similar to what many other scholars have described as conspicuous consumption by *nouveaux riches* groups around the world. The Trinidad big house is similar to the monster house in Vancouver and Northern California (Li; Ley; Ong; Ray, et al.) in that it signals a racialized/ethnic construction of opulence and consumption. Thomas offers an example of the latter in the icon of the white house in southeast Madagascar, which embodied processes of delocalization (i.e. substituting indigenous materials with non-local building materials and designs) and subsequent relocalization (reproducing a sense of locality that objectifies distinctions of wealth and status by incorporation into local cultural schemas). As a performance of consumption, relocalization signals the "owners' association with other worlds and ways of doing things" (Thomas 431). According to Thomas non-local images are absorbed into the local in the "constitution of personal and collective, as well as local, regional, ethnic, and national identities," that does not necessarily erode cultural difference (435).

A similar construction of conspicuous consumption styles expressed in housing architecture can be seen in Ley's study of the replacement of 20th century homes (inspired by English architectural styles) by monster houses built by Chinese residents in Vancouver. Ray, Halseth and Johnson describe these monster houses as

> usually new, large houses on a completely cleared lot, and are usually more than 400 square feet in area extending to the edges of lots. Architectural emphasis is placed on an eclectic mix of styles and traditions with an emphasis on large windows that allow in large amounts of sunlight, cathedral-like entrances, etched glass, pastel colors and painted trim. (84)

Ray, et al., claim that repercussions of architectural changes extended to group identity and culture and that both Chinese-Canadians and mega-houses were seen as an "assault on traditional meanings" of place. Futher, they posit that the popular discourse and constructed images of monster homes bear a weak relationship to the Chinese population and instead are reflective of a historicity of ideas of immigrants, race, and place. Aihwa Ong describes a similar situation in Northern California where the monster houses of affluent Chinese immigrants were seen as aesthetically contaminating and intolerable in the transformation of middle-class neighbourhoods. Ong states that: "A conflict over one of these monster

houses illustrates the ways in which the state is caught between soothing indignant urbanites seeking to impose their notion of cultural citizenship on Asian *nouveaux riches* (emphasis added) while attempting to keep the door open for Pacific Rim capital."

The Trinidad big house constitutes a lexical equivalent to Thomas' white house and Li's (et al.) monster homes in that it is a site of ambivalence and contestation that is predicated on historically contingent constructions of othering that are underscored by race and ethnicity in nationalist discourse. Monster houses, white houses and as I will show, big houses become sites for contesting belonging and declaring greater control over self-determination. In the following sections I draw on visual, interview and literary sources to begin to explore possible readings of the big house among Indo-Trinidadians and non-Indo-Trinidadians.

Reading I: Coskel Culture
The Big House as Cultural Alterity

In a letter to the editor in the *Trinidad Guardian* newspaper (Small), one citizen wrote a stern letter complaining about the anarchic state of residential architecture, specifically referring to the profusion of stylistically inept "marshmallow" houses that were cropping up on the landscape. In the last ten years or so it has become a generally accepted perception in Trinidad that houses such as those in Figs. 1 and 2, are part of a vernacular visual repertoire that might be termed in lay parlance as "coskel"—i.e., something that has been overdone or done in poor taste. While both Indo and Afro Trinidadians build and own opulent and coskel houses, my interviews with Afro-Creole architects and artists revealed that the notion of opulent housing is perceived to be primarily Indo-Trinidadian. One architect claimed that "if you go through San Fernando and Princes Town [symbolically projected as East Indian spaces] you will see the large houses with the winding staircases in front [. . .] that is a very coolie staircase." (Architect). A cultural historian/artist described the houses as a "vulgarity" that is "particularly Indian," in "gaudy colors" and as a creativity with no taste and no experience [. . .] it is based on economy [. . .] it tells you I have no taste but I have money [. . .] it is frightening." (Cultural Historian/Artist) This claim is part of a wider Creole Trinidadian-sanctioned orientalist consciousness that the Indo-Trinidadian big house represents a naturalized cultural depravity of what some respondents termed "the Indian mind." Commenting on this social phenomenon, one cultural historian/artist responded:

> [. . .] they (the Indians) have left the misery of the caste behind and left the misery of the class structure behind and they could become happy little millionaires and be as gorgeously opulent and as coskel as their imaginations could manage, [. . .] If you just drive through Central Trinidad you would see how 'goosh' Indian lifestyle and opulence is. It is absurd. It lurches into the bizarre. When you see birdbath plints taken and being put one

on top of the next to make balustrades in your father's gallery, you know that 'goosh' has really been arrived at. (Cultural Historian/Artist)

Fig. 1: Indo-Trinidadian big house with balustraded staircase and gallery and metal Om sign on the façade to indicate the owners Hindu affiliation. (Photo Credit: Wahab)

Fig. 2: Ornate façade of Indo-Trinidadian house in Princes Town, symbolically projected as East Indian space. (Photo Credit: Wahab)

The satirical allusion to Indians as "happy little millionaires" and possessing coskel imaginations suggests an attitude of resentment as if the perceived opulence of Indian lifestyle is a sort of pilferage

of undeserved national patrimony. This comment suggests that the opulence of the big house is somewhat of an East Indian cultural dispensation that is expressed as the "goosh" and "coskel." It signals a greed for wealth that is distastefully expressed. The big house is an imputation of wealth (as it builds on colonial stereotypes), not necessarily real culture. Opulence and coskel houses thus become markers of distinction of East Indianness. The historian's claim that "the goosh has really been arrived at to perfection" is to state that East Indianness, as a culturally creative dispensation, through housing styles, can only culturally "arrive" in a state of abject imperfection. Cultural arrival for the category "East Indian," in terms of housing sensibilities, can only be made visible as an illicit cultural expression—an abomination. This is suggestive of the indigestibility of the East Indian syncretic forms and processes into the aesthetic and creative economy of the nation. Implied in his quote is the denial of the category East Indian to arrive as *real* or *legitimate* culture creators. The big house is thus symbolic of a cultural eruption of the architectural landscape that requires ethnic registration to contain its transgressiveness.

Furthermore in lay discourse not only are these huge and richly embellished structures imputations of cultural alterity, but are also markers of an ethnic and orientalist discourse that conflates illicit activity and conspicuous consumption with members of Trinidad's East Indian community. For example, during the rule of what was perceived to be a Creole-dominated government one government minister stated publicly that the houses in what is known to be a predominantly Indo-Trinidadian part of the country were built from the proceeds of drug money. In fact when notorious drug leaders Dole Chadee and Joey Ramiah, both Indo-Trinidadians were sentenced to hang for murder in 1999, images of their mansions were consistently included in newspaper and television reports ("Gangland Boss"), loading these icons with imputations of dirty money and illicit activity. The case subtly conflated orientalist assumptions and accusations of *nouveaux riches* debauchery within the Indo-Trinidadian community. This built upon already existing stereotypes of East Indian houses being symbols of illicit activity, conspicuous consumption and of their backward or uncultured status as culturally-saturated aliens. While these sentiments evoke enduring orientalist stereotypes, they also capitalize on equally racist stereotypes of Afro-Trinidadians' attitudes to housing. For example, one architect claimed "to a black person a home means nothing [. . .] he cares about his car, a TV and his belly." (Cultural Historian/Artist) Another claimed that the "African doesn't care where he lives [. . .] once he has nice clothes and can party, that is all he wants." (Architect) It is by continuing to reinforce the image of the culturally-naked Afro-Trinidadian in this way that the big house becomes easily eclipsed as an Indo-Trinidadian cultural phenomenon (Munasinghe).

Interestingly, the projected ethnic association of East Indians' big houses with opulence and coskel culture is however dissonant with Miller's research in the urban area of Central Trinidad, which

suggested that there were no marked differences in housing design between Indo-Trinidadians and Afro-Trinidadians.[12] Munasinghe, however, makes the observation that

> [. . .] successes enjoyed by Indo-Trinidadian individuals become transformed, through the visible symbol of the concrete house, into a characteristic of the whole community. This transformation affirms both Afro-Trinidadian stereotypes of Indo-Trinidadians—their belief that "the Indians are taking over the country"—and Indo-Trinidadians' perceptions of themselves as an industrious and success oriented people. (147-48)

and juxtaposes the question: "Why [. . .] is the Indo Trinidadian concrete house a visible symbol of *East Indian success* and the Afro-concrete house not a visible symbol of *that group's success*?" (147)

Reading II: Symbolic Arrival as Culture Creators

Munasinghe emphasizes that in the Indo-Trinidadian village she studied, "new houses are symbols of success beyond mere utilitarian concerns" (141). While the icon of the big house is evaluated within a prevailing orientalist national discourse, Indo-Trinidadians themselves view these structures as an attempt to renovate their identity by re-establishing notions of achievement, permanence, industry, and most of all a statement of symbolic arrival as culture creators and economic contributors. As sites of ethnic differentiation, housing culture becomes coded into a discourse of cultural arrival, which like political arrival to some extent, has historically been regulated, deferred, or denied. One home owner claimed that his house "symbolized his movement from nothing to a concrete house" (Homeowner 1) while another echoed a similar sentiment that the "Indian came from humble beginnings." (Homeowner 2) Based on Munasinghe's ethnographic study in an Indo-Trinidadian village, she claims that a striking feature of this particular landscape is the mixture of modern concrete houses next to "humble modest dwellings constructed of wood, tin or sometimes even mud" (140). Aisha Khan also uses the icon of the wooden house attached to the two-storey concrete house as a symbol of this process of "mixing metaphors." From barracks, mud houses, and wooden shacks in the colonial period to more quaint wooden structures and eventually modern concrete houses, the latter symbolizes the mobility or economic arrival that East Indians have experienced predominantly as a result of the oil boom. These structures also constitute a discourse within the community of being able to survive against all odds during difficult colonial days and more so, during Afro-Creole rule.

The owner of the house in Fig. 3, which combined an adapted form of Greek pillars with symbols of American identity claimed that the moldings of the American Eagle and Statue of Liberty holding a torch and sword were meant to symbolize a new-found "freedom"

of Indians from their previous impoverished economic status. This transition is consistent with Munasinghe's analysis that modern concrete houses in Trinidad represent a statement of symbolic arrival for East Indians as "culture givers [. . .] after years of seclusion, alienation and poverty" (143). Moreover the borrowing of popular cultural markers such as moldings of the Little Mermaid and King Triton mixed with more ancestral motifs like moldings of Hindu god/desses (Fig. 4), also express a desire on the part of the Indo-Trinidadian *nouveaux riches* to selectively frame and objectify their own modernity. Through their own selective process of combining multiple design motifs might these big houses indicate a greater sense of control of East Indians over self-determination in the cultural arena?

Fig. 3: Indo-Trinidadian house in South Trinidad with molding of Statue of Liberty holding a sword in her left hand. The lower story, a neighbourhood bar, provided the finances to build the upper story. (Photo Credit: Wahab)

At the same time Indo-Trinidadian homeowners felt that their participation in home design allowed them to distinguish their individuality and escape their position as ethnics i.e., their Indianness. Berthelot and Gaume claim that the decorative show-pieces of the outsides not only exhibit a claim to social status and legitimate ownership, but also a struggle for individuality. For example, one owner (Fig. 1) claimed that he chose to paint his home in pastel pink and not yellow "like dhal"[13] as one of his neighbours since he felt that would be "too coolie," even though his own home was read by Creole architects as distinctive of an Indo-Trinidadian aesthetic. Even as these houses reflect a certain sense of Indo-Trinidadian agency to register their creative power, they are also premised on the desire of East Indians to differentiate themselves from Afro-Trinidadians, and thus grounds for their reinstated alien status.

Fig. 4: Indo-Trinidadian house in Princes Town. The lower story is a tyre shop while the upper floor is the family residence. Moldings of Ariel (the Little Mermaid) and King Triton are fixed to the top while the lower moldings are of Hindu god/desses, Shiva, Hanuman, and Lakshmi. (Photo Credit: Wahab)

Yet these sites are pivots against which are re-imagined, stereotypes of Afro-Trinidadians as squanders of their wealth. One home owner while echoing the struggle for cultural ascendancy also reified colonial stereotypes of the free-spending Afro-Trinidadian: "While the Indian was kept down for all those years when the African was rising and feting [. . .] he was saving to build his house for his family [. . .]" (Homeowner 2). In other words, the big houses of Indo-Trinidadians are subverted images and culture carriers, regarded as the cultural creations (partying/carnival) of Afro-Trinidadians and symbolic of improvident consumption behaviour. These sentiments signal the recalibration of Indo-Trinidadian identity as a result of social forces that are externally (ethnicity) and internally (class) imposed. The irony more so is that at the same time these big houses reinscribe orientalist notions of Indians as traditional (thrift, perseverance, and sacrifice), they also double-register as signatures of acculturation in which Indo-Trinidadians have actually learnt to adopt the free-spending and lavish habits they assign to their Afro-Trinidadian counterparts. In other words Indo-Trinidadians are adopting the same colonial stereotypes *against which* they self-define, making their re-positioning gestures as ethnics contentious at best.

Both readings are defensive posturings with the potential to reify already established orientalist scripts. For if the big house is in fact Indo-Trinidadian then why does it not express frugality and thrift,[14] the very same colonial stereotypes that defined the "East Indian?" On the contrary, the big house depends on the colonial stereotype of the African i.e., lavish spending, in opposition to which that sense of *being* "East Indian" is constructed against. At the same

time, this reconstituted trope of lavishness is counterpoised with a sense of being modern. The big house is asserting not only that it can contest the stereotypes of thrift and tradition which are reserved characteristics of East Indianness, but that East Indianness has reconstituted itself through the same categories that conferred cultural citizenship on Afro-Trinidadians—a sort of ethnic code switching. Shalini Puri also points to this reality in her analysis of chutney soca, a hybrid Indo-Trinidadian[15] musical expression, which does not escape fraught and questionable posturings (reactionary or otherwise) from the Indo-Trinidadian community struggling to re-define its identity in relation to its constructed Other Afro-Trinidadian figure ("Canonized Hybridities" *passim*). The emergence which the big house signals is one of a seething contention that vacillates between what Puri describes as "Afro-Trinidadian discourses that frame the "Indian threat" as one of Indian economic domination versus Indo-Trinidadian discourses that frame the "African threat" as one of African cultural domination" ("Nation and Hybridization" 128).

Reading III: A Syncretic Eruption or Blind Nostalgia?

Munasinghe argues that East Indians seek to redefine what it means to be "Trinidadian" rather than what it means to be Indian by attempting to add on East Indian to Creole as a culture referent of the nation, e.g., a pluralist approach. She contends that East Indians have not re-asserted their identity by challenging the very construction of Creole. I take this to mean that East Indians have not actually challenged the *canonized versions* of hybridity, to suggest the possibility that they too have undergone specific, though different, processes of hybridity that are historically conditioned and positioned. Could it be that the East Indian big houses *do* reflect the multiple identity struggles and syncretic experiences of East Indians in Trinidad, contesting the terms of on which a national cultural politics if claimed and possibly suggesting another syncretic contender that is yet in the realm of the profane? Shalini Puri refers to this contender as a "resistant hybridity" in the case of soca chutney music, though she cautions of the complexities involved ("Canonized Hybridities" *passim*).

As a cultural production, the big house relies on various techniques of blending design elements. Since this mode of cultural creation (i.e., hybridization) is itself normalized through the nationalist imperative to blend, one would expect a celebration of the big house as an incipient strain of national culture rather than as a peripheral ethnic dispensation. The Indo-Trinidadian big house might reflect a desire to renovate the normalized manifestations of nationhood through the reinvention of a different kind of Creoleness (in the analytic sense) by applying the very same attributes (i.e., the carnivalesque, the vernacular, and hyper-consumption) that characterized the initial impulse to define a national imaginary. Munasinghe claims that "in practice, housebuilding" is marked by an "openness and intermeshing of diverse cultural strains, which

attest to the creoleness of the East Indians themselves" (140). While these houses can be read as an eruption of a specifically Indo-Trinidadian syncretic consciousness that contests and affirm multiple yet peripheral realities, it is important to recognize that

> Creolization is not a homogenizing process, but rather a process of *contention* between two people who are members of social formations and carriers of cultures, a process in which their own ethnicity is continually re-examined and redefined in terms of the relevant oppositions between different social formations at various historical moments. (Bolland 73)

At the same time it is important to recognize the validity and potential utility of such a process in renovating the hinge between nation and ethnicity, how might these cultural hybrids inform an understanding of the ironies and anxieties of reconstituting postcolonial identity?

One might ask provocatively: is this supposedly new imperative to blend informed by something that is potentially liberatory or is it informed by nostalgia for the imprisoning colonial past, i.e., for the planter house, which with its grand size, heavy ornamentation and eclectic facades which symbolized progress and prosperity rather than conspicuous consumption? My interview with an artist however revealed the imitative anxiety that underlies the contentious posturing of these big houses *vis-à-vis* the French Creole planter's house:

> There is a house in Aranguez Savannah (predominant Indo-Trinidadian space) that is designed in a French Creole style. It's got a humongous blue Shiva on the tip and all the areas. There are tridents where all the filigree is. All the things on the roof are tridents. And I once went to the people, when I first came back and said oh my god, 'what a novel idea, can I come and see your house?' and then they opened the door. Then I realized the doors and cupboards are manifestations of Shiva and Krishna … wow … but what is fascinating is that he would choose—not an Asian style, but a French Creole style, but then decorate it in Asian motifs. I mean come on! Why can't we talk about this? Where are paintings of that? or Where's the discussions of that? No! All of that is denied, ignored. (Cultural Critic/Artist)

Could the artist's statement be suggestive of an imitative desire on the part of *nouveaux riches* Indo-Trinidadians to mimic the sort of syncretic forms that defined the upper echelons of colonial Trinidad's social hierarchy?

A similar anxiety can be found in V.S. Naipaul's *Mimic Men* in which the Indo-Trinidadian protagonist Ralph Singh, unable to find comfort in his father's wooden house or his grandfather's more modern concrete house, dreams of what is essentially a regressive dream for the old plantation type of colonial house (a French Creole dream) yet he builds a house that is influenced by Roman

architecture (Rohlehr).[16] Ralph Singh is representative of the Indo-Trinidadian *nouveaux riches* who is presented as being dislocated from the landscape and tries to locate himself through the icon of the colonial house. His anxiety possibly points to the larger concern of whether these conspicuously modern big houses re-inscribe colonial fantasies rather than circumvent them. If this is so, then might the big house be viewed as a sort of substitute hybridity that contends for national status in the competitive cultural economy while offering no liberation from the shackles of the past? My interview with an artist echoed this possibility of the past haunting the future:

> I find that really sickening in the sense that [. . .] that the Magnificent Seven[17] around the Savannah [. . .] we forget those houses are kitsch. They are pastiche, cause they are constructions based on the aspirations of the monied class at the end of the 19th century so that means theoretically that 100 or 50 or 60 years from now would you be driving down to Lange Park (monied Indo-Trinidadian residential community) to see the imitation of Graceland? (Cultural Critic/Artist)

Are these big houses then syncretic fissures that denaturalize the givenness of an Afro-Creole nationalist imaginary or are they just cultural derivatives with the potential to reinforce colonial legacies? Might the big house be viewed then as emerging out of a sense of angst or rage about whether anything can be salvaged from the corruption of the past?

Conclusion

This article only just begins to explore the Indo-Trinidadian big house as expanding a visual vocabulary of contestation, as Orientalist and Afro-creole nationalist discourses blur and solidify the boundaries of nation and ethnicity. If the idea of the Trinidadian nation is premised on Afro-Creole culture as a canonized hybridity, Shalini Puri asks the question "What, however, might a hybridity that threatens the domestic status quo look like?" ("Canonized Hybridties" 12) The big house not only calls into question the silent engagement of Indo-Trinidadians with cultural syncretism, but also the "capacity of prevailing imaginative discourse to anxiously sustain notions of authenticity" (Dash xxxv). Whereas Munasinghe's emphasis has been on the structures and functionalities of East Indian houses, I have attempted to address another layer: the external aesthetics of these houses. In so doing, I aim to foreground the symbolics of craft and creativity that not only allow East Indians/Indo-Trinidadians to re-instate arrival as culture givers, but to renovate notions of cultural citizenship by manipulating the vernacular residential landscape. As a coskel construct the big house emerges from the blending of different architectural styles which are illicit or not-yet-legitimized as real (i.e., national) culture. It is likely that the different ornamentation and styles are a choice mix of status symbols that some Indo-Trinidadians use to re-constitute the modernity of their homes. Ironically, in spite of the big house

being seen as an Indo-Trinidadian dispensation, it relies on the same techniques of size, heavy ornamentation, and displays of eclecticism that characterized large Creole urban residences' prosperity in colonial Trinidad. Yet these practices seem to be deployed in distinctive ways by Indo-Trinidadian homeowners.

In this article I suggest that the icon of the East Indian big house is an example of such an illicit hybridity that not only contests the terms of national cultural consciousness but also establishes the ambivalent relation of Indo-syncretic cultural forms to national orientalist thought [that denies them]. On one hand the eclectically-designed big house is viewed within national discourse as an expression of opulence, criminal activity, and a distasteful aesthetic sensibility, that are all part of an orientalist discourse that denies Indo-Trinidadians cultural citizenship. At the same time this cultural hybridity is not unproblematic since it is riddled with anxieties about a continued distinction of Indo-Trinidadian from Afro Trinidadian and the reinvention of colonial fantasies, both of which reify claims for continued alienation. Could the Indo-Trinidadian self be seeking to impress on the national psyche not only that it now holds measurable symbolic (cultural and economic) capital, but that it has achieved some degree of power to manipulate and maneuver the codes and symbols that define claims to authenticity? In doing so, a different story of fissure and eruption emerges that reflect and deflect contentious posturing, making claims for symbolic inclusion even more ambivalent.

Nevertheless, the big house is representative of a struggle to survive economically, aesthetically and symbolically on the national landscape, as it represents a desire for a new language of legitimate inclusion at the vernacular and national levels. It specifically supports the case for the inclusion of Indo-syncretics as a cultural referent of authenticity. One has to ask the question: why has Indo syncretism emerged as such an illicit spectacle? These illicit spectacles are refractive icons which distort the hinge between ethnicity and nation at the same time they are representative of it. Munasinghe asserts that: "Creolization when it involves Indo-Trinidadians is an absurdity, an alienating and disturbing phenomenon at best" (197). She interprets this in the context of modern concrete houses in Trinidad as an avenue for understanding that different groups may derive different meanings from these visible symbolics. Hence, she opines:

> [I]f we situate the materiality of the concrete house within the different social formations through which contending groups evaluate and redefine their ethnicity [. . .] then we cannot divorce the surface manifestation of the concrete house from its specific social and ideological moorings (152).

In the case of the big house, Munasinghe's suggestion for a single conceptual framework that includes syncretism, acculturation (Creolization) and traditional practices as a "general Creole" (in the analytic sense) is quite useful for further research.

This paper also extends the recent turn to the visual in Caribbean cultural studies as a means of complicating and resituating long-standing debates on nation and ethnicity in a plural society (Khan; Puri; Sheller; Thompson). Its use of vernacular architecture as a site of such contemplation is unique in that it complicates some of the more emancipatory readings ventured by scholars who have focused on some of the more predictable and popularized sites of cultural production such as music and art (Khan; Puri). My critique of residential housing in Trinidad is not necessarily about recuperating or liberating the historically marginalized Indo-Caribbean subject, but is premised on a view that power is fluid and always being remade, requiring a provocative and relentless reading of nation and the cultural politics of identity. Perhaps the most important aspect of this research is that it stands with few others, such as Puri and Munasinghe in contesting Creolization as the hegemonic process of syncretism and establishing cultural citizenship by illuminating perhaps other distinct, yet related instances of cultural syncretism. The work is therefore useful in revisiting the past to begin to historicize Indo-Caribbean syncretisms that have operated beyond yet in relation to processes of creolization. In so doing, the big house disturbs some of the more tidy histories and criticisms proffered by early scholars on Trinidad. Moreover this exploratory work provokes an enduring concern in Caribbean cultural studies: how do we frame and find new methodologies for tracking and critiquing emergent syncretisms, not only to understand the continued subordination of ethnic groups, but to contemplate the contentious gestures of negotiation, accommodation, contestation and subversion within the confines of what seems to be an ephemeral relation to Western modernity?

Notes

[1]See articles by Li and Ray, et al. for a discussion on monster homes in Vancouver, Canada and Ong for a similar discussion on immigrants and monster homes in Northern California.

[2] Yelvington defines ethnic stratification to mean the close correlation between ethnic identity, class and power.

[3] This was the generic term used by the British colonials to refer to indentured labourers but was soon used throughout the colony in a derogative way to mark the labourer's alterity in Creole society.

[4] It must be emphasized that the term Creole although connoting biological and cultural mixture between African and European, is a heterogeneous category. The Creole society thesis, developed by E. K. Brathwaite, conceptualized the Creole society and the Creolization process as a twin process of acculturation (forced assimilation) and interculturation between Africans and Europeans, (Reddock). As Brereton outlines for pre and immediate post-emancipation society, Creoles could include free Coloureds and free blacks as well as the black masses. However there were divisions between French Creoles and English Creoles, between blacks and

French Creoles, etc. ("Social Organization and Class" 34). What is however interesting is that the middle tier of Trinidadian nineteenth century society, composed of free Coloureds and free blacks, was unusually large—a factor which Brereton opines is probably why this group was favourably positioned to social mobility and political ascendancy in the 20th Century post-slavery hegemony.

[5] It is important to note that the Creole segment was temporarily split during the Black Power Revolution in 1970 where Coloured sub-groups were thought to be marginalizing urban blacks, (Oxaal).

[6] Munasinghe expands on the idea of East Indians as culture takers versus culture givers based on Brackette Williams' work on Guyana.

[7] Puri goes into detailed critique of the ways in which Afro-Creole theorists have attempted to manage the tensions between Indo-Trinidadians and Afro-Trinidadians. She summarizes: "Williams resorts to racial distinctions and racialized voting to prop up a bourgeoisie-nationalist divide-and-rule politics even as he advocates cultural hybridity in the form of creolization. Brathwaite's endorsement of creolization, too, manages Afro-Caribbean/Indo-Caribbean tensions either by separating Indians out in the name of a "plural" society or by assimilating them to a Creole Caribbean norm; Walcott, celebratory of both racial and cultural hybridity, nonetheless glosses over the economic competition between these groups through recourse to the language of love. Each of these discourses is invested in a particular arrangement of class and race power that it attempts to conceal" ("Canonized Hybridities" 24).

[8] Reddock asserts that prior to the 1945 census the main differentiation was between categories, "East Indian" and "General Population."

[9] Keeping estates going, sustaining agriculture, opening up the country, paying taxes, and becoming proprietors and merchants.

[10] Singh states: "the modernizing elite recognized the importance of adapting to the demands of a society dominated by Western social and cultural values. [. . .] Like every upstart elite and especially one engaged in combating the negative stereotyping of their race and ancestral civilization, the Indo-Trinidadian modernizing elite, especially those based in Port of Spain, wished to imitate the social life style of the upper class, largely the white elite, something which the Portuguese and Chinese in Port of Spain were already doing" (236).

[11] Bolland deploys Antonio Gramci's work on cultural hegemony to mean: "how the persistence of a régime of exploitation often depends on the capacity of the rulers to persuade the oppressed of the justice, or at least the inevitability, of the system" (66).

[12] Interestingly Ray, Halseth and Johnson found that in Vancouver, the relationship between increasing Asian residents and construction of monster houses was "implicit, though untested" (84).

[13] Dhal is Hindi for a sort of split pea soup which is a weekly staple in the Indo-Trinidadian diet.

[14] Puri posits that (post)colonial representations of race and national belonging have equated material wealth and miserliness

with "Indianness" ("Nation and Hybridization" 103). She views these cultural formulae as an area for the struggle over symbolic representation.

[15] Munasinghe positions East Indians in the space of "visible ethnics." Drawing on the work of Brackette Williams, she states: "Ethnic groups are seen as an outcome of nation-building projects that seek to create homogeny out of heterogeneity. Through a selective process of cultural appropriation dominant members of society (the privileged "race" and "class") determine the ruling cultural ensemble of civil society in their efforts to create a metonymic relation between their group and the nation. This process in turn devalues or denies the link between selected appropriations (now elevated to national symbols) and contributions of marginalized others to the nation's patrimony [. . .] [T]hese marginalized others, or ethnics if you will, now rendered visible in contrast to the invisible ethnics who come to metonymize the nation lie at a considerable pragmatic and ideological disadvantage vis-à-vis the ideologically defined nation" (10).

[16] See Rohlehr.

[17] This is a group of seven very eclectically designed houses that were built by wealthy planters and merchants in the beginning of the twentieth century, but which are now celebrated as national architectural jewels.

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