



Chameleon: Shifting the Spectrum from Anansi and Rabbit to Lizard

Warrick Lattibeaudiere¹

¹Pb.D. University of Technology, Jamaica, E-mail: wglatts@yahoo.com

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Abstract

Chief Caribbean animal metaphors, Anansi and Rabbit, fail to adequately capture these three fundamental attributes in authors wrestling with colonisation's aftermath. These writers skilfully praise and undermine, while living off the coloniser. The carrot-and-stick approach evokes the colour-shifting chameleon—a fabulous, camouflaging, enemy-rerouting African trickster lizard—chosen as a cynosure for succeeding where Anansi and Rabbit fail. Anansi and Rabbit served the Caribbean well insofar as adjusting to slavery and post-slavery survival dynamics. But given progress in a modern era, the old Anansi and Rabbit tropes become haunting metaphors to the Caribbean and threaten to retard the region in an era of modern civilization. While Chameleon retains some of the attributes of Rabbit and Anansi, the lizard's colours are diverse and reflect adaptation to any reality: old or new. The chameleon's camouflage serves as a signification-occluding rhetoric for authors and, on the character level, those who mimic and outwit oppressors to survive resemble chameleon. The lizard's colour alternation, for figuratively and ably capturing authorial ambivalence towards oppressor and oppressed, renders the lizard suitable as rhetoric for subversion and character survival in the Caribbean. What is more, an in-depth study of chameleon reveals that the creature is a feature in the lore of Europe, Africa, and Asia—the three Caribbean impacting continents, making chameleon in proverbial language, and, unlike the African Anansi and Rabbit, a lizard for all seasons.

Keywords: Chameleon, Anansi, Rabbit, Camouflage, Metaphor, Survive.

Antillean writers routinely deploy animals to trope human experience. Anansi and Brer Rabbit, in particular, predominate as trickster figures in the Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean respectively. This paper submits another dissembler, chameleon¹—a primarily East-African-lore-originating, camouflage-achieving lizard—as a more fitting trope for character survival and authorial subversion in the Caribbean. Given the Caribbean's strong West African roots, Antillean folklore understandably excludes chameleon. Why, the saurian creature has only recently crawled into a few Caribbean fictions!ⁱⁱ Nevertheless, this research surfs with the predominantly East African reptile on traditional inviting waves of Afro-Caribbeanness, while emphasising an international trope that spans several continents. As a means of demonstrating chameleon camouflage, this paper has unitalicised word plays throughout.

Why transport Chameleon from Africa and bypass familiarly local Caribbean signal trickster figures, namely, Anansi and Rabbit? Several reasons emerge. For one, a growing number of Caribbean authors have boarded the Chameleon train because of greater literary legroom afforded by Chameleon's multifarious attributes. The slowly increasing passenger count serves to reinstate an importantly overlooked Afro-Caribbean Chameleon route justified by two West African Chameleon tales that never made the Caribbean journey. This article makes the roundtrip on these lost, yet

essential, oral tales. Interestingly, Rabbit and Anansi, distinguished African hoodwinkers, crash before Chameleon in a race of wits ran in these two folktales: “Anansi and the Chameleon” and “How Chameleon Defeated Hare.” African oral tradition, therefore, stations Chameleon as quintessential trickster figure in myth, “the highest terminus for a culture’s ideals and beliefs” (Mazzucco, “African Myths and What They Teach”). While Rabbit, Anansi and Chameleon behave duplicitously,

chameleon excels in ambivalence. Rabbit’s ruse and Spider’s web of trickery account little for a survival-defining, dual historical reality based on contradiction. Chameleon’s colour shifting better encapsulates ambivalence in Caribbean nationals, products of racial miscegenation between antipodal parental ancestries of oppressor and oppressed. This vacillation precipitates internal anguish in authors and characters searching for allegiance and reassurance in progenitors antagonistic to each other. Especially poignant is comparing chameleon’s colour-changeableness to ambivalence in these islanders torn between Africa, Asia and Europe, but equally, their unique Caribbean reality. Such identity irresolution fuels the regions diglossic and polyglossic realities. Of the three creatures, then, Chameleon, with his colour changeability, best resembles authorial ambivalence and functions across a wider range of possibilities.

This paper demonstrates how the tropes, Anansi and Rabbit, once suitable to read Caribbean identity, may slowly become dead metaphors, and how Chameleon, given changing context and realities, may better capture these dynamics. With the Caribbean being a product of Africa, Asia, and Europe, it is critical to examine Chameleon’s colours on these main lands, before looking at how these territories influence the Caribbean Chameleon. Such intercontinental examination will reveal that any characteristics Rabbit and Anansi have, Chameleon surpasses.

The Embattled Wall Crawler

Despite Anansi’s indelible impact on Caribbean consciousness, especially Jamaica, the Spider *a get a warm time in him skin* [faces many obstacles], because his web cannot fully capture Caribbean creolisation. Daryl Dance,¹ who collects and critiques Anansi stories compares the arachnid to the American Brer Rabbit, and shouts Anansi’s praises as “a figure of admiration whose cunning and scheming nature reflects the indirection and subtlety necessary for survival and occasional victory for the Black man in a racist country” (12). Brought by slaves to the Caribbean, Anansi, the Akan god and spirit of all knowledge of stories, identifies with ‘the Black man.’ ‘The Black man’ remains a highly contentious figure in the Caribbean, especially given the latest culture-celebrating, blackness-deprivileging Caribbean identity shift, Creolity. The one-colour black Anansi inadequately represents extra-black, disenfranchised races and hybrid groups characteristic of Caribbeanness. For example, Asians undergoing Caribbean creolisation cannot fully relate to an African Anansi.

This New World trickster, like Rabbit, communicates a specific world view not fully representative of Caribbeanness. To both Anansi and Rabbit, one may attach the term “signifying”—to paraphrase Henry Louis Gates Jr.’s 1988 book. *Signifyin’*, in Gates’ terminology, defines subversions by post-abolition downtrodden black communities in the Americas. He explicates African ways of surviving in the New World, employing Monkey, known as Macaque in the French Caribbean, as central figure. Again, what about Caribbean-relevant, creolised ways of surviving? Swung differently, the tree swinger’s prehensile limbs and tail cannot fully grasp the Caribbean’s diverse limbs and tales. Like Dance’s Anansi stories, Gates’s playful Afro-centric *Signifyin’* *singe* sings Creole fabric and, in fact, renders Macaque too black for the Creole pack. As the Guyanese say: “Monkey dress him pickney/child till him spoil” [Some people, as hard as you try, cannot dress the role]. Arnold aligns these creatures with a culture of resistance; that said, the critic then identifies a flaw in weaving Spider into Caribbean discourse: “Anancy, to pursue our privileged mediator, must be stabilized as an emblem of the culture” (271). This process demands that Spider “presents uniformly the same features in his new world incarnations and in the presumed culture of origin... Africa” (271). But Arnold remarks remarkable differences between Anansi stories in West Africa and the New World.

In Africa, Anansi stories demonstrate that anyone who masters the broad complex range of cultural sign posts with Anansi's assistance deserves to be king (Arnold 47). To illustrate, Dakubu, an African folk critic, analyses an elaborate tale from Ghana as literary art. The tale exists in three local languages. In the Dagaare tale, the king creates competition among his sons to determine the most suitable heir. Anansi reveals to the youngest son the secret of the yam the boy must choose to prove his sagaciousness. Dakubu's linguistic approach goes on to reveal phonetic and semantic systems in uncovering significations in God's name. Next, the Asante version emphasizes how celestial-like bodies manipulate politics and law to validate power relations. No current Anansi story functions like these in the Caribbean, Arnold relates. In fact, Anansi stories and short Rabbit tailsⁱⁱⁱ emerge in a context of oppression with no sympathy for the colonizer. Herein lies another reason to sever Anancy's web: the African-turned-Caribbean webmaster expresses no sympathy or ambivalence—a key characteristic of Antilleans after colonisation—towards Whites or people of mixed colour, and rightly so. Anagrammatically, “can any” African Anancy sympathise or identify with an oppressive white predator? The Jamaican proverb justifies Spider's alienation from the coloniser: “A faas mek Anancy deh a house-top” [Meddling in other people's affairs causes Anancy to live in the house top]. The Jamaican proverb recalls the story of Spider's interference with Tiger's bird's nest, forcing the web spinner into seclusion or going ceiling-bound to escape enemy Tiger, the coloniser.

Anancy consequently presents a problematic metaphor for spinning Caribbean Creoleness. Arnold remarks a double flaw in the culture of resistance model to which Anansi and Rabbit belong. Firstly, the premise on which Anansi stories rests remains shaky given the disparity in function between African and West Indian Spider tales. Secondly, the Caribbean Anansi model “inhibits further creolisation—hybridisation, in contemporary postcolonial theory—of the culture by presuming its theoretical impossibility” (Arnold 272). In other words, impossible would hybridisation be were society to undergo irremediable segmentation as demanded by the African Spider trope.

Anansi has also gradually lost his positive allure to morph into a *persona non grata* in the region. His diplomatic stay risks revocation as many Antilleans *a get clyde a him dirty, trickify ways* [are getting cloyed of his dirty, trickster ways]. True, since Donkey *seh di worl no level*, this unjust hegemony leads to anomie in Anansi. Critic of note, Joceline Clemencia, writing from Curaçao, re Cha Nanzi (Brother Nanzi), notes: “He was a liar, astute and quick, able to defeat the Shon Arei, the king, the personification of the slave owners. In the eyes of the slaves, Nanzi was a hero who personified themselves” (435-6). Some Antilleans, for example, distrust Spider stories for their ‘wicked content,’ thinking that Anansi's rascality and deceit bode badly for the national character in a global village. Dance explains how growing discontent with Spider's wicked content causes the bourgeoisie, contented with their reputation, to threaten Anansi.

Anansi shons the king even as Rastafarians, who view animals as human neighbours in the larger planetary ecology, shon Anansi. *Di dread dem bun Anansi* [The dreadlocked men burn/disapprove of Anansi] seen as Spiderman, a representative of the Babylonish system they envision overthrowing. Dennis Forsythe, sociologist and Rastafarian, reads Anansi as “a symbol of the degenerateness in the Caribbean, and an obstacle to regional advancement” (220). But even without Rastafarian Forsythe, one can see the reasonableness in that statement; Rastafarians condemn the Caribbean Spiderman for bearing little resemblance to the African archetype. Arnold ends his work thus: “In a word, where Anansi is concerned, the Rastafarians got it right” (275).

In the *Gleaner*, Pat Roxborough reports the call of the Jamaica Teacher's Association to ban Anansi as folk hero. With the continuing controversy, Ralph Thompson, another reporter, gainsays sentimental attachment to this character *ginnal/* trickster: “What was once a means to an end is no longer appropriate for a nation facing new challenges of its destiny. It is time to say goodbye to Anansi in our schools.” The next major newspaper, *The Observer*, sandwiched the helpless spider whose name is mud: “Anancy is no longer a mere spider that fills the corners of our houses, but has grown into a gigantic insect that has woven webs of deception, greed, corruption, murders, lies” (Dennis 8).^{iv} Thus, swatting Spider is his own predictable *ginnalship/* trickery.

Nanzi's *ad nauseam* tricks are repetitively *same ole, same ole* ruse. Tales, time after time, tell of Tiger, Turtle, and those that triumphantly trick the trickster tarantula. Spider suffers many leg-pulling defeats at the hands of characters accustomed to his knavery and rodomontade in these Caribbean

stories: “Anansi Goes Fishing,” “Anansi, Firefly, and Tiger,” “Anansi and Turtle,” “Anansi and the Witch named Five,” as well as “Anansi and the Phantom Food.”^v In the first account, the narrator recounts that “Fisherman was clever and quite wise to Anansi’s tricks.” Fisherman offers Anancy the day’s catch, while awaiting tomorrow’s larger haul. Greedy Spider refuses, eyeing the bigger amount. The following day, Fisherman and Anansi notice the nets rotting. He suggests that Anansi sell the nets profitably. Spider glibly accepts, crawls into town, and purrs: “Rotten nets for sale,” an announcement met with threats and a beating. Fisherman thus outsmarts Anansi. Tiger similarly outmanoeuvres Anansi in “Anansi, Firefly and Tiger.” On an egg-seeking night mission with Firefly, Anansi claims all eggs for himself, wreaking the ire of Firefly who flies away, leaving Anansi fireless. Firefly, in effect, puts out his light, and does not give a fly^{vi} whether Anansi’s light gets put out in the deathly jungle. Freaked out, Anansi creeps in the dark until he reaches Tiger. The arachnid identifies himself as Tiger’s godson. The narrator’s comments here sit squarely with those in the Fisherman’s tale: “Tiger knew he had no godsons, and he knew that Anansi had tricked him many times in the past.” Tiger invites Anansi inside, steals Anansi’s eggs, covers a live lobster in a food pot, and goes to sleep. When Anansi tries to steal food in the night, *him get wat di duck get.*^{vii} Next, in “Anansi and Turtle,” the narrator pinpoints a similar moral running through the five tales: “When you try to outsmart someone, you may find that you are the one outsmarted.”

In “Anansi and the Witch named Five,” the Witch kills anyone who utters the number. Anansi gets Pig and several animals to say five, and eats their carcasses, his way of bringing home the bacon. He then waylays plump Mrs. Goose, sits on one of the five heaps of corn and says: “If you can count the corn mounds, you can get them.” Goose honks: “One, two, three, four, and the one you are sitting on.” Goose avoids the ancient trickster’s fetch. In high dudgeon, he sinks himself: “Can’t you see? There are one, two, three, four, five!” And were Anansi French-speaking, possibly he would not have *cing*. Goose not only tricks the trickster, she now has—how many piles of corn to take to her children?

In the final story, Spider loses credibility after moving among villages, enjoying delectable servings. When the villages disappear, the glutton cannot convince anyone to believe *him duppy stories*. Throughout all these half-of-ten stories, the Jamaican proverb runs: “You can fool people once, but you can’t fool them forever.”

Swatting Anansi in his visible web proves easier than cornering the elusive *Compère Lapin* in his Rabbit hole that connects deeply, and in many ways, to French Caribbean consciousness. In the French West Indies, even though Rabbit displaces Spider as trickster figure, Rabbit still reproduces the highs and lows of Anansi. Nearly four decades ago, Maryse Condé, prolific French West Indian writer, hypothesised that animal tricksters replicate values peculiar to a slave society. Condé matches Rabbit and Hyena of the French Antilles with their African counterparts (38). The Caribbean animal duo rarely suffer the censoring identified with corresponding African animal manifestations. Additionally, Condé discovers that “the voracity that draws Hyena/ Zamba into so many misadventures is shared by his companion Rabbit; both think only about stuffing themselves with meat; but the superiority of Rabbit is in his knowing how to avoid getting caught” (38). In the corpus of ten traditional tales she studied, three unfold during famine to emphasise survival, three involve food theft, and one involves trickery by Rabbit who, without stopping work, ensures he eats. So, seventy per cent of the tales emphasise trickery for survival under extreme conditions. Condé, after her stay in Africa, attributed the radical transformation in New World incumbents, Rabbit and Zamba, to the back-breaking influence of slavery. According to Katherine E. Browne, storytellers “reweave African folk tradition to fit the new plantation environment” (126).^{viii}

Rabbit, like his Spider comrade, is a one-man Caribbean band, rendering Rabbit’s hole too tiny to house a group or a community. Rabbit’s collective heroism in Africa atomises in the New World, since “the most important social unit was oneself. One’s best hope was to watch out for him- or herself, to plot individual strategies of survival and resistance” (Browne 126). Chamoiseau similarly remarks the lone hero known for dexterously and selfishly sacrificing corporate social cohesion. Such capitalising on cracks in a system constitutes *débronillardise*. Married, mid-forties, Martinican mother and money maven, Micheline, defines a *débronillard* as “someone smart, cunning, shrewd—they are people who know how to land on their feet” (Qtd. in Browne 102). It is a great compliment, Micheline notes, despite the unfavourable connotation. Professors, for example, who give undeclared

classes and work at night as chauffeurs exemplify *débrouillardise*^x or canniness. In the same spirit, given the indignity of slavery, slaves considered stealing as honorebel. The Martinican expression exculpates the *débrouillard*: “Débrouya pas péché” [Hustling is never a sin]. The French and Martinican terms do not contradict, but *débrouillards* carry “more muscle and nuance locally, working off the books in a cunning way” (Browne 101), as slaves did at night and on Sundays outside plantation work.

Local scholars associate Rabbit tales with African *débrouillardise*. Martinican psychiatrist, Franz Fanon, diagnoses these stories as “belong[ing] to the oral tradition of plantation Negroes. Therefore, it is relatively easy to recognise the Negro in his remarkably ironic and wry disguise as a Rabbit” (84).^x Unlike Anansi, Rabbit “continues to express the energy of the people who are proving their worth by making smart, self-interested economic choices” (Browne 120). Folklorist, Roger Abrahams, praises Rabbit fables for codifying hard-won truths and dramatising the rationale behind traditions.

Despite Rabbit’s admirable traits, however, he has, like Anancy, an Achilles’ heel. To corner *Compère Lapin* in his African or Caribbean hole, lower him Tarbaby or Rubber Girl! Despite “generally victorious outcomes of *Compère lapin*” (italics mine) (127), says Browne, once Bunny touches these sticky characters, the rest is history.^{xi} Bedaubed, Bunny bears bad beatings and banishment. Additionally, world over, via myths and cartoons, myriads know of Lagomorph’s embarrassing run against Turtle. That money comes like a turtle and goes like a rabbit expresses, at Bunny’s expense, how haste makes waste. Chameleon, on the other hand, excels where Rabbit and Anansi fail. Mathematically stated: “Chameleon > Rabbit + Anansi.”

The Chameleon paradigm in African, Caribbean, Western, and Asian fiction occupies the remaining discussion. Explored through plot narration and analysis, the fictional representations portray a palette of Chameleon attributes, under some of which Rabbit and Anansi can be subsumed. Secondly, this portion portrays Rabbit and Anansi as foils, and who say five before Goose-like chameleon.

Chameleon Defeats Anansi and Rabbit

To fully stop up Rabbit’s hole and cobweb Anansi from this Chameleon proposal are two tales: “How Chameleon Defeated Hare” and “Anansi and the Chameleon.” Both accounts recount a showdown of wits. These tales serve three purposes. In the first place, Chameleon successfully challenges his loreal nemeses, and vanquished them. Secondly, Chameleon’s victory in West Africa, Anansi’s kingly web ground, means a great deal. And finally, two other West African Chameleon tales, one with Anansi and the other with Stork, that never informed Caribbean folk imagination, aid in strengthening the Afro-Caribbean connection.

By out-thinking Anansi who out-thinks God, Chameleon, in this West African tale, “Anansi and the Chameleon,” earns another stripe as quintessential trickster. Anansi’s arrogance and wealth soar in the tale, “How Anansi Tricked God.” Still *a carry belly fi Anansi* [seeking vengeance on Anansi], God blesses rain on Chameleon’s crops while Anansi’s wither. Envious of Chameleon’s walk in high cotton, Spider spies out the lizard’s field. One morning, Anansi starts harvesting Chameleon’s crops. Chameleon drives away Anansi, but Spider capitalises on the lizard’s untraceable footsteps.^{xiii} Spider, bent on rapine, sues for possession in the tribal court and, by virtue of his irrefragable footprints on the land, gains proprietorship. But *sé kòd yanm ki maré yanm* [it is the climbing stem of yam that attaches the yam], or one can be entrapped in his own trap. The web expert should know the African expression.

Measure for measure, Chameleon retrieves his property by double-dealing. He excavates a deep, minute-appearing aperture covered with vines and flies, materials Chameleon fashion into a cloak that glitters in sunlight. By assenting to stuff the hole twice over with food, Anansi procures Chameleon’s scintillating cloak to gift the chief. One afternoon, a vine fractures, and away fly the flies, leaving an angry chief *au naturel!* *Ad interim*, Anansi futilely packs the little hole only to discover Chameleon’s chicanery. To add fuel to fire, the disgruntled chief, after losing his coat and temper, reinstates Chameleon’s field and dispossesses Anansi of his assets, as Spider yells yellow bloody murder. “O what a tangled web we weave...!” says the oldie but goodie.

The second West African folktale positions Chameleon among the oldest and wisest animals. In the cosmogony-explaining tale, “Chameleon and Stork,” the lizard stuns onlookers by claiming he

predates *la terra firma*. According to the antediluvian Chameleon, the congealing of liquid earth forces him to test the hardness of each spot before proceeding, hence accounting for his teetering movement.

The *mega-savant* is also apatetic, since he camouflages to vanquish Hare. African scholar, Ciarunji Chesaina, recounts an Embu folktale^{xiii} redolent of the Eurocentric story, “How Turtle Defeated Hare.” “How Chameleon Defeated Hare” privileges ingenuity over brawn. Snail-paced chameleon challenges Hare over a beautiful girl. The Hare lover, aware of the antagonism, declares a race to give the advantage to the Hare. Chameleon mounts Hare’s tail to avoid the schlep and, with his Lilliputian stature, remains undetected. Hare hares on, eyeing victory. He looks back and checks: “Are you bringing the rear” (101)? Chameleon’s faint and affirmative answer sends the Energiser Bunny going and going and going. All this time, Chameleon is neck and neck with Bunny. On arrival at the girl’s home, Hare scampers to the designated victory seat. Upon flumping, a voice interrupts: “Take care not to sit on me my friend” (101). Chameleon triumphs, while the March Hare, the also-ran, almost pulls out his hare in disbelief. Despite running fast, it is as if Hare is stuck fast. Chameleon ends up taking the girl’s hand and breath away with his tactical acumen. Surely, this account is not responsible for Hare’s harelip.^{xiv} Chameleon’s last laugh at Bunny illustrates that the weak may access seemingly inaccessible desiderata through cunning. A pangram summarises both stories: Chameleon did outfox Rabbit and outweave Nanzi to jump as quintessential trickster figure in myth.

The story of *Compères* Chameleon and Hare irradiates Chameleon’s brilliance, as a sluggard crafts a swift defeat. Hare is not hare-brained, since he “is the main character in African trickster stories,” notably, “Hyena and Hare” and “The Lady of the Hare” combined with diverse French- and English-speaking Caribbean Rabbit tales. The dice, nonetheless, always favour Chameleon. Here, Hare’s unchangeable hair cannot compeere to chameleon’s diverse wear: “Chameleon is slow but cunning. Just as he does in his natural habitat, he camouflages his intentions to survive among those who are bigger and faster than himself” (Chesaina 32). Chameleon’s superior brilliance over Rabbit and Anancy gives the blue-ribbon lizard the critical edge.

The colour-changing lizard, a one-man band so far, now becomes a community leader. Chameleon’s community spirit distinguishes him from Rabbit or Anansi’s one-animal band. In African tradition, Chameleon parallels Lion’s majestic portrayal in Western anthropology. Kenyan playwright, Moses Omondi Oinya, sets the stage in his play for a showdown for kingship of the jungle. Lion and Chameleon, in cahoots with other animals, challenge King Hyena and Rat. Hyena and his hordes retreat to summon Bees. The insects sting Chameleon’s coalition camp into confusion. Chameleon’s imminent capitulation reverses with the rain, giving the lizard a red-letter day, as his enemies scatter in droves. Comparably, the unanticipated weather gives the embattled French cold feet at Waterloo and, like Napoleon, away run Hyena and Rat. Chameleon sets up his Lion Mound, blows the victory trumpet and their minds, as he declares: “I’ve brought the rain that the battle be won” (87). Eeks Rat: “Run for your lives before death arrives” (88)! Although fortune favours the lizard’s allies, they appreciate that hanging together prevents them from hanging separately.

In his aristeia, Chameleon, the opportunist and pretender, capitalises on the rain to reign and rein in his enemies. Oinya’s folktale corroborates an African superstition that attributes rainfall to chameleon. The commander of rain wields god-like powers in African folklore, since he interfaces with Chiuta.^{xv} In fact, Rat’s squeal—to hurtle “for your lives before death arrives”—evokes rain-summoning rituals with animal bodies. In Ratho Kroonkop, South Africa, on the authority of online magazine, *Archaeology*, the discovered remains of some 30,000 animals at a rain-making ritual site indicate that “the animals may have been sacrificed for their fat, believed to have a supernatural potency, that would empower the shaman to make the request for rain.” The shaman, the only person allowed in these rites, is a rain-invoking ritual specialist. The animal characters allude to the cyclical nature of life and death—that one produces the other. Sings monkey: “He who brings rain brings life... Chameleon brings rain, brings life” (88). This deductive gibber serves to lionise Chameleon who marches in on Lion’s shoulders. The tale foregrounds power reversal through cunning and teamwork, a combination lacking in Spider and Rabbit. As the African proverb notes: “If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” Unlike selfish Rabbit and Anansi—daily tricksters—Chameleon, a long-term visionary, enlists support, secures kingship, and rules with cunning.

Unlike Anansi and Rabbit who identify, like Robin Hood, with the oppressed, Chameleon's colours encompass rulers also. Harri Englund likens dissembling in Malawian politicians to Chameleons. His work combs Malawi's political landscape and finds no Hares in government and opposition, only political chameleons. He recounts several cases of governmental underhandedness. For instance, Malawian Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Phoya, advocated a third term in office for Muluzi (president). The Justice Minister forwarded new rhetoric to justify old ambitions for absolute power. He highlighted an archaic constitution begging reform, citing the current two-terms-in-office restriction as restrictive. His less-than-democratic, techno-legal argumentation, relies on section 83(3) of the constitution that, given the two-term stipulation, "the majority will be denied their right to free political choice" (17). Phoya cunningly utilised democracy as rhetoric—the unflinching respect for the constitution and will of the people—to achieve autocracy. States Englund: "Chameleons may have changed their power but not their motives" (17). The African proverb agrees: "The chameleon can only change its colour but never change its skin." These opportunistic chameleons manipulated the political system of reform so that the hero becomes the villain, and the villain becomes the hero.

Englund compares shifting political allegiance in Malawi to Chameleon's changing colours. Chameleon, unlike Rabbit and Spider, identifies with both dominator and dominated. Chameleon furnishes the oppressed with a survival stratagem, while offering oppressors hegemony-perpetuating tricks. Especially important is this in the Caribbean with ruler and ruled coming from the same pool of people, and yet, like Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Barbados, the colonizer has greater historical footing. Malawian chameleon politics, one of the primary grounds from which the lizard trope can be harnessed, "search out new ways to lure others into pacts and submission. One changes one's colours like the chameleon in order to outwit the autocrat and his coterie" (18). After the first genuinely competitive multiparty elections in 1994, Malawians experienced several bewildering shifts in their leaders' loyalties. Englund cites three mutually supportive opposition parties in that year. Supporters of AFORD^{xvi} and UDF^{xvii} unapologetically condemned the MCP, ^{xviii} which transitioned to democracy. Chihana, president of AFORD, dubbed MCP a party of "death and darkness, swearing that [he] would never support their policies" (12). However, volatile politics created an interim coalition government, and Chihana, who could no longer afford to ally with UDC, shockingly crossed the floor to MCP.

Among the oracular publications execrating Malawian totalitarianism is Jack Mapanje's *Of Chameleon and Gods*, for which he became a prisoner of conscience in Mikuyu Maximum Security Prison. His collection features animal metaphors as a poetic voice for fellow exiled inmates and victims of Banda's absolutism. In his poetry, by engaging animals, which are lower beings, Mapanje accentuates the innocence, innocuousness, and victimisation of the disadvantaged. His work highlights the hypocrisy and injustice in rulers who fleece those they liberated from colonialism. His messages brim with allusions and caricatures of the new elite surrounded by apologists and sycophants in a manor comparable to the pigs of *Animal Farm*. By criticising the beasts of England's *A Democracy of Chameleons* and, by extension, beasts of every land and clime, Mapanje's satire lays bare the incompetence, fickleness, and untrustworthiness of language-twisting squealers in a Napoleon-like government.

Mapanje's *Of Chameleon and Gods* appeals to local culture as resistance by invoking oral praise poetry to articulate ambiguities. This enshrined cultural production (oral praise) normalises the constructive critique of chiefs. Prior to his imprisonment, he scrutinised the new praise poems during Banda's regime and found lacking "the element of constructive criticism of either the leadership or the society" (Vail and White 286). By restoring the element of critique, Mapanje assumed the well-embraced, enigmatic figure of the *imbongi* or oral praise poet. Vail and White identify ambivalence in the *imbongi's* role as praise singer and critic. As singer, the *imbongi* extols the king in songs and poems that celebrate the nation's accomplishments. As critic and cultural judge, the *imbongi* chastises the chief for sidestepping the nation's laws and traditions. The poet also criticises by covert omission of praise, and checks and balances the ruling authority by representing the "opinions of the ruled" (28). He parallels a newspaper cartoonist whose witty images and expressions ridicule distinguished societal figures. Criticising the king unearths the *imbongi's* "greatest scope for wit." However, criticising royalty must never appear vulgar.^{xix}

From oral praise poetry, Mapanje extracted techniques that praise and criticise the ruler, while refraining from vulgarities. He recognised that alternative metaphors of denunciation issued from the same esteemed oral traditions consecrated for praise. In effect, “a traditional authority could be undermined by a traditional aesthetic” (Vail and White 298). Mapanje located ironies and metaphors in oral praise songs and poetry to deride the powerful. Invoking a metaphor conjures mimicry, and so riddling defines all metaphors. It is the Caribbean’s dual identity reality of colonizer and colonized that renders Chameleon a more suitable trope than Anansi and Rabbit.

Mapanje tailors chameleon creation myths to expose a banda lies. In “If Chiuta were Man,” God, and not Chameleon, gets a life-giving message, which he never delivers. God’s unreliability equates him to politicians or imperfect men: “This transposition of gods to politicians indicates that the gods in the title are no longer of the heavens alone but include the politicians who lord on others as emperors, believing they hold powers of life and death over their subjects” (Chimombo 105). This likely interpretation of Mapanje’s title recalls Banda’s self-proclamation as saviour, one who rescues to plunder.^{xx} Chimombo remarks decontextualisation as a chief strategy Mapanje employs to undermine Banda.^{xxi} An author may select a literary cast *a ext* in future or in the past. He may decide to describe the present, but with animal characters. In this context, the author can, if accused of dissidence, claim to be writing about wildlife.

Unlike Anansi and Rabbit, Chameleon gives birth to other revolutionaries as a means of continuing resistance in different shapes and forms. Chimombo esteems another type of Chameleon, the Kalimombe, the fourth martyr, or is it the third one? The poet engages this larger type of Chameleon as a symbol of life for death. Kalimombe bursts into laughter, song, and poetry, then bursts open. Evoking Kalimombe awakens the well-received, mythological Chameleon that laughs and plummets earthbound to rupture her womb to give birth.^{xxii} Thus, from a death-fall issues life. Chimombo relates: “The real Kalimombe enfolded us fondly; a pincer leg each session, before our eyes, she hatched a new kind of chameleon.” But Kalimombe vents niggling internal feelings, and opts for martyrdom. Her death gives birth to continued resistance symbolised by her new offspring.

The Asian Chameleon

Complementing African representations of folk and political chameleons is the Asian chameleon. Asia, the only chameleon-fossil-producing continent outside Europe and Africa treasures chameleon as metaphor. In his dissertation, “Chameleon: A Story of Adaptation,” Thuy Do enlists the “cultural chameleon” to read the adjustment and adaptive processes of theatre ownership models in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. His paper examines how shifting from a subsidised and centrally planned economy to a socialist-oriented market economy shaped the management and evolutionary survival of theatre companies in Vietnam from the mid-1980s to the present.

Like Chameleon’s easy habituation, theatre companies, through constant restructuring, adapted to a transitioning environment, redolent of Antilleans after slavery. As the Vietnamese saying goes: “Cái khó ló cái khôn” [Adversity is the mother of wisdom]. The three theatres targeted “have gradually developed into more open and flexible multiple institutions, jointly mobilising public and private owners and resources in some aspects or at different periods” (541). Tran Huu Trang Cai Luong Theatre, for example, mobilised private resources and collaborative efforts to save the cai luong arts,^{xxiii} thus generating greater income with minimal government funding. The dissertator ties the successful evolution and adjustment of theatre ownership models to the “duality in the market, the ambiguity, and the experimental essence of a transition period” (540). He notes that long before the government’s formal socialisation implementation policy, the three theatres engaged in shrewd government-private partnership models as a socialisation initiative. He considers decentralisation, empowerment, and flexibility indispensable to the development of these theatre companies. Asia’s cultural chameleon ultimately identifies benefits in adaptation.

Yusuke Yonezu’s fleshes out similar advantages, and privileges reader intervention in uncoiling narrative. In the children story, as Leon the chameleon seeks out his friend, Carmen, he camouflages from Snake, Wolf, and Crocodile. The lizard also changes colour to attract a delectable

female chameleon. Within *Chameleon's* simplicity lies a brilliant concept—the author creatively incorporates the reader in the unfolding of the text by his playful, hands-on apparatus of colour dials and pull-tabs manipulated to facilitate chameleon's escape and to showcase chameleon's colour range. Chameleon, at liberty to display any colour of the rainbow, mimics even the barcode colour on the back cover of *Chameleon*. Yonezu's work, captivating to little eyes, reinforces this thesis' playfulness and attention to reader participation.

Zheng Yangwen assesses reasons countries polarise China. He examines the lizard's habitat, and adapts his findings to the polarisation of China revealed in these words of critic, Raymond Dawson: "Thus China has at one time or another been thought to be rich and poor, advanced and backward, wise and stupid, beautiful and ugly, strong and weak, honest and deceitful" (2). After tweaking the saying, "all roads lead to Rome," to get "all roads lead to China," Yangwen explains Dawson's list of China's contradictory qualities via chameleon's ability "to change colour depending on its environment and needs" (Yangwen 31). The chameleon continually changes colour and character; pink, blue, red, orange, green, black, brown, light blue, yellow, turquoise, and purple all constitute the chameleon's colours, which Yangwen shows may express anger, mating, socialisation, or a different mood. Fittingly, the creature tropes China's contradictions.

The Western Chameleon

Unlike Africa's folk Chameleon, human Chameleons line the streets of western fiction, with a focus on adaptation and simulation. This true-to-life fiction, *Chameleon Street*, features William Douglas Street Jr. as human Chameleon. Through impersonation of noted societal figures (lawyers, doctors, reporters, athletes), Street, a school dropout and man in the street, self-actualises. Street smartly disguises, for example, as a surgeon and performs thirty-six successful hysterectomies. In essence, the protagonist takes the back street and mimics his way onto easy street. In the process, this 'mimic man' (popularly adapted from Bhabha's work to read Caribbean reality) works both sides of the street to copy legitimate ways to fool a discriminatory social framework. Street, in this conventionally negative role of copycat, re-invents himself, protagonises, and is now streets ahead of his contemporaries.

Human Chameleons master dialectic contexts in Mark Burnell's novel. In an era of underground terrorism, Stephanie Patrick, Mark Burnell's protagonist, dresses the rock-hardened role of an assassin, Petra Reuter. Her surname (a play on the news agency) evokes expediency in information acquisition. Stephanie metamorphoses into a petrifying hit woman, then reverts to the common-named, attention-deflecting Stephanie Patrick. She retires comfortably in one of France's suburban villages. Her former employer, for whom she worked as Petra, threatens exposure if she refuses to hunt a crime lord. Liberatory action necessitates chameleonic deployment in reverting to Petra. As Petra/ Stephanie trails Koba—a Russian crime lord—and his KGB members, she realises that he too is a chameleon of sorts, masquerading his criminality through 'legitimate' business deals.

Richard Hains attributes evasiveness to human Chameleons. In a cut-throat economy, protagonist and silk-stocking head bond trader, Jon Phillips, eyes one final, pre-retirement deal with a Russian kingpin. Their money laundering plot crashes *tout de suite* when news of a cardiac arrest of the president of the Stock Exchange surfaces. As stakeholders rush to salvage their failed investment, Jon becomes the target of a manhunt. Death on the heels of Jon forces him into evasion. He travels across continents under different names, and fakes his death twice. He falls into a repetitive cycle: he hides, he kills his enemies, he goes back into hiding.

Another form of evasion, self-deceit, occurs in José Eduardo Agualusa's novel,^{xxiv} and is a serious bone of contention for Antilleans facing the question of who they really are. Characters rely on chameleon tactics as therapy for colonial trauma in Agualusa's novel. The characters, unaware of being chameleons, live an illusion as reality. The protagonist, Félix Ventura, uniquely trades memories, reconstructs old ones, or 'supplies' one where none is present. He targets those with bright prospects but no historical roots during the *longueur* after colonisation. Ventura seeks to right past wrongs or exorcise painful or hazy memories, making him a 'seller of pasts.' Purchasers acquire his ware, a new reality, under the veneer of a psycho-historical restitution; in reality, they are who they are not.

In Agualusa's work (in plural form), in addition to the people, both protagonist and lizard narrator function as chameleons. The seller of fake pasts qualifies as human chameleon. He capitalises on 'cracks' in people's history to entrap them. In war-ravaged Angola, the psychological depth of the emotional scarring by colonialism makes people yearn to extricate bitter pasts as a postcolonial response. Desire to mend the colonial breach clouds reason, leading those in desperation to accept any cosmetic solution such as masquerading.^{xxv} The impostor 'authenticates' his constructed family lines with 'proper' documentation; he manages to escape the notice of sinking people clutching at straws. The lizard narrator also evokes chameleon when he alternates between dream and reality. The gecko in Ventura's house previously had a human form and, through dreams, becomes a boy to communicate with Ventura. While the protagonist prefabricates people's pasts, the memory of the omniscient lizard narrator as incarnated boy evokes the profoundest of pasts.

Piers Anthony, like Agualusa, treats Chameleon as externally influenced. Chameleon, Anthony's deuteragonist, displays three personae that each fluctuates with monthly cycles. The protagonist, Bink, returns to the magical kingdom of Xanth with chameleon. Chameleon's intelligence varies inversely with her changing beauty. Wynne, Fanchon, and Dee constitute chameleon's manifestations. Wynne's winsome appearance and stupidity contrast with the dastardly ugly intellectual, Fanchon, rendering Chameleon unrecognisable to Bink. Similar to *The Three Faces of Eve*,^{xxvi} external indicators affect chameleon's changes considered unsuitable by the suitors she considers suitable. Chameleon accepts the advice of Humphrey, the magician, to settle in Mundania with Bink, where she becomes the average-looking, average-intelligent Dee. Such a trope would, again, be fitting for an Antillean with vested interest in different nations.

Different from Anthony's work is Jordan Taylor Brown's autobiographical novel which manipulates opposing spaces of the character, Chemille, and the author. Brown and her protagonist both suffer from a distressing disease that threatens to derail the teen writer. The teen writer's sad mental state marginalises her. Her social withdrawal symptoms ironically attract attention instead of deflecting it, causing her to communicate by means of the pen.^{xxvii} By means of the pen, the mute child author reconciles real-world, psychological anguish, thereby celebrating literature and the power of the novel. The novel acts as veil and medium in capturing public attention and articulating feelings rendered mute in reality. In reality, the author, muteable in nature, shifts to the empowering novelistic world, for, only there in the double of Chemille can Brown best articulate her disquiet. Her disquiet and how she handles it privilege literary discourse over face-to-face communication to address people's perceptions of her. Her response in the end, through Chemille, dispels stereotypes of her being self-centred, mute, or lesbian. The autobiographical novel, in a similar way, starting from Joseph Zobel's work, *La rue cases nègres* and others like Hodge's *Krik Krak Monkey*, are indispensable in how Caribbean author's shift, via their alter-egos, from the real world to the world of narrative.

Amanda Leamon employs the sexual chameleon to paint boundary-transgressing narrative sexual doubles. Her title^{xxviii} signals the negotiation of primary and secondary colours to interpret sexual identity in different Cendrarsian works. The gender spectrum in *Moravagine*, for example, highlights Cendrars' male double, the eponymous and effeminate Moravagine. The sexually neutral Raymond La Science occupies the middle of the spectrum. By contrast, Mascha, Moravagine's lover, represents an all-consuming female sexual passion and maternity. Moravagine's *double féminin* radiates masculine intellectual characteristics, even as the author associates him with a female attribute, the 'vagine' in Moravagine. Another recognisable avatar, Dan Yack, in the 2002 novel *Dan Yack*, exhibits sexual ambiguity similar to another textual double, Mireille. At times, Cendrars, as autobiographical narrator, appears *en travestie*, kaleidoscopically navigating homosexuality, hermaphroditism, and androgyny, issues at the heart of Caribbean sexuality. In his final novel, Cendrars walks in the shade of female protagonist, Thérèse Eglantine. Leamon sees a "theatrical parade of multicoloured, multifaceted characters, most of which are variations on the male Cendrarsian persona" (4). Cendrars' colour schemes invoke his love and passion, sexual difference, deviation, obsession, and fetishism.

The short film, *Scars of Chameleon*, demonstrates how survival may fortify patriarchal hegemony, a reality not found in the Spider and Rabbit tropes bent on undermining the status quo. Nina, the protagonist, suffers banishment from her North American Indian tribe for transgressing native hunting laws. Engaging in *shikar*—hunting for sport—incenses tribal spirits, who punish the village by inflicting unusually big, black blotches on Nina's face. The chief invokes the gods, and

attributes the facial defect to the banned practice of *shikar*, and excommunicates her. While in exclusion, Nina kills a white soldier and wounds another. Instantaneously, the scars heal to express divine approval against enemy soldiers. After redeeming herself, she heads home; but the chief refuses her reinstatement request. Strangely, the villagers' visages now reflect similar facial blotches, signifying divine displeasure for their degenerate actions. With her normal face, she now becomes the abnormality. Nina's dejection and rejection lead her to disfigure her face with charcoal. She eventually gains acceptance only after embracing the scars that may go with being a chameleon, in effect bolstering the regime.

The Caribbean Chameleon

The Caribbean Chameleon search uncovers three relevant fictions by Makeda Silvera, Jane Bryce, and Lawrence Scott. Silvera starts by jettisoning the stereotypes, "Jamaica no problem" and "everything irie/ okay," to recount untold miseries that force inhabitants to craft their way past immigration onto aircrafts: "Temper rackle/ flare in dis small island. Sufferation pon di land. Fasten seat belt. Iron bird tek off" (27). Silvera targets racial discrimination as topmost socio-political concern for black Caribbean-Canadian expatriates, and suggests dissembling and prevarication as chameleon tactics in fight prejudice.

Although set in Jamaica, "Caribbean Chameleon" describes Caribbean migration to Uncle Sam, since "no betta no deh a John shop" [there is nothing better locally]. This colonial legacy that "the noble is generally elsewhere" (891) plays out in Silvera's work. The protagonist, an anonymous black Jamaican Canadian resident, "come back a yard/ home fi two weeks." Unbeknownst to her, several jagged rocks cut at her *en route* from the Norman Manley (NM) International Airport to the Persoan International Airport. On arrival at the NM airport, she sees many who *waan run off* [wants to migrate illegally]. The dissimulating crowd comprises gunmen, *mules* [drug-carriers], and *dons* [area leaders]. One woman sweet-talks her son and his grandmother, promising to "tell immigration [that it] is holiday. [I will] send for little boy and older woman when life tek off/ improve" (28). Her actions perpetuate the well-understood Jamaican reality of 'barril pickney' [barrel children], who survive off goods sent by emigrating parents. Next in line, a young man, a rogue, lyingly claims he is visiting his mother. In effect, he yearns to resume *badmanism* in Canada (29).

Apart from dissembling, disillusioned Jamaicans in Canada, such as Rastafarians, adapted upon realizing that *dem swap black dog fi monkey* [six of one, half dozen of the other].^{xxix} Many, including *di natty dem*,^{xxx} migrated during the social unrest in the 1960s and 1970s in Jamaica. This exodus still foments the stereotype that "nutten/ nothing local nuh/ is good." Lillian Allen, poet, dubs: "I came to Canada and found the doors of opportunity well-guarded" (260).

The black protagonist in black, polka-dot pant suit does not suit Canadians, who humiliate her. She thus exiles herself in Jamaica for two weeks after acclimatising to a menial Canadian job frowned upon locally. The woman returns home, because "di Canadian cole a walk and talk in her skin" [the Canadian cold is unbearable]. The unkind weather contrasts with her tropical sunshine island, where she drinks her last ambrosia, a cool jelly/ coconut—the *aqua vitae* locals say "washes the heart"—before facing Immigration's cold discrimination. At the Canadian airport, the woman's double blackness (complexion and wear) raises suspicions of illegality, as Immigration doubts her ability to vacation in a hotel, as only whites, Immigration say, may pay a hotel stay. Like others before and after her, she must find a clever way to stay in Canada.

Jane Bryce's characters chameleonise to negotiate local and foreign culture. Bryce suffers a real-life identity crisis, being Tanzanian-born-British. As British protectorate, Tanzania afforded Bryce a British passport. Her father opted for British over Tanzanian citizenship and suffered deportation under Africanisation policy. She later migrated to Britain, suffering alienation although being a white woman with an English accent. The African experience she had had, had had an indelible impact on her. Says the 'black woman in white skin' in an interview: "I'm driven by a feeling stronger than I can control to describe myself as African... I've maintained my relationship with the continent and built my entire life and career around it" (Ede, "The Face of Africa in the Caribbean").

Bryce's crisis surfaces in her protagonist, a white girl longing for belonging. The character must adapt to parental strictures and a demanding Muslim servant, a duo that compound the white

child's life in the Caribbean. The servant's loathing for a tree chameleon baffles her, until she discovers African chameleon stereotypes. Despite having negative African connotations, the totemic chameleon, similar to Rorie's pet, signifies adaptation for Bryce's protagonist who juggles black and white Nigerian friends. White gatherings with a nimety of toothsome food lure her to the British Embassy, while her impoverished black associates furnish memorable camaraderie. In effect, she runs with the foxes and hunts with the hounds.

Despite her strong African roots, Bryce selects Chameleon, not Anansi and Rabbit, to fictionalise childhood experiences. No doubt, Chameleon provides colours to match the ambivalence of a white-bodied, black-minded author and protagonist. Again, chameleon's colour dragnet outcasts Anansi and Rabbit's black-fixedness. While superstitions paint the lizard badly, his diverse colours paint over the stigma. Painted differently, unlike Anansi's dirty linen in the Caribbean, chameleon sails under false colours in the region. Recall that Bryce's protagonist embraces the lizard; it is the African servant who frowns. Chameleon, therefore, has the potential to constitute a bibelot for Caribbean literary exploration. The lizard that identifies with oppressor and oppressed carries wider appeal for a Jekyll and Hyde Caribbean context. Like Hekyll and Jekyll, identical yet different anthropomorphic magpies, known for calmly outwitting foes, chameleon alternates colours for agency. In the third fiction, Chameleon rhetoric serves to mislead readers. "Chameleon," Lawrence Scott's short story, camouflages the effeminate and transvestite tendencies of Monty, the protagonist, thereby detouring both characters and readers. Monty gets his name after General Bernard Law Montgomery, a renowned British commanding field marshal of the Allied Forces in World War II. Monty's sickness-marred maturation disrupts his father's Montgomerian expectations. The eponymous Monty imitates Montgomery's primping. The protagonist belongs to the Monagas family, a *clin d'oeil* to Scott's novel that features a similar-named family of transvestites. In "Chameleon," through an autodiegetic narrator, Scott enlightens the reader to Monty's interest in female attire, and not the female body. His father castigates him years earlier, not for his voyeuristic tendency in spying on a demoiselle bathing, but for craving her dress. Monty thus deludes his father. Even more importantly, Monty's actions delude the reader, who incorrectly labels a transvestite a *voyeur*. Via his story, then, Scott derides heterocentrism in the reader, who wrongly presumes that Monty stares through heterosexual lens.

Chameleon, from Asia, the West and Africa, presents a critical trope for the Caribbean's variegated and changing context. Anansi and Rabbit, though established metaphors, tend towards monolithic, selfish and reductionist resolutions. This paper sought to introduce Chameleon as a possible alternative to reading a whole range of issues in the Caribbean, such as sexuality, mimicry, ambivalence, changeability, subterfuge and survival by looking at the metaphor's function in three Caribbean-impacting continents, and explain how it already functions within the Caribbean.

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End Notes

ⁱThe term literally means ‘earth lion.’

ⁱⁱSee “Caribbean Chameleon” in Makeda Silvera’s *Her Head a Village*, Jane Bryce’s *Chameleon: Short Stories*, and Lawrence Scott’s “Chameleon” in *Ballad for the New World and Other Stories*.

ⁱⁱⁱLike Chameleon’s camouflage, several wordplays remain unitalicised, blending in with other words.

^{iv}The title of the July 24, 2012 article, “Tear down the Spirit of Anancyism,” says it all.

^vOne can find these Spider stories all over the web.

^{vi}Does not care.

^{vii}Well, no one knows to this day what the duck got, but the statement means “getting what one deserves.”

^{viii}The anthropologist’s work, *Creole Economics: Caribbean Cunning under the French Flag* (2004), comprehensively examines folktale as resistance.

^{ix}Jamaicans tell the anecdote of three men vying for a job. The employer poses the same question to each: “What is one and one”? The first candidate answers: “Two.” The second responds: “Eleven,” while the third says: “Any numba dat yuh want.” The third respondent, a superior *débrouillard* to the second candidate, gets the job.

^xHis work, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), assesses the psychology of racism and colonial domination.

^{xi}Davis’ *Stories Rabbit Tell* (2003) tells of Rabbit’s “foolish tendency to get himself into sticky situations” (157).

^{xii}Mythology ascribes this non-traceability to the creature’s delicate steps.

^{xiii}The Embu belong to the Bantu people, who inhabit the county of Embu in Kenya. The Embu speak Bantu Embu as their maternal language.

^{xiv}Myth holds that Hare, so accustomed to laughing at the animals he tricks, guffaws to the point of splitting his lips.

^{xv}Chiuta, Malawian supreme deity, is also their rain God.

^{xvi}Alliance for Democracy.

^{xvii}United Democratic Front.

^{xviii}Malawi Congress Party.

^{xix}Mapanje’s multiple dense images endorsed the sophistication of the oral mode of literature, rubbishing presumptions of primitiveness rampant in the early 1970s. By the same token, writers across the Caribbean, such as Chamoiseau and Confiant, approach Creole as a language capable of high rhetoric.

^{xx}Banda landed at Chileka Airport on July 6, 1958 after the Nyasaland African Congress summoned him to break Nyasaland from British yoke. Malawians memorialised the event in song. Two months after political independence from Britain, Malawi plunged into a political crisis, and Banda seized power. He inaugurated a thirty-year benevolent dictatorship, the likes of which Malawi had never seen nor will probably ever see again.

^{xxi}A situation where the “setting may be displaced along the parameters of time and space (geography), reality and meaning” (Ross 171).

^{xxii}Firstly, the creature symbolises “creativity, artistic solitude, and fecundity,” and represents martyrdom seen in a creation myth that has her falling from a tree and dying as she pours from her innards a stream of creatures that swim, fly, and walk, including man himself” (Roscoe 96).

^{xxiii}A form of modern folk opera in Vietnam. Cai luong arts blend southern Vietnamese folk songs, classical music, “hát tuồng” (a classical theatre form based on Chinese opera), and modern spoken drama. ^{xxiv}The translated version is *The Book of Chameleons* (2004).

^{xxv}Masquerade is a psychoanalytical tool. Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* explains masquerade in formerly colonised people.

^{xxvi}This 1957 fiction addresses multiple personalities in individuals suffering from Dissociative Identity Disorder. Dr. Luther, the psychiatrist Eve White (the mousy, unassuming mother and wife) visits, unearths the hidden personality of Eve Black (the racy and wild extrovert). The latter personality demonstrates conscious awareness of the former, but the opposite does not hold true. Under hypnosis, a third but more stable, in-between personality of Jane materialises. This final personality remembers everything and amalgamates all three into one. These multiple personalities emerge in the protagonist as stimuli to a host of uncontrollable, stressful situations in her life.

^{xxvii}Her condition, social anxiety disorder (SAD), is one that provokes fear of public humiliation, a fear that may preclude social contact with others. The disorder produces tension-heightening symptoms for the sufferer. Symptoms include trembling, sweating, blushing, stuttering, fainting, bladder control problems, or a mind that goes blank. Victims literally experience fear comparable to a child watching a horror movie. The fear to speak renders them as good as mute.

^{xxviii}*Shades of Sexuality: Colors and Sexual Identity in the Novels of Blaise Cendrars.*

^{xxix}Also called dreadlocks and 'natty' (due to their knatted hair), this group is a Jamaican socio-religious movement that started in the 1930s. Rastafarians view Ras Tafari, Ethiopian Emperor, as supreme leader. They oppose a world formed from European domination, the Babylonish antitype.