

# [The tormentors and he uses his powers](https://assignbuster.com/the-tormentors-and-he-uses-his-powers/)

[](https://assignbuster.com/)[Art & Culture](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/art-n-culture/)

The SlaveMentality of the Haitian RevolutionTheKingdom of This World byAlejo Carpentier expresses the history of Haiti before, during, and after theHaitian Revolution as seen by its main character, Ti Noel, a slave on M. Lenormand de Mézy’s plantation in Santo Domingo. Carpentier portrays themultiple revolts making up the Haitian Revolution from the point of view of theslaves.

He explores the cultural and religious practices that inform theslave’s drive to be free of slavery and oppression. The main goal of theEuropeans during slavery was to keep their slaves, under their control and awayfrom the thought of insurrection. The characters in The Kingdom of This World go against traditional representations ofslaves. Traditional history displays slaves as victims and Europeans as havinga superior mindset and therefore acting accordingly, but Carpentier’s gives adifferent outlook by representing these slaves as ones who demonstrate thepower and the will to rebel against the oppression being placed upon with theleadership of their revolutionaries.

Macandal is seen as the mainrevolutionary for the rest of the slaves. He announced himself as the “ Bocor ofMilot,” which is a sorcerer or priest of the Haitian vodou religion (Carpentier26). Macandal believed that he is supposed to free his people from their whitetormentors and he uses his powers to help him do so. The result of this mentalityis the development of a ruthless regime in which the oppressed become theoppressors, a period of rebellion.

During this time, slaves had no right to “ appealin court, had few or no property rights defended by the courts, could not signlegally enforceable contracts, did not pay taxes, were maintained illiterate bysocial policy, and were not regarded as objects of religious institutions thatkept records” (Stinchcombe). For most slaves, a lack of so many rights took atoll on their outlook on life. They felt helpless and stuck in their unfair anddangerous situations. But Macandal was resilient and he devised a plan topoison the masters and their livestock from many plantations in hopes ofkilling not only the livestock but the plantation owners and their families aswell. He disappeared as his plan worked and “ cows, oxen, steers, horses, andsheep were dying by the hundreds” and as time went on the poison continued tomake its way through the town, “ decimating families and wiping out grownups andchildren” (Carpentier 29). When the slave owners finally caught on to thesource of the poisoning, they set out to find Macandal but were unsuccessfulfor years. Although they were unsuccessful, Macandal visited the plantation often” with wings one day, spurs another, galloping orcrawling, he had made himself master of the courses of the underground streams, the caverns of the seacoast, and the treetops, and now ruled the whole island” to make sure that the other slaves were still hopeful (Carpentier 36).

Finally, after four yearsMacandal was captured and the masters held a huge ceremony displaying his execution. Little did they know that the slaves and Macandal had a plan. Macandal who wasbound by ropes and ties transformed into a mosquito and the restraints becameuseless, the slave owners were “ completely helpless … against a man chrismed bythe great Loas” (Carpentier 45). When Macandalescaped from his death sentence, his people were so joyous they failed to see thathe was recaptured and successfully put to death. Macandal lived on in the mindsof his people as a symbol of resilience and admiration. From Macandal theslaves had learned that they are the active agents in their own liberation, andthat they are not just victims of slavery. His people gained strength anddetermination from his example.

Bouckman and TiNoel follow in Macandal’s footsteps and continue to fight for the liberation ofthe slaves. Bouckman plays a prominent role in society by also acting as arevolutionary. Bouckmantells the slaves that “ The white men’s God orders the crime. Our gods demandvengeance from us.

They will guide our arms and give us help. Destroy the imageof the white man’s God who thirsts for our tears; let us listen to the cry offreedom within ourselves” (Carpentier 67). Bouckman tries to again cause anuprising among the slaves. He preaches to them trying to explain to them theirworth and the duty that they have as the oppressed in his eyes. In a societywhere slaves were not represented fairly it was even more important to defendone’s rights, or to “ defend one’s practical freedom by using other more or lesslegal liberties, such as emigration, rebellion, or the right to duel”(Stinchcombe). This was all that these slaves had. They weren’t able to receivejustice in the way that the whites during this time did. Through Bouckman, Carpentier ties European and African religion to the issues of enslavement and independence.

The slave’s religious beliefs play a huge role in their decision to rebelagainst their enslavement. Like Macandal, Bouckman is a powerful leader, but herelies on the faith that Macandal has instilled in the slaves in order to leadthem to rebellion. Bouckman’s rebellion however, did not rely on secrecy.

It isa very brutal approach which uses violence causing the slaves to follow by ambushingthe masters in their homes with weapons, murdering and raping the familymembers and burning their property. Expanding upon the foundation put in placeby Macandal’s rebellion and the failure of the masters to notice the will ofthe slaves to be free, Bouckman raises the stakes with this violent revolution. From the standpoint of the enslaved at this point, the only way to carry out aneffective revolution in efforts to end oppression and slavery is brutally.

Bouckman’suprising ends with his execution, “ green and open- mouthed, already crawlingwith worms on the very spot where Macandal’s flesh had become stinking ashes”(Carpentier 70). The extermination of the black community is called. This is alow point for the slave population as many of their own are killed. Lenormand de Mezy makes surehis slaves are released, including Ti Noel, with plans to sell them in theslave markets in Cuba. After Ti Noel hasbeen won and moved to a new plantation, he saves enough money to buy hisfreedom. Throughout his life, Ti Noel desires nothing but freedom.

When he is aslave, he has so much built up animosity towards his masters. As a free man, TiNoel returns to his homeland looking to experience a completely different life. However, he unfortunately finds that the abolishment of slavery as he knew itdoes not mean an end of his suffering or enforced labor. He returns to find” Prisoners… as he observed that the custodians were Negroes, but that theworkers were too” (Carpentier 107).

Under the rule of the black King HenriChristophe, Ti Noel finds himself back as a slave. Ti Noel feels as thoughslavery under a fellow black man is much worse than when it was Lenormand deMezy. Ti Noel escapes and returns to the former plantation of Lenormand de Mezyfor some time and then later returns to the city to find it ruled by HenriChristophe’s regime. The slaves again began to plan a rebellion and during thechanging of the guard had come in and “ shots were fired into the air” (Carpentier137). When King Henri’s home is overrun by blacks and voodoo traditions hecommits suicide and a new regime comes to replace him. Ti Noel is also present duringthe struggle against the Mulatto Republicans.

Carpentier viewed history for theHaitian community as a “ cyclical repetition of a pattern of oppression, revolution, and renewed oppression” (Paravisini- Gebert 117). After beingthrough the cycle of rebellion and oppression so many times, Ti Noel “ began tolose heart at this endless return of chains, this rebirth of shackles, thisproliferation of suffering, which the more resigned began to accept as proof ofthe uselessness of all revolt” (Carpentier 171- 172). Ti Noel tried his hardestto keep the mindset and resilience of Macandal, who he viewed as a largelyimpactful person in his life but as life went on it became increasingly hard todo so. and home. Ti Noel, like Macandal, transforms himself into animals and “ slipsinto death, not before learning that the meaning of his toil in the kingdom ofthis world is that of understanding that action (revolution in the case ofHaiti) is the most appropriate response to the human predicament” (Paravisini-Gebert 120). Even in today’s day and age, oppression and slavery is still very much alive. A study last year states that thereare “ 27 million slaves worldwide” (Chadwick). Of that 27 million, there areapproximately 300, 000 children from ages 5 to 17 that live “ in the impoverishedland of Haiti as a domestic worker” (Janak 321).

These child slaves are knownas restavecs. In many cases these children are treated as less than human, doing any work that random family they have been given to ask of them. Whenthese restavecs are girls it is almost expected that they will have “ sufferedmental abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse” (Janak 321). Poverty and someform of slavery or oppression have been linked with Haitian culture forcenturies. Despite the revolution which gave hope for freedom and prosperity, Haiti has continuously struggled with sufficiently providing for its citizensand they still continue to do so today.

The sequence of enslavementand freedom seems to be never ending. This cycle that Carpentier writes aboutin his novel, The Kingdom of This World, can be viewed as a sign of persistence rather than hopelessness seeing as eachof these phases of enslavement is eventually destroyed by the faith of theslaves and their determination to challenging any who oppress them. It is withthis determination and faith that will one day cause the cycle to come to itsend.