

The tormentors and he uses his powers

[Art & Culture](#)



The Slave Mentality of the Haitian Revolution

The Kingdom of This World

by Alejo Carpentier expresses the history of Haiti before, during, and after the Haitian Revolution as seen by its main character, Ti Noel, a slave on M. Lenormand de Mézy's plantation in Santo Domingo. Carpentier portrays the multiple revolts making up the Haitian Revolution from the point of view of the slaves.

He explores the cultural and religious practices that inform the slave's drive to be free of slavery and oppression. The main goal of the Europeans during slavery was to keep their slaves, under their control and away from the thought of insurrection. The characters in *The Kingdom of This World* go against traditional representations of slaves. Traditional history displays slaves as victims and Europeans as having a superior mindset and therefore acting accordingly, but Carpentier's gives a different outlook by representing these slaves as ones who demonstrate the power and the will to rebel against the oppression being placed upon with the leadership of their revolutionaries.

Macandal is seen as the main revolutionary for the rest of the slaves. He announced himself as the "Bocor of Milot," which is a sorcerer or priest of the Haitian vodou religion (Carpentier 26). Macandal believed that he is supposed to free his people from their white tormentors and he uses his powers to help him do so. The result of this mentality is the development of a ruthless regime in which the oppressed become the oppressors, a period of rebellion.

During this time, slaves had no right to "appeal in court, had few or no property rights defended by the courts, could not sign legally enforceable

contracts, did not pay taxes, were maintained illiterate by social policy, and were not regarded as objects of religious institutions that kept records" (Stinchcombe). For most slaves, a lack of so many rights took a toll on their outlook on life. They felt helpless and stuck in their unfair and dangerous situations. But Macandal was resilient and he devised a plan to poison the masters and their livestock from many plantations in hopes of killing not only the livestock but the plantation owners and their families as well. He disappeared as his plan worked and "cows, oxen, steers, horses, and sheep were dying by the hundreds" and as time went on the poison continued to make its way through the town, "decimating families and wiping out grownups and children" (Carpentier 29). When the slave owners finally caught on to the source of the poisoning, they set out to find Macandal but were unsuccessful for years. Although they were unsuccessful, Macandal visited the plantation often" with wings one day, spurs another, galloping or crawling, 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 years Macandal 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 was bound by ropes and ties transformed into a mosquito and the restraints became useless, the slave owners were "completely helpless ... against a man christened by the great Loas" (Carpentier 45). When Macandal escaped from his death sentence, his people were so joyous they failed to see that he was recaptured and

successfully put to death. Macandal lived on in the minds of his people as a symbol of resilience and admiration. From Macandal the slaves had learned that they are the active agents in their own liberation, and that they are not just victims of slavery. His people gained strength and determination from his example.

Bouckman and Ti Noel follow in Macandal's footsteps and continue to fight for the liberation of the slaves. Bouckman plays a prominent role in society by also acting as a revolutionary. Bouckman tells the slaves that "The white men's God orders the crime. Our gods demand vengeance from us.

They will guide our arms and give us help. Destroy the image of the white man's God who thirsts for our tears; let us listen to the cry of freedom within ourselves" (Carpentier 67). Bouckman tries to again cause an uprising among the slaves. He preaches to them trying to explain to them their worth and the duty that they have as the oppressed in his eyes. In a society where slaves were not represented fairly it was even more important to defend one's rights, or to "defend one's practical freedom by using other more or less legal liberties, such as emigration, rebellion, or the right to duel" (Stinchcombe). This was all that these slaves had. They weren't able to receive justice 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 rebel against their enslavement. Like Macandal, Bouckman is a powerful leader, but he relies on the faith that Macandal has instilled in the slaves in order to

lead them to rebellion. Bouckman's rebellion however, did not rely on secrecy.

It is a very brutal approach which uses violence causing the slaves to follow by ambushing the masters in their homes with weapons, murdering and raping the family members and burning their property. Expanding upon the foundation put in place by Macandal's rebellion and the failure of the masters to notice the will of the 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 an effective revolution in efforts to end oppression and slavery is brutally.

Bouckman's surprising ends with his execution, "green and open-mouthed, already crawling with 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 a low point for the slave population as many of their own are killed. Lenormand de Mezy makes sure his slaves are released, including Ti Noel, with plans to sell them in the slave markets in Cuba. After Ti Noel has been won and moved to a new plantation, he saves enough money to buy his freedom. Throughout his life, Ti Noel desires nothing but freedom.

When he is a slave, he has so much built up animosity towards his masters. As a free man, Ti Noel returns to his homeland looking to experience a completely different life. However, he unfortunately finds that the abolishment of slavery as he knew it does 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 the workers were too” (Carpentier 107).

Under the rule of the black King Henri Christophe, Ti Noel finds himself back as a slave. Ti Noel feels as though slavery under a fellow black man is much worse than when it was Lenormand de Mezy. Ti Noel escapes and returns to the former plantation of Lenormand de Mezy for some time and then later returns to the city to find it ruled by Henri Christophe’s regime. The slaves again began to plan a rebellion and during the changing of the guard had come in and “ shots were fired into the air” (Carpentier 137). When King Henri’s home is overrun by blacks and voodoo traditions he commits suicide and a new regime comes to replace him. Ti Noel is also present during the struggle against the Mulatto Republicans.

Carpentier viewed history for the Haitian community as a “ cyclical repetition of a pattern of oppression, revolution, and renewed oppression” (Paravisini-Gebert 117). After being through the cycle of rebellion and oppression so many times, Ti Noel “ began to lose heart at this endless return of chains, this rebirth of shackles, this proliferation of suffering, which the more resigned began to accept as proof of the uselessness of all revolt” (Carpentier 171-172). Ti Noel tried his hardest to keep the mindset and resilience of Macandal, who he viewed as a largely impactful person in his life but as life went on it became increasingly hard to do so. and home. Ti Noel, like Macandal, transforms himself into animals and “ slips into death, not before learning that the meaning of his toil in the kingdom of this world is that of understanding that action (revolution in the case of Haiti) is the most appropriate response to the human predicament” (Paravisini-Gebert 120).

<https://assignbuster.com/the-tormentors-and-he-uses-his-powers/>

Even in today's day and age, oppression and slavery is still very much alive. A study last year states that there are "27 million slaves worldwide" (Chadwick). Of that 27 million, there are approximately 300,000 children from ages 5 to 17 that live "in the impoverished land of Haiti as a domestic worker" (Janak 321).

These child slaves are known as 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. When these restavecs are girls it is almost expected that they will have "suffered mental abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse" (Janak 321). Poverty and some form of slavery or oppression have been linked with Haitian culture for centuries. Despite the revolution which gave hope for freedom and prosperity, Haiti has continuously struggled with sufficiently providing for its citizens and they still continue to do so today.

The sequence of enslavement and freedom seems to be never ending. This cycle that Carpentier writes about in his novel, *The Kingdom of This World*, can be viewed as a sign of persistence rather than hopelessness seeing as each of these phases of enslavement is eventually destroyed by the faith of the slaves and their determination to challenge any who oppress them. It is with this determination and faith that will one day cause the cycle to come to its end.