

*The Resisting Monkey:
“Curious George,”
Slave Captivity Narratives, and
the Postcolonial Condition*

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IN SEVERAL STRIKING ways, the children's book *Curious George* (1941) recalls the accounts of capture and enslavement undergone by Africans during the era of the slave trade. George's association with slaves allows us to position him as a colonial subject, and his relationship with his captor, the Man in the Yellow Hat, brings to mind parallel relationships, notably slaves to masters and children to parents. Viewing George from a postcolonial perspective allows us to see how the book series reflects American cultural ambivalence toward its own colonialist history. This ambivalence is expressed on different levels: the first is that by describing a detestable epoch of American history, that of the slave trade, the books admit to that atrocity, but at the same time they excuse it by sanitizing and romancing it. The ambivalence spills over into the effect the stories have on child readers. On one hand, the narrative works to convince children to identify with George, who is curious and mischievous like them, and thus learn lessons of obedience and compliance with him when he does. On the other, the books also instruct certain segments of their audience, specifically, young white boys, that while they may be like George now, they will grow up to be more like the Man in the Yellow Hat, that is, an adult.

Other readers, however, may not receive that message. An African-American boy with the cultural consciousness of slavery may be struck by the parallels drawn between George and slaves. Simultaneously, he may identify with George because of their shared childishness. But his awareness of George's subject position versus that of the Man intervenes with his identification with the Man as adult; the African-American child might see George's

captor as a captor first and foremost while a white child might blithely overlook that role, as the books encourage them to do. For what these books provide, over and over (currently there are over forty different titles and twenty million copies in print), is a miniature version of the colonialist project. In each book, George gets into trouble because he is as yet uncontrolled, undisciplined, uncivilized. He then saves the day in some way and gains the praise but not necessarily the respect of society, virtually always represented by white, male adults. George learns his lesson and is assimilated to convention. Thus these books participate in a colonial project even in their half-hearted attempts to critique such colonialism; in their "civilizing mission," they imbue child readers with values that at some level perpetuate the very ills they seem to condemn. By portraying and excusing imperialism, the books coerce children into accepting their own and others' colonization.

It is natural to wonder about the extent of Margret and H. A. Rey's awareness of having created a character and story that echo slave capture narratives. The information available about them, however, yields few clues to their intentions. Without their testimony, one can only guess about their motivations and goals. The Reys themselves were exiles, forced to leave their homeland like Curious George, but they were fleeing from the Nazis (*Something* 173). Once in America, they likely encountered many of the aspects of disenfranchisement that George experiences, including language barriers, nostalgia for home, and cultural clashes. On the other hand, the Reys can also be perceived as on the side of those who wield power over others. Before becoming a writer, H. A. Rey participated in the imperialist system, selling bathtubs on the Amazon River. When he and his wife were living in Brazil, they kept pet monkeys which died when the two were on a trip to Europe (Rey, *Authors* 359-63). More important than these snippets of information, the voice of the Reys in the books is indisputably that of the white, male adult, represented by the Man in the Yellow Hat, a voice William Moebius describes as "the injunctions of the suave master" (40). Always warning, often scolding, and forever superior, the voice telling George's story is definitely not George's. The Reys' relationship with George, and by exten-

sion, with child readers, is that of the adult, the parent, the teacher—the person in charge. Thus while we can imagine that the Reys had sympathy for and perhaps empathy with George, the ultimately ambivalent status of their connection to him renders them neither saints nor sinners. Instead, they stand in the position of the parent to the child. At issue in a postcolonial analysis of the Curious George series is the effect of this paternal voice.

Anne McClintock's study of imperialism in nineteenth-century England demonstrates how the English saw "savages" and "Negroes" as occupying the same metaphorical space as young, male children, thus legitimizing the imperialistic notion that the colonizing nations needed to parent and socialize native populations. She cites a popular children's writer who wrote, "The intelligence of an average negro is about equal to that of a European child of ten years old" (51). This paternalistic attitude helped validate the taking of slaves and the creation of inferior classes based on race and other forms of "otherness." Ariel Dorfman, in his article about the Babar books, which are very similar to the George series in ways crucial to my project here, argues that we cannot overlook the "civilizing mission" of books such as these. Viewing Babar as specifically political, Dorfman insists that we see the books in their historical context. He examines the colonial agenda of the Babar books and how their author, Jean de Brunhoff, links that agenda with the education of young minds:

This confusion of individual psychological life with national historical life enhances the dominating dimensions of both. You get treated like a child for your own good, and that's how the indigenous and backward must be treated too. Those who are undeveloped are so because of their childlike natures, not as the result of the international economic system, and all those little people need is education and technology in order to gain access to the Western, Christian, adult world. (45)

Also writing about Babar, Herbert Kohl poses the questions: "Who has the power in *Babar*? Who makes the decisions in the story? Who is obeyed and tells the other characters what to do?" (5). In both the Babar and Curious George series, power lies with

human characters who represent adulthood, if not owners and masters.

As Dorfman does, postcolonial critique often describes the relationship between colonizer and colonized or master and slave in terms of the adult-child relationship because of the imbalances of power as well as clear-cut positions of dominance and subordination that these relationships share. These connections, however, are problematic and cannot be made without examination. Actual slaves were not monkeys or children; children are not slaves; and their parents are not slave-owners. Yet the *Curious George* books rely on the slippage between these categories to encourage children to identify with George and learn the socializing lessons he must learn. So when these books establish George as similar to children by dint of his subject position versus that of authority figures, we must view how the books make use of those blurry comparisons to assuage American ambivalence.

The comparison made in the first book of the series between George and African slaves aptly conveys colonial ambivalence. First, George is tricked into being captured by the “man in the yellow hat.” Using this very hat to provoke George’s curiosity, the man lures and bags the monkey because he “would like to take him home with [him]” (6). Many captivity narratives recount similar trickery in which the white man’s goods, including jewelry, liquor, clothing, and even hats, are proffered to lure Africans.¹ Next, George is brought aboard a ship that will take him “to a big Zoo in a big city” (14). The journey across the ocean compares to the Middle Passage undergone by slaves. Like them, George does not know why he has been taken and is being forced into new circumstances; similar to Equiano, the subject of an early slave narrative who found himself “caught between horror and wonder” (Pedersen 230), George is “sad but . . . still a little curious” (12). Out of curiosity, George tries to fly like some seagulls—an attempt that causes him to go overboard. Likewise, on slave ships, people jumped overboard frequently. Once taken to the new country, George’s curiosity leads him to be locked into prison and later, the zoo. In this way, he is similar to slaves who were shackled and imprisoned upon their arrival.

Although the broad outlines of this captivity narrative are similar to those of the slave experience, George actually fares much better than the slaves did. He has comfortable sleeping quarters, is well fed, and is allowed to scamper about the deck. Later, he is released from both prison and the zoo, and he demonstrates a level of freedom that slaves never had, pursuing his adventures. Thus any recognition a reader may have of slave experience is ameliorated by how good George has it. The book, in effect, has it both ways. It admits to George's captured status but suggests it is not so bad. Such ambivalence marks the George series as a whole.²

To the extent to which George shares traits of slaves, we can argue that he is a colonial subject. He exhibits resistance through his attempts to escape, his yearning for home, and his struggle to be understood in a culture that does not speak his language. The issue of language, or George's lack of it, threads through the George series and is especially relevant when we recall another African monkey who came across the ocean, the Signifying Monkey. In the same way that George's story compares to slave captivity narratives, George's comparison to the Signifying Monkey works at only a superficial level and is undermined when a deeper comparison is made. But as before, the comparison is useful because it elucidates George's problematic position in American culture.

The Signifying Monkey, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. explains, is the figure in African-American literature who uses his superior verbal skills to stir up trouble between bigger and stronger animals, the elephant and the lion. A descendant of African mythology, the Signifying Monkey is closely related to the Yoruba trickster figure, who came to Western countries via the figure of Esu-Elegbara, the messenger of the gods (5-6). "Signifying" itself refers to African-American verbal discourse, a way of speaking that turns language on its head. Any play on words, any speech that calls attention to words as words, any tripping up of a listener through language is Signifying. The Signifying Monkey must rely on words because he is too small to fight physically. But his wiliness gets him out of trouble every time. From this perspective, he is much like George who constantly gets into scrapes that he

must use his ingenuity to get out of.³ George maintains other elements of the Signifying Monkey, including satire, irony, uncertainty, disruption, and reconciliation (6) as well as having his physical characteristics, which are his “extraordinarily dark color and his tiny size” (17). But he does not have the most significant trait, the possession of language. George’s inarticulation prevents us from investing him with the full power and agency of the Signifying Monkey, but the partial equation helps us to see how intrinsic George’s silence is to his disempowerment. As I explore the various elements of his postcolonial condition, the issue of language, or more specifically, of George’s frustrated need to communicate, will surface often.

A significant marker of postcolonial subjugation, the suppression of language, is instrumental in forcing George into his new culture. The first book the Reys wrote, *Cecily G. and the Nine Monkeys*, features George and eight relatives in the jungle and demonstrates that George’s creators were aware of the imperial forces shaping his experience. He is homeless because all the trees have been cut down, and Cecily the Giraffe is grief-stricken because her family and friends have all been taken to the zoo. This book is the most straightforward in admitting the atrocities of Western imperialism. Although in *Cecily G.* George is depicted as having speech, in *Curious George* and all the subsequent books in the series, George never again speaks aloud. Verbal communication is completely denied him. While children’s books commonly depict animals as able to speak to one another but not to humans, the fact that George is rendered voiceless precisely at the moment of his capture and never retrieves his voice while he lives in the Man’s world is significant. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin point out that slaves, in a typically oppressive and disempowering move on the part of colonizers, were “deliberately separated from other members of their language groups . . . to minimize the possibility of rebellion” (27). And Frantz Fanon reminds us that “to speak a language is to take on a world, a culture” (38). George’s lack of speech is a constant reminder of his lack of power and place.

That George is not thoroughly happy with his new home is apparent when one reads his mischievous behavior as a form of

resistance. Kohl's description of Babar's lack of resistance elucidates, by contrast, the opposite tendency in *Curious George*. According to Kohl, Babar's relationship with the Old Lady, the person who introduces him to culture, demonstrates the extent of his compliance. "Babar . . . is putty in the hands of the Rich Lady [sic]. Resistance to the temptations to lose his elephant nature seem foreign to him. . . . He does what he is told, is as passive as a paper doll and as uncomplaining. It's hard to imagine Babar opposing the Rich Lady or hurting her feelings" (6-7). George, as all readers of his books know, almost never does what he is told, is as active as the most rambunctious child, and intentionally or not, opposes the Man in the Yellow Hat at every opportunity. The narrator of the books describes George's behavior as "naughty," but such a description does not address the motivation behind it. Is there a pattern to George's antics that discloses underlying tension and unhappiness?

One need look no further than George's name to determine such a pattern. Curiosity, George's predominant trait, is in many ways a screen for resistance. Often, what George is curious about is finding a way to escape, a desire played out so frequently that Moebius calls George an "escape artist" (34). In the book *Curious George Takes a Job*, George's efforts to escape are inseparable from his drive to satisfy his curiosity. Because he is "very curious . . . he want[s] to find out what [is] going on outside the Zoo" (3), so he steals the keeper's key and hides under an elephant's ear until he can make his exit unnoticed. Time and again in the *Curious George* series, George's curiosity leads him into acts that are perceived as trouble-making but that often lend him the means to escape or to outwit others. He tricks the prison guard to get out of prison (*Curious George* 40). In the hospital, he climbs into a wheelchair and "wheel[s] [it] right out of the room" (*Hospital* 34). He hides in a shirt hanging on a clothesline when farmers are chasing him (*Medal* 28). In this way, George can be compared to the trickster slaves who used intelligence and cunning to outwit their masters. In each of the books, George follows the pattern of the hero in a "trickster tale [that] consists of a confrontation in which the weak use their wits to evade the strong" (Levine 106).⁴

George's escapades can also be seen as "rascality," the name given to slave behaviour that resulted in things being broken or mistreated. Julius Lester sees such behavior as deliberate resistance (100), calling it "sabotage." While George may not purposefully endeavour to cause people financial loss, his wreaking of havoc does result from more than mere curiosity. If it does not directly give him the means to escape, it announces his discomfort and dislocation in a world that is not his own. The illustrations reveal how frequently his escapades are associated with the imagery of bondage and liberation. He gets wound up in a huge batch of spaghetti; he is caught in a tangle of phone cord that wraps around him just as the spaghetti does; he releases other animals, such as pigs in a barnyard, from their own imprisonment; and he dangles from a fire escape while running from pursuers in an apartment building.⁵

An example of George's rascality is the mess he makes when he spills ink while trying to write a letter. Although he is not able to write, he is characteristically trying to find a way to communicate. Pouring an entire box of soap powder on the ink, George creates an even bigger mess of bubbles. The illustration reveals the pleasure this mess first gives George. The strategic placement of the hose and the obvious effect it causes suggest the oedipal boy's first awareness of and control of his incipient phallic power, an image that is sure to delight child readers (*Medal* 11). But soon the bubbles overpower George, who must scramble out the window to find a way to clean the mess. George is not the first monkey to be associated with soap and cleaning. McClintock, describing how the racialized other is inscribed in nineteenth-century colonial discourse, explores the prevalence of monkeys in soap advertising at the end of the nineteenth century, especially the well-known Monkey Brand (214-17). She explains how soap "was credited not only with bringing moral and economic salvation to Britain's 'great unwashed' but also with magically embodying the spiritual ingredient of the imperial mission itself" (211). The monkey "was an icon of metamorphosis, perfectly serving soap's liminal role in mediating the transformations of nature . . . into culture" (217). In the way the monkey of Monkey Brand soap suggested the improvements of both the British

citizen and colonial subjects, George provides the same suggestion of evolution and edification to the children we are supposedly similarly trying to “raise.”

McClintock’s characterization of the monkey as mediator corresponds to Moebius’s description of Tom Thumb. According to Moebius, Tom Thumb is, like Curious George, a descendant of the trickster figure who mediates between “the animal and the human” (38). When readers realize how vulnerable Tom is, as animals try to eat him, or he is stuffed into sausages, they may then

question what difference there is between the human and animal forces that prey on Tom, between the civilized entrepreneurs or sausage-makers and the hungry wolf or fox. It is against such a world of exploitation, of economic savagery, that Tom Thumb’s pluck and ingenuity are measured. He knows only what he needs to “not be” himself momentarily; but to be more than a jumping jack across the gap of the animal and the human is beyond him, unless it is to live to tell the tale. (38-39)

George’s pluck and ingenuity would seem to take him further than Tom’s; George is more adored and integrated into human society than Tom generally is. Yet George inarguably mediates between the animal and the human as Tom does. As is the case with innumerable animal characters with human features in children’s books, it is this mix of animal and human characteristics that presumably makes George attractive to children. But George mediates between two other states as well: whiteness and blackness. His status as an African monkey and his color make him appear “black,” but this blackness is “whitewashed,” in the same way the Middle Passage is sanitized. Because he is cute and cuddly, he is partially acceptable. But his blackness, or his animalness, ultimately points to and maintains his difference. Moebius describes the effect of this condition on Tom Thumb: “His nimble responses to life-threatening situations earn him passing respect, but he will never be ready for the world except as a curiosity” (38). George similarly earns “passing respect,” and in the context of his racialization, the word “passing” resonates even more.

Moebius, however, sets George apart from Tom. Believing that “Tom’s experience leads him deeper and deeper into the ‘old

world' of brute consumption" (39), he sees George instead as elevated, aerial, and ecstatic. Flying like a seagull or hanging onto a bunch of balloons high over the city, George is above geographical consideration. "George belongs not so much to a particular stretch of land in the southern hemisphere as to the air, where boundaries disappear. . . . As an aerial explorer, George knows no political or legal boundaries" (39). I would argue the opposite. George seeks the air precisely because he knows boundaries, precisely because he needs to escape. His status as mediator enslaves rather than liberates him; he has no real sense of belonging and is caught permanently in a state of half-definition, half-resolution, forever ambivalent, forever incomplete.

Moebius notices the ambivalent strain running through the George books, seeing it manifested as a discrepancy between words and pictures. Remarking on the several occasions when the hilarity and gaiety of the pictures belie the sombre tone of the text, Moebius calls such discrepancies "a constant source of uncertainty of meaning, as we do not know whether to join in the pursuit of aesthetic or of moral goals" (43). But he seems to perceive this uncertainty as a device that draws children in by catching their attention; thus the ambiguity is consciously produced by the Reys as a rhetorical strategy. As should be clear by now, I see such discrepancy as indicative of a deeper ambivalence, one that describes George's essential status as captive.⁶

Another incident depicting George's attempts at communication results in an even more obvious example of colonial ambivalence. George's first misadventure when he arrives in the new country occurs when he sees the man using the telephone and tries to imitate him. This imitation can be seen in the context of Homi Bhabha's complex reading of the mimic man, the colonial person who attempts to achieve subjectivity in a project doomed to fail because those he mimics will never grant him equivalent status (so mimicry becomes a form of establishing difference, of disavowal).⁷ On the surface level, this incident serves to caution children against playing with the telephone. But George's outrageously extreme punishment (dozens of firemen descend on him and lock him in prison) suggests he is being punished for

more than making mischief; he is being punished for acting like the Man and possibly even for trying to make himself heard. The illustrations themselves support this more complicated reading. George's sad face in the picture (39) demonstrates fear and remorse. It is worth noting, however, that this exact same picture, with a small difference, graces the cover of this most famous of the Curious George books. Here we see the same two authoritarian firemen holding the same two offending objects: George and the telephone. But in this picture, George is smiling, as if he is enjoying his capture. Does the picture suggest that children should likewise submit to authority? Does it warn that the person with less power does best to keep a grin on his face and appease his captors? The contrast between these pictures, slight as it is from a graphic perspective, speaks volumes about the ambivalence of the series as a whole.

George's yearning for home is also evidenced, again in the context of his trying to communicate. After escaping the zoo, he becomes a window washer. Peeking into the window of an apartment about to be painted, George sees an opportunity to create a beautiful African scene and paints himself in a tree (*Takes a Job* 26-27)⁸. Here his feelings of displacement and yearning for home, as well as his attempt to demonstrate where he wants to be, are obvious. In a much later book, George is shown in a schoolroom painting a picture, again of a palm tree and of himself standing beside it (*School* 27). Elsewhere in the series, George demonstrates his yearning through other means. The ending of *Curious George Takes a Job* reinforces George's ambivalence through a nostalgia that is both manufactured and genuine. His story has been made into a movie, the first shot of which reproduces his capture. In the film as seen in the book, George happily smiles at the yellow hat, as yet unaware of its real significance. Yet the reader and George at the bottom of the page already have the knowledge of George's capture. We can see George pointing at the Man, as if to say "that's your hat!," but there is also the sense of accusation. George here personifies the hybrid colonial subject, split between screen and audience, between subjectivity and objectivity, between identification with and alienation from his captor.

George's resistance is revealed in other ways, as well. One vivid example demonstrates George's frustration at lacking effective language when he finds a way to subvert and control, if temporarily, the dominant language that has been imposed on him. In the book *Curious George at the Railroad Station*, George is taken to a train station and becomes "curious" when he sees a trainmaster "moving letters and numbers around on a big sign" (6). In an action that can be seen as rascality, resistance, or protest, George climbs the ladder up to the sign and begins to rearrange the letters and numbers. Of course, chaos ensues, and George characteristically incurs everyone's wrath. He runs and hides but later redeems himself by saving a boy from running in front of an oncoming train. It is interesting to note the cities listed on the big board. Along with major American metropolises such as Chicago and New York, one can read Sarnia, Port Cartier, and especially Montreal—all Canadian cities where the ramifications of colonialism, particularly as they affect language, persist today.

Despite George's playful attempt at subversion, even this story recapitulates the basic plot that virtually every book in the series relates. George, curious about something, gets into trouble, angering authority figures. He then inadvertently or intentionally does something heroic that allows him to be redeemed and that overshadows his resistance.⁹ By constantly suggesting to children that they must not be curious, must always heed the man's words, the books simultaneously imbue children with the values of an expansionist, paternalistic society. The "other" is acceptable only when he behaves and conforms. When George does that, he becomes a mimic man in the sense of a colonial subject who is heroic when he appeases his colonizer. Yet like these mimic men, George always maintains an element of difference, his monkey-ness always marks him, in Bhabha's words, as "always the same but not quite" (126). It is in this slippage, this difference, that the danger in reading George lies. For a white child, particularly a male one, the slippage allows him to identify with George at the level of a child *and* to realize that the identification will eventually cease because he knows he will grow up and become more like the Man. For children of colour, however, the slippage may be much more dangerous. If they identify with

George as a child and sympathize with his plight of being taken from Africa because of their awareness of slavery, they are also identifying with his monkey-ness, an insidious connection for African-American children to make. Aware of George's similarity to a slave as much as a child, children of colour may not be able to see themselves as ever "growing out of" this identification and taking on the power of the Man.

What then do we do with this mischievous monkey? I do not wish to advocate censorship. But I do think readers need to be aware of the forces at work in the George series. Parents or other adults who read these books can use the opportunity to discuss the problems they raise, opening up the text. Issues of discipline and control can be discussed. George's motivations for his misbehaviour can be analyzed in a context broader than "curiosity." Parents aware of the political forces at work in the stories, particularly the racism, can bring up those matters when they feel it is appropriate. Even children as young as three or four can be told about slaves being taken from Africa, and those readers familiar with the Signifying Monkey can compare George to him. Not all of this must happen at once but can occur over time. For reading to children is an ongoing process, one which ends, I would hope, only when all children are equipped fully with the voice that is denied Curious George.¹⁰

NOTES

- ¹ Cf. Little 19, Aguet 27-31, and Mannix. Mannix specifically mentions hats (46).
- ² Dorfman notes the same tendency in the Babar series: "Certain historical elements, picked out and isolated, are allowed to function in a different context. Having lost their real links to history, unable to accuse their perpetrators or denounce their origins, they are absorbed by the dominant interpretations, sterilized, and made neutral" (27). Ultimately, such neutralization has effects that are far from value-free, as I am sure Dorfman would agree.
- ³ Margret Rey acknowledges this general pattern: "George's curiosity gets him into trouble . . . but he always gets himself out of it through his own ingenuity. I suppose there's a moral in that" (Berg 4). The equivocal "I suppose" suggests that Rey may not have desired to emphasize George's autonomy or resourcefulness; at the least, it reveals her own ambivalence about the purpose of the books.
- ⁴ Cf. Levine, especially the chapters on the animal and slave tricksters. William Moebius also finds that George's folkloric roots are in the "merry prankster, the trickster, the *enfant terrible* and the *enfant malin*" (36). Supplying a list of characters who descend from those archetypes, Moebius mentions Ananse and Br'er Rabbit, both of whom can be traced to African folklore and are possibly con-

nected to the Signifying Monkey. Although Moebius is aware of these sources, he does not directly connect them to George, not seeing how George is racialized.

- 5 These illustrations can be found in the following: *Curious George Takes a Job* 16, *Curious George Gets a Medal* 19, *Curious George Takes a Job* 30.
- 6 Here one may inquire about the Reys' knowledge of the ambivalence of their texts. Did they consciously construct George as rebellious and insurgent? Did they intend to offer varying, even opposed, messages simultaneously? My guess would be that the Reys unconsciously reflected their own ambivalences, their own mixed feelings about their position in American culture and about their roles as increasingly influential and far-reaching shapers of children's imaginations.
- 7 Bhabha also sees in mimicry the potential for resistance. He explores the confluence of these terms, ambivalence, mimicry, and the possibility of subversion, in his essay "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." See especially pages 126-27, where Bhabha claims that

colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a *subject of a difference that is always the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse . . . called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy; mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. (126)

For a discussion of Bhabha's treatment of mimicry, both as a self-defeating strategy and as a mode of resistance, see McClintock 61-65.

- 8 George's activity in this illustration can also be understood in the context of Michel de Certeau's description of how workers and others in subordinate positions use certain "tactics," including "la *peruque*" as a form of resistance and to "signify [their] own capabilities through [their] work" (25). A *peruque* usually involves a creative or artistic act similar to what George does with his paint and is a way of asserting oneself through "stealing" time when one has limited or no access to physical and metaphoric "place." De Certeau explains that "the space of a tactic is the space of the other. . . . What it wins it cannot keep. This *nowhere* gives a tactic mobility, to be sure, but a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment, and seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment. . . . In short, a tactic is an art of the weak" (37; emphasis added). Clearly, George seizes this opportunity "on the wing," and the stunned expressions on the faces of the men when they return and the chase that ensues demonstrate how ethereal and transient George's act of resistance is. Rey's assertion that George paints the African mural because he "could not resist" (*Takes a Job* 25) becomes ironic in this context.
- 9 It is interesting to note that George also saved the Reys when they were captured in France and accused of being spies. "During the Reys' interrogation, an officer came across the *Curious George* manuscript. Attempting to find evidence in the book that would confirm the Reys as spies, the man instead found himself amused and enchanted by the story of the little monkey. Reasoning that the person who wrote such an innocent story could not possibly be a spy, the officer released the Reys, and they were able to escape the Nazi invasion" (*Something* 173). This story can certainly be read as a defining moment in the Reys' lives and careers, one that stamped them indelibly with the concept of George as hero/saviour. It also casts the Reys in George's position; they take the place of the defenseless animal or child, accused of wrongdoing by paternalistic authority figures. Yet one must also take into account that the Reys did make their escape and were able to resume adult stature once abroad, unlike George who forever remains childlike, nostalgic, and dispossessed.
- 10 Many people assisted me in writing this paper. I would especially like to thank Anjie Rosga, Meg Swatterthwaite, Yael Lachman, Jennifer Rowe, Lisa Chinitz, David Chinitz, Ann Harris, and J.D.L.

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