

**Unmanning Lessons: Emasculation in Novels by C.L.R James, Garth St. Omer,
and Orlando Patterson**

by

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ABSTRACT

Caribbean men have been affected by racist, classist, and sexist discourses and praxes that privilege “true” masculinity (i.e. heterosexual, usually Anglo-Saxon) at the expense of “lesser” masculinities (non-binary, African, East Indian, Euro-Creole, etc.). These contradictory ways of thinking and performing maleness coalesce with colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial regimes in 1920s Trinidad, 1950s St. Lucia, and 1960s post-independence Jamaica, and thereby emasculate aspirant males who fail to meet such standards. Hindered by their colonized state and personal choices, the protagonists of C.L.R. James’s *Minty Alley* (1936), Garth St. Omer’s *A Room on the Hill* (1968), and Orlando Patterson’s *An Absence of Ruins* (1967) see their claims to “real” masculinity disrupted.

This work focuses upon three seldom studied West Indian novels whose characters struggle to attain wealth, power, and preeminence through the conquest of hegemonic masculinity. It also elaborates upon the fiction works of two canonical West Indian writers (James, Patterson) better known for their theory and nonfiction. The resulting dialogue between a marginalized West Indian fiction writer (St. Omer) and the aforementioned canonical writers/theorists employs a theoretical framework which elucidates the ways fictional characters negotiate the demands of society, the church, colonial education, and their families. By elaborating upon previous theoretical works by Frantz Fanon, Belinda Edmonson, and other scholars, this work seeks to illumine a seldom explored topic in gender studies.

Biographical Information

Raúl J. Vázquez Vélez is a PhD student at the English Department of the University of Puerto Rico's Río Piedras campus. He received his B.A. degree in Comparative Literature at the UPR in 2009. He earned his M.A. degree in the aforementioned field in 2013, and formally enrolled at the UPR English Department's PhD program in August 2015. He received his ABD degree in 2018, and finished his Doctoral Thesis in November 2020. He has published poetry, short stories, and essays both locally and abroad. His research interests include gender studies, masculinity studies, literary theory, and postcolonial theory.

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Chapter I: Race, Class, Sex, Gender, and Power in the Anglophone Caribbean: An
Introduction

The world is what it is. Men who are nothing,
who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it.

V.S. Naipaul, *A Bend in the River* (1979)

As Paula Morgan states in *The Terror and the Time: Banal Violence and Trauma in Caribbean Discourse*, Caribbean societies, including the English-speaking West Indies, came into being through personal and communal tragedies, most of which have their origin in the transatlantic slave trade and other practices brought about by European colonizers and their representatives during the Age of Discovery:

The New World island societies of the modern Caribbean have been crafted by a traumatic encounter between worlds. In an early experiment of technologically driven global modernity fueled by the largest mass labour migration in human history, Europe undertook to transform two-thirds of the then known world into its playground and factory. The imperial impulse which propelled the enterprise of the Indies drew together a multiplicity of non-homogeneous people-groups – indigenous Indians, Europeans, Africans, Asians—in minute island spaces to jostle for a place in an embryonic social order. This took place against a framework of genocide of indigenous tribes, oppressive systems of slavery and indentureship, racism and denigration, poverty, hunger and social inequities—all buttressed by incredible excesses of terrorism and social violence. (1)

Marked by European colonial rule, these societies originated from the capture, enslavement, and degradation of Africans, coupled with the subjugation and near extermination of the aboriginal Carib, Taíno, and Arawak communities that inhabited the region prior to Columbus's arrival. From the late-fifteenth to the late-eighteenth centuries, the colonial enterprises of Spain, England, France, Portugal, Denmark, and Holland also saw the entry of other European nationals (impoverished Irish, Scots, Spaniards, etc.) as indentured servants during the first centuries of colonial rule. Following the emancipation of enslaved Africans in the 1830s, the 1840s to 1880s saw the introduction of indentureship policies to fill the resulting demand for labor, as most emancipated Africans were unwilling to work in former slave plantations. Subsequently, large numbers of East Indians, Chinese, and non-enslaved Africans were imported to the Caribbean to meet such demand. These migrations of diverse ethnicities thus created the complex nature of Caribbean island societies.

As Antonio Benítez Rojo asserts in *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, these groups were organized around the Plantation, societies “dominated by plantation economy” (plantocracies) from the beginnings of colonialism to the present day (317, n.8). In *Poetics of Relation*, Édouard Glissant defines the Plantation system as a “pyramid organization” that created consistent “rhythm[s] of economic production” and formed “the basis for [variegated] style[s] of life” throughout the Caribbean basin, spreading across “very different linguistic areas engaged in very divergent political dynamics and creating various “social pyramid[s]” despite remaining “confined within an enclosure” (63-4). Although plantations seemed to function as

“autark[ies],” they actually depended on “an [non-evolving] technical mode of production . . . based on a slave structure”:

[E]verywhere after 1848 the origin of the mass of slaves, then workers, was African—or Hindu [East Indian] in the Caribbean; the middle level, managers, administrators, and overseers, were hired men of European origin, a small number of whom were replaced early in this century by people of color—once again in the Caribbean; at the top of the pyramid were the planters, colonists, or *bekés* . . . who strove to constitute a white pseudoaristocracy. (64)

This “huge machine of machines” not only ravaged natural resources and destroyed lives for the sake of Western domination and profiteering, but also (mis)shaped “the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres of the countr[ies] that nourishe[d] it” (Benítez Rojo 72). Having little or no interest in the Plantation’s yield or otherwise blocked from it, the enslaved and their “close descendants,” followed by indentured workers and their progeny, embraced various “small occupations” in order to survive within the fringes of such a system, splintering into “individual operations” that eventually gave rise to “a habitual economy of bits and scraps” barely capable of sustaining its practitioners in the midst of the institutionalized “immobility and fragmentation” eroding the system (Glissant 65). However, the abolition of slavery and the repeal of indentureship that saw the ultimate decline and fall of the Plantation system did not eradicate its residual effects throughout the Caribbean region and beyond, as the plantation system underwent several “changes and adjustments” that have kept it in operation well into the present (Benítez Rojo 73).

Additionally, the Emancipation of enslaved Africans in British Caribbean territories did not end sociocultural stratifications based on race, class, gender, and phenotypes, but instead intensified the hierarchization of these stratifications. In *Afro-Creole: Power, Opposition, and Play in the Caribbean*, Richard D.E. Burton delineates these stratified positions according to three sociocultural locations (3). The first group, “Euro-Creole” or “upper culture,” was occupied by a “white” ruling class of “pure” European and/or European-Caribbean descent. This group was composed of high-ranking representatives of metropolitan and colonial power, as well as former plantation-owner families who retained their racial apartness, wealth, and property after Emancipation and indentureship (6). The second group, “Meso-Creole” or “middle culture,” emerged as a major social group throughout the English-speaking Caribbean during the post-Emancipation period (6). Though it mostly consisted of lighter-skinned descendants of African and European mix, these mulatto aspirants to bourgeois enclaves also included Indo-Caribbean, Asian-Caribbean, and European-Caribbean groups which served as a buffer between the upper and lower-classes from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Their members achieved a modicum of capital, social power, prestige, and respectability through professions such as school teachers, civil/public servants, and merchants. The third and bottom category, “Afro-Creole” or “lower culture,” comprised agricultural workers, small-time merchants, manual laborers, and disenfranchised working-class people of African (Afro-Creole) and Asian-Creole (Indian and Chinese) descent, along with a minority of Creole-European descent (“poor whites”) who fell into poverty after abolition restructured the old plantocracies (6). Subjugated and marginalized by metropolitan and colonial authorities, people from middle and lower-

class groups faced ever-evolving forms of raced, classed, and gendered oppression. Older paradigms of subjugation and degradation gave way to newer ones, or were transformed to accommodate ever-shifting needs, desires, and intentions of local ruling classes as well as powerful foreign and metropolitan interests.

Undoubtedly, after centuries of racial division, mutual mistrust, and violence (physical or otherwise), Caribbean social groups continue to struggle to improve their lives. Invariably, it is clear that though social, cultural, political and economic conditions have changed over the years from the times of slavery and Emancipation, Caribbean people remain adversely affected by new foreign interests, such as the predatory policies of Western institutions like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Inter-American Development Bank, which compel Caribbean nations to subsist on economic dependency defined by tourism.

This study aims to shed greater light upon the subject of Caribbean middle-class masculinities because the topic remains largely unexplored in Caribbean literary studies. The present work expands upon subjects discussed in Raúl J. Vázquez Vélez's "The Rise and Fall of Caribbean Gentlemen: Marginalization and the Unmanning of Caribbean Masculinities in Anglophone Caribbean Fiction," as it explores discursive constructs of Caribbean masculinities that shape the lives of fictional characters reared in social, political, cultural, and economic backdrops akin to those of the English-speaking Caribbean from the 1920s to the late-1960s. This work examines C.L.R. James's *Minty Alley* (1936), Garth St. Omer's *A Room on the Hill* (1968), and Orlando Patterson's *An Absence of Ruins* (1967) by engaging sociological, historical, anthropological, political, cultural, and literary theories about Caribbean gender constructs explored in these novels.

It investigates middle-class African-Caribbean struggles to accede to (or approximate) hegemonic British masculinity through three prose fiction texts authored by men belonging to the colored bourgeoisies of 1920s Trinidad, 1950s St. Lucia, and late-1960s post-independence Jamaica. The present work examines how the chosen authors bring attention to a liminal social group beguiled by illusions of being a privileged sub-middle class tasked with mediating between the hegemonic Euro-Caribbean upper-classes and the larger lower-class of dispossessed African-Caribbean, Indo-Caribbean, Asian-Caribbean, and Creole-European populaces.

Various works of fiction and nonfiction have critically explored lower-class Caribbean masculinities, yet few have paid similar attention to bourgeois masculinities as they unfold in Anglophone Caribbean island societies. In addition, “canonical” Caribbean prose fiction like Earl Lovelace’s *The Dragon Can’t Dance* (1979) and *The Wine of Astonishment* (1983) primarily focuses on working-class African-Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean masculinities. *The Dragon Can’t Dance* deconstructs 1970s post-independence urban lower-class masculinist practices that successfully opposed slavery in pre-Emancipation Trinidad, yet detrimentally affected their practitioners after abolition and the advent of early-to-mid twentieth century Euro-American capitalism. Unhappy with his life as a loafer who only takes a break from living and embodying the trinity of “Idleness, Laziness, and Waste” prevalent in Calvary Hill to play dragon each year during Carnival, Aldrick Prospect begins questioning the purpose and effectivity of such ways of living and performing masculine resistance, and eventually moves away from toxic European and African-derived paradigms of masculinity that emphasize

“toughness,” emotional detachment, and non-involvement in the lives of other people as attributes of so-called real men.

In *The Wine of Astonishment*, which preceded *The Dragon Can't Dance*, Lovelace chronicles the struggles of a community of Spiritual Baptists whose members respond differently to the Shouter Prohibition Ordinance that outlaws their African-derived spirituality during the early to mid-twentieth century. The African-Trinidadian community of Bonasse first places its hopes in a young man named Ivan Morton, hoping he would use his political position to repeal the ban, only for Morton to abandon them and convert to Catholicism after being seduced by the wealth, power, and influence of his new bourgeois position. Stickfighter Bolo urges the community to use violence to confront the colonial police and its leader Corporal Prince. However, church leader Bee Dorcas instead advises pacifist methods such as negotiating with the government. Bolo rejects this pacifism, openly and violently defies police orders, and is arrested and imprisoned. No one comes to his aid, and he perceives this as abandonment by his people. Subsequently, Bolo becomes a criminal who terrorizes Bonasse and nearby areas, asserting his violent masculinity as a wounded African “warrior” until he is shot and killed by colonial police.

In *Minty Alley*, Mr. Haynes struggles to take control of his life as a bourgeois Trinidadian young man living in 1920s Trinidad. Following the death of his mother, Haynes's encounter with the working-class community at No. 2 Minty Alley entices him with promises of adventure and enjoyment, yet simultaneously calls into question his middle-class masculinity, reputation and social standing by highlighting his “unmasculine” passivity, inexperience in worldly affairs, and excessive dependence upon

the work of women. In *A Room on the Hill*, John Lestrade, a middle-class African-Caribbean man, lives in a society similar to 1950s St. Lucia, a former British outpost that languished under the joint sociocultural, political, and economic chokehold of the British Crown Colony system and the French-defined Catholic Church. The guilt-laden Lestrade battles depression after the deaths of his mother Lena and his friend Stephen while reminiscing about the life Lena led as a Caribbean woman ostracized by their community for giving birth to him out of wedlock, as well as Stephen's apparent suicide and Lestrade's own alleged inaction to prevent it. Unable to cope with the unresolved feelings of hate and resentment he harbors towards his father for abandoning his mother and him, Lestrade comes perilously close to falling into suicidal despair after the death of his friend Anne-Marie and the Church's refusal to grant her a Catholic burial. *An Absence of Ruins* deals with Alexander "Alex" Blackman, a bourgeois man from late-1960s post-independence Jamaica who finds himself cut off from his newly independent nation, friends, and family after years of living and studying in London. Though he sees through the ideological blind-spots and self-serving colonialist mimicry that plague the postcolonial Jamaican government and his circle of middle-class friends, Blackman finds no solace in the Rastafari movement and its Afrocentric agendas because they cannot ease the pervasive sense of futility, rootlessness, and unmaning that strangles him throughout the novel and ultimately destroys him.

The characters of these novels are adversely affected by early to mid-twentieth century colonialism, neocolonialism, and postcolonialism as the latter unfold in the context of their island societies. Such a state of affairs brings to bear sociocultural, political, and economic practices simultaneously created and caused by power relations

built upon foreign-imposed notions of race, class, sex, and gender prevalent throughout the Western world, particularly Eurocentric and Caribbean masculinisms and their attendant discourses and practices.

In the English-speaking Caribbean, privilege and license coalesce with racism, classism, and masculinism to differentiate men according to categories it then transforms into criteria for inclusion or exclusion at a symbolic, sociocultural, political, and economic level. Caribbean men who fall into the underside of such categories might find themselves emasculated, their masculinity questioned at best and degraded at worst. In turn, “emasculated” is related to the term “unmanning” (*entmannung*), which designates men who consider themselves to have been physically and/or symbolically “castrated” by the society and epoch they inhabit in, their families, women, or other men. The term denotes the opposite of conventional assumptions of what so-called true masculinity consists of. To “unman” a person (or more specifically, a male human being) is to strip him of qualities or attributes traditionally associated with so-called real men, such as courage, fortitude, power, resolve, and self-reliance. In the context of the present work, unmanning consists of a systematic undermining, negation, and destruction of the means by which men might accede to the imitation and enactment of dominant masculinities and the privilege the latter make possible at the expense of women and subordinated men. It is therefore linked with Freudian theories of castration anxiety, which at their most basic argue that men live in constant fear of losing their sexual organs, permanently damaging them, or being otherwise stripped of their sexual potency, that is, “maleness” or virility.

Just as men fear to lose their reproductive organs, they also dread being deprived of their ability to perform masculinity and reap the lion’s share of the patriarchal

dividend, as well as the capacity to create, regulate, and sustain life through roles such as father, husband, lover, breadwinner, and head of household. Thus understood, unmanning is a social, cultural, political, and economic “castration” male subjects suffer whenever they think themselves stripped of their physical and metaphorical capacity to perform “true” masculinity and benefit from the bounties of wealth, power, and prestige the latter affords. It preys upon the shame, guilt, anger, and insecurity of men who believe they have lost or compromised their masculinity, creating and feeding upon fear, insecurity, self-loathing, and other afflictions likely to affect subordinate men who reside in colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial Caribbean societies. Since unmanned men often find themselves marginalized from the wealth, political power, cultural prestige, and social preeminence dominant men derive from the mimesis and praxis of hegemonic masculinities, unmanning also entails diminution or extirpation of social, cultural, political, and economic masculine power, reputation, and respectability in Caribbean island societies.

Caribbean masculinities are structured within Eurocentric social, cultural, political, and economic power paradigms based on hierarchical classifications predicated on race, class, sex and gender. Such divisions place Caribbean males into sub-categories whose members derive unequal access to power, wealth, representation, and allocation of resources. Linden Lewis argues in “Caribbean Masculinity: Unpacking the Narrative” that this “present configuration of gender relations” creates and enforces “level(s) of oppression and subordination necessary . . . to realize certain types of male privilege” which a few groups of men enjoy at the expense of women and the majority of other men

within Caribbean island societies (94). Even so, Caribbean masculinity is more than a mere source of privilege and oppression:

Masculinity is both a set of practice or behaviors and an ideological position within gender relations. As a set of practices, masculinity refers to the many ways in which society interpellates male subjects as men. Using biology as a point of departure, men come to understand themselves—politically, sociologically and within a system of gender relations—as ideologically different from women. Masculinity is not reducible to some distilled essence. [. . .]. It is . . . a whole constellation of practices and behaviors. It is a phenomenon that is not fixed but is always in the process of being negotiated, contested, even destabilized. (95)

While it is true that embodying and performing certain types of masculinities rather than others implies taking ideological positions based upon differentiation of biological sex between men and women, such “system(s) of gender relations” ultimately pivot around power relations formulated and enforced through social and cultural race, class, sex, and gender equations. As Rafael L. Ramírez states in the “Foreword” to *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities: Theoretical and Empirical Analyses*, “the categories through which [human beings] perceive, evaluate and think are socially constructed” with “cultural specificity” and “do not exist independently of the subject” (viii). Social subjects recur to “the guidelines that their cultures lay down” and use them to “construct their reality in accordance with or in opposition to these guidelines” and the ways the latter play out in human societies through variegated forms of “gender differentiations”:

The masculine and the feminine domains are defined by specific attributes, tasks and symbols. Subjects are recognized as male or female, and are evaluated according to their compliance with gender expectations. What it means to be a man, or a woman, is a cultural construction. Although gender constructions are embedded on biological differences, they are not biologically determined. They constitute a design sustained by a system of symbols, meanings, ascriptions and expectations. (ix)

Similarly, Arthur Brittan argues in *Masculinity and Power* that the term “masculinity” and its derivatives encapsulate a series of raced, classed, sexed, and gendered discourses and praxes enmeshed in socially oriented relations of power. Masculinity should not be discussed “as if it [were a] measurable” and quantifiable phenomenon that “naturally” occurs in the world and of which some men possess more, and others, less (1). There are plural *masculinities* rather than a singular, universally valid masculinity that permits knowing and describing men “in terms of some discoverable [“timeless and universal”] dimension” (1). Since “gender does not exist outside history and culture,” masculinity and femininity are continuously subject to “process[es] of reinterpretation” that make it necessary to assess them from the places they occupy within “the general discussion of gender” and power in the context of the Western world throughout different societies and epochs (1).

Rather than as a “normative referent,” masculinity should be regarded as what Ramírez terms “a multidimensional construct” (ix). Unlike previous assessments, the latter approach examines “the interaction[s] of power and sexuality in the construction of masculine identities” and the ways they unfold throughout modern Western societies,

including Caribbean island societies (ix). Thus, R.W. Connell posits, masculinity and femininity cannot exist or be understood outside of “a system of gender relations,” the latter being “the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives” (*Masculinities* 71). Correspondingly, gender comprises one of numerous ways in which “social practice is ordered” by means of processes that organize “the everyday conduct of life . . . in relation to a reproductive arena” (71). The latter is thus defined by “the bodily structures and processes of human reproduction,” which include, but are not limited to, “sexual arousal and intercourse, childbirth and infant care, bodily sex difference and similarity” (71). The fact that gender relations unfold in a “reproductive arena” as part of “a historical process involving the body” carries important implications for what gender consists of, as well as the roles the latter might play in a given society at a specific time and place:

Gender is social practice that constantly refers to bodies and what bodies do, it is not social practice reduced to the body. [. . .]. Gender exists precisely to the extent that biology does *not* determine the social. It marks one of those points of transition where human historical process supersedes biological evolution as the form of change. (71-2)

Ergo, masculinity simultaneously encompasses “a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture” (71). Such arrangements are both cause and effect of “creative and inventive” social practice that “responds to particular situations and is generated within definite structures of social relations” (72). Although these practices come into being in/through social relations that unfold as people

and groups engage “their historical situations,” the former cannot be reduced to “isolated acts” which only affect particular persons or specific groups (72). Masculinity and femininity name “*process*[es] of configuring practice” which transform their “starting points” to the extent they encompass “place[s] in gender relations,” as well as discourses and praxes through which men and women engage their place in gender orders, along with the ways the resulting practices affect their “bodily experience, personality and culture”(72). Similarly, Brittan defines masculinity as “those aspects of men’s behaviour that fluctuate over time” and which are “local and subject to change” according to the demands of different societies and cultures, as well as the needs and desires of particular men and groups of men, thus expressing “the current image[s] that men have of themselves in relation to women,” as well as other men (3).

However, these images tend to conflate *and* conflict with culturally-ingrained tendencies of “attributing some kind of exalted power to masculinity,” thereby obscuring explanations that stress the latter’s “contextuality” (4). This habit of regarding masculinity as an “essence” or “inborn characteristic” often leads to confusing the former word with “masculinism,” a related term which designates “the ideology that justifies and naturalizes male domination” along with patriarchy and its accompanying relations of power that present masculine dominance as normative, desirable, and unavoidable throughout the entire world, Western or otherwise (4). Masculinism assumes “there is a fundamental difference between men and women” and that “heterosexuality is normal,” treating same-sex attraction and relationships as “forms of deviance or abnormality” rather than “alternative forms of gender commitment” (4). Being “relatively resistant to change,” this “masculine ideology” dismisses all evidence “that the relationships between

men and women are political and constructed,” accepting without question “the sexual division of labour” prevalent in patriarchal societies in the Western world as dictated by “the political and dominant role of men in the public and private spheres” (4). The “existing social relations of gender” that unfold as a result of such dominance play a vital role in the ways men behave not only towards women, but also towards other men, delineating “the way[s] in which men and women confront each other ideologically and politically” as far as gender “reflect[s] the material interests of those who have power and those who do not” (2-3).

Furthermore, masculinist dominance creates “[m]asculine ideologies” or “discursive constructs” prevalent in “societies structured on asymmetrical gender and power relations,” which disproportionately assign “tasks and attributes” such as “prestige” and “power” to each gender (Ramírez ix). The continuance, reproduction and transformation of this “androcentric sex-gender system” privileges “the masculine domain” at sociocultural, political, economic, and symbolic levels, bringing about “the subsequent subordination and devaluation of the feminine domain” by binding it to power relations “designed by males and sustained by male dominance” (ix).

In *Ideology: An Introduction*, Terry Eagleton defines the eponymous term as “the process of production of meanings, signs and values in social life” permeated by “a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class” (1). Such groups promulgate ideas to “legitimate a dominant political power” or otherwise contest it in the interest of persons and groups marginalized/victimized by this power and its representatives (1). This unceasing dialogue can result in “systematically distorted communication” between social groups, yet can also aid interaction between social subjects through the interplay of

discourses and praxes, as it occurs when members and representatives of such groups build upon ideologies to offer “a position” regarding one or more subjects (1). Since these positions are often permeated, interpreted, and spoken by and through “forms of thought motivated by social interests,” such forms play significant roles in “identity thinking,” making them useful for the creation and maintenance of “socially necessary illusion(s)” born out of “the conjuncture of discourse and power” as part of “medium(s) in [and through], which conscious social actors make sense of their world” (1-2).

Moreover, social actors can create and assume “action-oriented sets of beliefs” that might allow them to accommodate or otherwise challenge prevalent systems of domination along with the societal practices which are both cause and effect of their existence (2). The resulting “confusion of linguistic and phenomenal reality” might provide the means for social subjects to achieve their own “semiotic closure” throughout lives spent negotiating “indispensable medium(s) in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure,” the latter being inseparable from “process(es) whereby social life is converted to a natural reality” (2). Nevertheless, ideologies are far from one-sided weapons of absolute dominance, let alone unambiguous contestation:

Ideologies are usually internally complex, differentiated formations, with conflicts between their various elements which need to be continually renegotiated and resolved. What we call a dominant ideology is typically that of a dominant social bloc, made up of classes and fractions whose interests are not always at one; and these compromises and divisions will be reflected in the ideology itself. [. . .]. Oppositional ideologies,

similarly, usually reflect a provisional alliance of diverse radical forces.

(45)

Since ideologies engage in unceasing dialogue with their adherents and detractors, the former seldom serve the needs of “dominant social bloc(s)” or marginalized groups neatly and unambiguously. Successful ideologies translate their ideas to the realm of practice, yet also make the problems and exigencies of everyday life concord with those ideals and tenets they uphold (48). Being ongoing interplays involving exchange, contestation, reassessment, and compromise, ideologies cannot be understood separately from the historical, social, cultural, political, and economic contexts that originate them, any more than they can be excised from their proponents, detractors, and the persons/groups they affect one way or another. Dominant or otherwise, ideologies exist “only in relation to other ideologies” and thus must “negotiate” with rulers and subordinates by maintaining an “essential open-endedness” that prevents its achievement of “pure self-identity” of any sort (45). Though the capacity to “intervene in the consciousness” of their adherents by “approaching and reinflecting their experience” and engaging significantly “with genuine wants, needs and desires” is what makes ideologies “powerful” and compelling, such capacity tends to make them “internally heterogeneous and inconsistent” (45). Therefore, heterogeneity and inconsistency forces ideologies to “recognize an ‘other’ to [themselves]” and inscribe such otherness as a “potentially disruptive force within [their] own forms” precisely because ideologies are discourses “addressed *to* another” and depend upon “the other’s response” in order to live. (46).

Consequently, the concept of ideology must not be dismissed as mere “thought rendered false by its social determinations” because “there is no thought which is *not*

socially determined,” let alone unaffected by “certain socially determined standpoints” and “viewpoints prevailing over others” (51). Furthermore, it is nearly impossible to separate “true” or “false” thought from “pragmatic interests” that are responsible, if not for the inception of ideology, then at least for its rationalization and defense, particularly when such interests and what their upholders might do to achieve them are deemed suspect at best or unconscionable at worst (51). Since “there is no thought which is *not* socially determined,” it is just as unfeasible to disconnect any given ideology from “social determinants” that not only make its mere existence possible, but also mediate upon the ways it interpenetrates society, different people, and groups to the extent it exists in a particular way rather than others (51).

Thus understood, ideologies can be approached as “more or less systematic attempts to provide plausible explanations and justifications for social behaviour which might otherwise be the object of criticism” by means of rationalizations that might “conceal the truth from others, and perhaps also from the rationalizing subject itself” (52). The need to justify unacceptable wants or desires can also compel social subjects to resort to legitimation, “the process by which a ruling power comes to secure from its subjects an at least tacit consent to its authority” by “establishing one’s interests as broadly acceptable” (54). Even so, legitimating power is not necessarily synonymous with “naturalizing” power by presenting it as “spontaneous and inevitable to one’s subordinates” (54-5).

Generally speaking, power becomes “legitimate” when those subjected to its “mode[s] of domination” assess and “judge their own behaviour by the criteria of their rulers” instead of favoring other considerations or standards (55). What matters here is

not so much to what extent a particular ideology dominates or is dominated by society and other “greater” or “lesser” ideologies, but rather how an ideology acts and is acted upon by social, cultural, political, and economic pressures which may be beyond the immediate control (or even comprehension) of its upholders, even as they themselves permeate it with their own needs, desires, and intentions. Rather than abstract monoliths that grant unquestionable power to ruling classes and uncontested oppression to groups and individuals who challenge the former, ideologies are constructs fraught with conflicts and divisions. Since they engage the needs, desires, and intentions of their upholders *and* detractors, ideologies are permeable from the inside and the outside not only by allies and foes, but also by groups and individuals who fall somewhere in between or nowhere at all, namely groups and persons who style themselves as “apolitical,” or otherwise assume ambivalent positions regarding masculinity, politics, etc.

Similarly, masculinities are provisional, subject to change, contestation, and accommodation. However, while it is true that masculinities and gender are “historically changing and politically fraught,” these changes and conflicts do not undermine masculinist privilege and male dominance, any more than they erode the power men wield as individuals or groups (*Masculinities* 3). According to Brittan, these shifts usually alter “styles of masculinity” while leaving “the substance of male power” relatively intact (2). Such changes redefine “the arena in which [male] power is exercised,” as well as the ways such power might be exercised, and therefore should not be construed as a “general abdication” of men’s power and “dominance in the political and economic spheres” (2). There is “an almost infinite number of styles and behaviours associated with gender relations,” just as there is “a large number of styles and

behaviours associated with class relations,” yet such proliferation and differentiation demonstrate that men have “a multitude of ways of expressing their masculinity in different times and places,” not that such masculinities do not participate in “male dominance” (5).

Moreover, the fact that terms like “masculine,” “feminine,” and “gender” often prove “remarkably elusive and difficult to define” facilitates male dominance while simultaneously allowing its contestation and transformation (*Masculinities* 3). Such contestations happen largely due to “current preoccupation[s] with identity” as a “gender problem,” as well as a matter of “ethnic politics” and “contemporary accounts of class consciousness” (Brittan 19). As Connell further stipulates, “the right to account for gender is claimed by conflicting discourses and systems of knowledge” throughout modern Western societies (3). He pinpoints three prominent “forms of knowledge dealing with masculinity and femininity” in the Western world: “common-sense” knowledge, “scientific” knowledge, and “intuitive” knowledge (4).

On the one hand, common-sense knowledge consists of “the rationale of the changing practices through which gender is ‘done’ or ‘accomplished’ in everyday life” (6). Mediated by religion, social class, personality, political allegiances, and other factors, it delineates more or less commonly shared parameters of what constitutes acceptable behavior for men or women, along with the discourses that naturalize gender difference and related praxes.

On the other hand, scientific knowledge correlates with the notion of *episteme*, which Michel Foucault defines in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977* as “the strategic apparatus which permits . . . separating out from

among all the statements which are possible those what will be acceptable within . . . a field or scientificity, and which it is possible to say are true or false,” thus making possible “the separation, not of the true from the false, but of what may from what may not be characterised as scientific” (197). Scientific knowledge about gender consists of strategic discrimination from among countless possible statements about masculinity and femininity, separating “true” statements (“what makes a man,” “what makes a woman,” “how men/women act/think,” “why men are different from women,” etc.) from “false” (i.e. non-scientific) statements dealing with the same subjects.

For that matter, intuitive knowledge appeals to a form of gendered knowledge altogether different from those gleaned from institutional (scientific, religious, etc.), as well as everyday discourse and praxis (*Masculinities* 4). Principally, the intuitive approach presents male and female behaviors as the unfolding of “innate” masculine or feminine “essence[s]” that have been present throughout history as archetypes dictated by a timeless “masculine/feminine polarity” (13). According to such views, gender difference does not exist because of socially learned behaviors or political positions assumed vis-à-vis specifically constituted relations of power which predominate within a given society at a specific time and place, but because they are built into the inner psyche of men and women and are practically second nature to them.

These types of knowledge tend to function as part of “normalizing theor[ies]” about gender and gender relations because all of them depart from predefined criteria of so-called normality (15). Such theories assume there is only one “normal” or “natural” way to define and perform masculinity and femininity, then demarcate what they consider to be “deviant” definitions/constructions of gender and gender identity from

vantage points provided by criteria of value that are suspect at best and spurious at worst. Matters of gender and gender identity are controversial largely because the “terms of reference” used to discuss them are predefined long before discussion begins:

[M]ost discussions of masculinity are informed and often shaped by masculinism, by the prevalent ideology of gender differences and inequalities. . . . [T]he discussion of gender identity is not immune from this, especially the assumption that gender and identity are terms which have some kind of reality, some kind of measurability. (Brittan 35)

Such contexts make masculinity, femininity, gender, and related concepts into sites of conflicting discourses and practices that work with *and* against each other. Even so, it is possible to assess masculinity in more concrete ways: “[D]efinitions of masculinity are deeply enmeshed in the history of institutions and of economic structures. Masculinity is not just an idea in the head, or a personal identity. It is also extended in the world, merged in organized social relations” (*Masculinities* 29). The proliferation of such conflicts and systems not only means that “[o]ur everyday knowledge of gender is subject to conflicting claims to know, explain and judge,” but also reveals important relations and effects of power in the Western world, “forms of knowledge are . . . connected with particular social practices,” and “major world-views are based on the interests and experiences of major social groups” (5). Since there are “social relations underpinning knowledge” (scientific or otherwise), the resulting “conflicting forms of knowledge about gender betray the presence of different practices addressing gender” (5).

Assessing gender and masculinities demands examining the “practices” that enable such knowledge to emerge, as well as how such practices “shape and limit the

forms that knowledge takes” (6). Scientific knowledge in particular is subject to what Foucault defines in “The Discourse on Language” as the opposition between true and false statements enacted by *episteme*. These oppositional divisions are created by “constraints of truth” dominant in a given society at a particular time, which are in turn “supported by a system of institutions” that impose and manipulate them in varying ways and circumstances, with variant levels of violence and restrictions (232). Consequently, the social standing of differing knowledges in Western societies is far from equal, as science and scientific knowledge have “a definite hegemony” in the education system and other media for the creation and dissemination of knowledge (*Masculinities* 6). Ineluctably, all “leading discourses” about gender, sex, identity, race, class, and similar matters make “some claim to be scientific” or otherwise use “scientific ‘findings’” (6). Nevertheless, for all its claims to objectivity, rationality, and impartiality, this “appeal to science” is inextricably linked to raced, classed, sexed, and gendered relations/effects of power:

[I]t has been shown, in convincing historical detail, that natural science itself has a gendered character. Western science and technology are culturally masculinized. This is not just a question of personnel, though it is a fact that the great majority of scientists and technologists are men. The guiding metaphors of scientific research, the impersonality of its discourse, the structures of power and communication in science, the reproduction of its internal culture, all stem from the social position of dominant men in a gendered world. The dominance of science in

discussions of masculinity thus reflects the position of masculinity (or specific masculinities) in the social relations of gender. (6)

In the “Afterword” to *Power/Knowledge*, Colin Gordon asserts that Foucault regards the European eighteenth century as “the period of the initial constitution of the human sciences in their modern forms,” along with the simultaneous “elaboration of certain new ‘technologies’ for the governance of people” (Gordon 234). Accordingly, Foucault sees how these “new technologies of power” grasped “a multiple and differentiated reality” that functioned according to a “form of power” exercised to obtain “productive service from individuals in their concrete lives” (*Power/Knowledge* 125). Throughout the nineteenth century, the “economy of power” that had been predominant in Western societies up until the seventeenth century shifted its practices and discourses in such a way that it became “more efficient and profitable . . . to place people under surveillance than to subject them to some exemplary penalty, giving rise to “new mode[s] of exercise of power” (38). Such practices gave rise to mechanisms of “surveillance” inseparable from “the establishing of a power exercised on the body itself” and, by extension, on life itself (186).

From the eighteenth century onwards, mechanisms of “bio-power” [power-over-life] and “somato-power” [power-over-body] began to shift Western societies to their modern forms by redefining the ways such societies disseminated power relations throughout new social bodies (186). Western societies integrated older social, cultural, political, and economic problems such as the control of population, hygiene, and epidemics through “the establishment of apparatuses of power making possible not only observation, but also direct intervention and manipulation in all these areas,” thus

allowing the inception of a “power over life” where up until then there had only been “vague improvisatory measures of promotion designed to alter” situations which tended to escape most efforts of knowledge and control (226). These surveillance practices gave rise to new “power relations” that “materially penetrate the body in depth, without depending . . . on the mediation of the subject’s own representations” (186). Bio-power, somato-power, and their mechanisms assumed a “capillary [network-like] form of existence” by reaching “into the very grain of individuals” (39). The former affected their lives as bodily beings to the point of inserting themselves into “their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives,” thus constituting a “synaptic regime of power” by exercising it “*within* the social body, rather than *from above* it” (39).

The Foucauldian view of power also deviates from the commonly held notion that power is “some substantive instance or agency of *sovereignty*” which localizes and invests itself in particular rulers, communities, groups of citizens, or specific regimes (Gordon 235). As Foucault states, sovereignty and sovereign power are “. . . linked to a form of power . . . exercised over the Earth and its products, much more than over human bodies and their operations” (*Power/Knowledge* 104). Having more to do with “the displacement and appropriation on the part of power, not of time and labour, but of goods and wealth,” these relations of power allow “discontinuous obligations distributed over time to be given legal expression” without allowing for “the codification of a continuous surveillance” (104). The “theory of sovereignty” and its accompanying mechanisms ground power upon “the physical existence of the sovereign” rather than in “continuous and permanent systems of surveillance,” thus permitting “the foundation of an absolute

power in the absolute expenditure of power,” which in turn bars possibilities of calculating power “in terms of the minimum expenditure for the maximum return” (104-5).

However, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the “invention” of “a new mechanism of power possessed of highly specific procedural techniques, completely novel instruments,” and apparatuses that displaced “relations of sovereignty” (104). This “disciplinary power,” its mechanisms, and strategies are “more dependent upon bodies and what they do than upon the Earth and its products (104). This mechanism of power “permits time and labour, rather than wealth and commodities, to be extracted from bodies,” and thus entails “a type of power . . . constantly exercised by means of surveillance rather than in a discontinuous manner by a system of levies or obligations distributed over time” (104). Resting upon “a tightly knit grid of material coercions rather than the physical existence of a sovereign,” disciplinary power demands both constant “increase[s]” in the numbers of “subjected forces,” as well as continuous improvements regarding “the force and efficacy” of the grid(s) of “material coercions” that subject such forces (104).

While disciplinary power serves as “a fundamental instrument in the constitution of industrial capitalism” and the societies it creates, the former has not done away with sovereign power, its mechanisms, and discourses (105). Modern Western societies from the seventeenth century onwards are structured upon “disciplinary constraints . . . exercised through mechanisms of domination,” as well as “a theory of sovereignty” that functions “at the level of [their] legal apparatus” and reemerges in its codes in order to disguise the “effective exercise of power” wielded by such constraints and exercised

through such mechanisms (106). This grid of “material coercions” retools “the discourse and techniques of right” prevalent under sovereign power (95). By doing so, it effaces “the domination intrinsic to power” in its discourses and praxes, presenting the latter “at the level of appearance under two different aspects,” namely those of “legitimate rights of sovereignty” and “legal obligation to obey” the latter (95). Thus, right in the disciplinary sense of the word should be viewed “in terms of the methods of subjugation that it instigates,” namely “the manifold forms of domination that can be exercised within society” and have “a place and function within the social organism” as manifested through the “mutual relations” of social subjects of/to disciplinary power (96).

Gordon stipulates how modern Western societies ground such mechanisms and the fields of knowledge that make them possible upon “a new philosophical conception of ‘Man’ as a simultaneous subject and object of knowledge,” which gained sociocultural, political, scientific, and economic currency during the late-seventeenth century all through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and beyond (Gordon 234). Modern Western societies built upon mechanisms and practices of disciplinary and sovereign power function according to a dynamic three-pronged structural/regulating model consisting of “power,” “right,” and “truth” (*Power/Knowledge* 93).

Foucault defines truth as “a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements,” linked “in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it” as part of a “régime of truth” (133). Discursive systems of prohibition and exclusion render knowledge into a “form of power” that disseminates “effects of power” and becomes inseparable from the latter (69). This

occurs because “the exercise of power itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information” to the extent that such exercise “perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power” (51). Thus, it is impossible to exercise power (oppressive or otherwise) without knowledge, just as it is impossible “for knowledge not to engender power” (52). Truth in modern Western societies is bound to the production of discourse and the dissemination of the effects of disciplinary power because it is “centred on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions which produce it . . .” (131).

All societies select, organize, control, and distribute “the production of discourse” by means of rules of prohibition that “interrelate, reinforce and complement each other, forming a complex web, continually subject to modification,” that restricts discourse and its production by placing limits regarding “objects, ritual with its surrounding circumstances,” and “the privileged or exclusive right to speak of a particular subject” (“The Discourse . . .” 231). Foucault also uncovers “principles of exclusion,” namely the ancient dichotomy of “reason and folly” and the “opposition between true and false,” both of which work along with such prohibitions to the point of becoming inseparable from them (231). The reason/folly dichotomy comprises a network of “division” and “rejection,” which in turn consists of a more or less strategic selection, organization, distribution, and control of language that distinguishes between written and spoken language acts considered to be part of “the common discourse of men” (“reason”), and language acts termed “deviant” (“folly”) from the perspective of “common” discourse (231). These rules of prohibition and systems of exclusion employ distinctions between “true” and “false” discourse, thereby lending their “general form” to the “will to truth”

that has dominated the Western world to the point of obscuring the roles it plays alongside the “will to knowledge” in the history of “constraining truths” (233). Like other “systems of exclusion,” the will to truth cannot function without “institutional support,” as it is “reinforced and accompanied by whole strata of practices such as pedagogy . . . the book-system, publishing, libraries . . . and laboratories . . .” (233-4).

In turn, these arguments implicate Western scientificism in what Foucault defines as the “will to truth,” namely “the manner in which knowledge is employed in a society, the way . . . it is exploited, divided and, in some ways, attributed” (234). In the context of Western societies, this will to truth is enmeshed with a “will to knowledge” that exercises “a sort of pressure, a power of constrain upon other forms of discourse,” and compels language and works of fiction and nonfiction to “base [themselves] in nature, in the plausible, upon sincerity and science,” upon so-called truth (234). This will to knowledge aims to codify and organize all social, cultural, political, and economic practices into all-binding “precepts and recipes” in order to “rationalise and justify their currency” by means of theories and “prescriptive ensembles” (234). The aforementioned ensembles are themselves validated by psychological, psychiatric, sociological, medical, and other forms of institutional knowledge/truth, thereby masking the power relations that make such knowledge and practice possible and all but inescapable throughout modern Western societies (234).

Will to knowledge and will to truth implicate all subjects of Western societies, particularly to what concerns the “production” of truth and knowledge thus understood:

We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth. [. . .]. .

. . . [W]e are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has need, in order to function: we *must* speak the truth; we are constrained or condemned to confess or to discover the truth. Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalises, professionalises and rewards its pursuit. . . . [W]e must produce truth as we must produce wealth, indeed we must produce truth in order to produce wealth in the first place. . . . [W]e are also subjected to truth in the sense in which it is truth that makes the laws, that produces the true discourse which, at least partially, decides, transmits and itself extends upon the effects of power. . . . [W]e are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power. (*Power/Knowledge* 93-4)

Moreover, Foucault argues that while it is true that “major mechanisms of power” and their effects are inseparable from “ideological productions” and politics of legitimation, power itself cannot be reduced to ideology, as the former is both “much more and much less than ideology”:

[Power] is the production of effective instruments for the formation and accumulation of knowledge—methods of observation, techniques of registration, procedures for investigation and research, apparatuses of control. . . . [P]ower, when it is exercised through these subtle mechanisms, cannot but evolve, organise and put into circulation a

knowledge, or rather apparatuses of knowledge, which are not ideological constructs. (102)

Power creates discourse, knowledge, ideology, and practice, not vice-versa. Modern Western societies exercise power to achieve “domination” through “material operators of power” (102). The latter function according to variegated “forms of subjection and the inflections and utilisations of their localised systems,” all geared towards the creation and application of “strategic apparatuses” structured around “techniques and tactics of domination” (102). To Foucault, power is hence, “neither given, nor exchanged, nor recovered, but rather exercised, and . . . only exists in action” to the extent it is “a relation of force” rather than a mere “maintenance and reproduction of economic relations” or any other kind of relations prevalent in a given society (89). Thus understood, “[p]ower is constructed and functions on the basis of particular powers, myriad issues, myriad effects of power,” rather than on “individual or collective” wills/agencies or interests (188). In modern Western societies, including their peripheries of influence such as in the Anglophone Caribbean, power and its effects comprise “a more-or-less organised, hierarchical, co-ordinated cluster of relations” extended via “great strategies” that encrust themselves upon “micro-relations of power” and depend on such clusters for “their conditions of exercise” at a given time and place (198-9).

However, within these clusters, there exist counter “movements in the opposite directions,” where the strategies that “co-ordinate relations of power” originate new “effects” of power and “advance into hitherto unaffected domains” (199-200). The “difference of potentials” implied in the “unequal and relatively stable relation of forces” that comprise power relations requires both a “movement from above to below,” as well

as “a capillarity from below to above” (201). Because of this, power is “something which circulates . . . something which only functions in the form of a chain” and is “never localised here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth” (98). It is “employed and exercised through a net-like organisation,” within which individuals “circulate between its threads” and are “always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power” (98). Individuals are “elements of [the] articulation [of power]” to the extent they are “vehicles of power” rather than mere “points of application” or “inert or consenting target[s]” of power:

. . . [I]t is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. [. . .] The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle. (98)

The individual, along with her or “his identity and characteristics,” is constantly made and remade as “the product of a relation of power” exercised over sociocultural, political, raced, classed, and gendered desires, forces, multiplicities, and movements, as well as over the very bodies of male and female social subjects (73-4). Such arguments are analogous to the following hypotheses on the ways power disseminates itself and (re)creates its subjects:

- a) Power is a given within the social body. There are no “spaces of primal liberty” to be found inside or outside of its network.

- b) Relations of power play a simultaneous “conditioning and . . . conditioned role” regarding other human relations, including sexuality, family, kinship, and production, and are thus intertwined with them.
- c) Such relations take “multiple forms” and are not restricted to prohibition and punishment.
- d) These interconnections stem from “general conditions of domination” structured into “a more-or-less coherent and unitary strategic form[s]” which serve as a series of “global strategies” that adapt, reinforce, and transform “localised procedures of power.” However, since the latter are always accompanied by “numerous phenomena or inertia, displacement and resistance,” domination unfolds as “a multiform production of relations . . . partially susceptible [to] integration into overall strategies,” rather than as “a massive and primal condition” functioning as a clear-cut “binary structure with ‘dominators’ on one side and ‘dominated’ on the other.”
- e) Power relations work to the extent they can be “utilized in strategies,” not because they serve “economic interest(s)” that supersede all other agencies and agendas.
- f) Relations of power always create resistances “formed right at the point” where such relations are exercised. Resistance exists by “being in the same place as power” and, like power itself, it is “multiple” and capable of integration into “global strategies.” Because of this, resistance “does not have to come from elsewhere to be real,” just as it

is not necessarily condemned to failure or cooptation “through being the compatriot of power.” (142)

Like gender and the discourses and practices attached to it, power and its relations are subject to contestation and change. Both may be transformed in matters of style and usage without altering male power and masculinist dominance at their core.

Nevertheless, the fact that it is men who dominate women in such relations does not mean that *all* men perpetrate male dominance the same way, let alone that they equally benefit from it. As Ramírez asserts, men also experience the contradictions attached to gendered power relations throughout Western societies:

Men perceive the power of masculinity in contradictory ways.

Collectively, men are considered to be powerful, but individually, there are men who do not have much power—men subjugated to other men and, on occasion, to women—and who evaluate themselves as individuals deprived of power. This situation responds to the fact that the power of masculinity is constructed and unevenly manifested in homosocial relationships (social relations among male actors, from which women are excluded). Masculine power is also interrelated with existing inequalities in a society. (ix)

Caribbean island societies are particularly affected by such disparities in homosocial and heterosocial gender relations. The way Caribbean men claim and wield power unfolds “in the context of structural relationships” endemic to the region, which include racialized, cultural, and “classed systems” structured to privilege people of European ancestry at the expense of those belonging to African, Asian, and other non-

European descendent peoples (ix). Along with masculinism, racism, colorism, and Eurocentrism, this class system is implicated in “political and economic inequalities” and other “systems of oppression and exclusion” structured upon European and North American colonialism and neocolonialism, which in turn unfold as part of a common past linked to slavery and the transatlantic slave trade (x). These interrelated phenomena impact the ways Caribbean men construct their masculinities:

In Caribbean societies homosocial relations are constructed in a hierarchical system. . . . [T]here are diverse levels of differentiation and of relative equality between men, depending on their position in the hierarchy and on the various scenarios in which they relate to each other and weave their everyday living. The differential access of men to power also entails hypothesizing the existence of multiple masculinities, in which the margins of the representations of sexuality and gender identities are constantly being erased and redrawn. (x)

These dynamics of power interpenetrate all discourse and practice regarding gender throughout the Caribbean, particularly stratifications built upon what Connell terms “hegemonic masculinity.” This definition repurposes the arguments Antonio Gramsci makes in “The Intellectuals” regarding the creation of dominant social classes and their representatives, as well as the roles they play in processes of production and dissemination of ideas and practices.

According to Gramsci, “[e]very social group” comes into being “on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production,” and thus “creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it

homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields” (5). These classes and their members “must have the capacity to be an organiser of society in general, including all its complex organism of services, right up to the state organism,” thus creating “the conditions most favourable to the expansion of their own class,” including “the capacity to choose the deputies (specialised employees) to whom to entrust this activity of organising the general system of relationships external to the business itself” (5-6). Hence, a “dominant class” ensures its domination and reproduces it by means of “a number of actual pre-meditated tactics operating within the grand strategies that ensure this domination” (*Power/Knowledge* 203). In turn, domination functions as part of “a reciprocal relation of production” that operates “between the strategy which fixes, reproduces, multiplies and accentuates existing relations of forces,” as well as “the class which thereby finds itself in a ruling position” (203). Therefore, since human beings “carr[y] on some form of intellectual activity” beyond their “professional activity,” they take part “in a particular conception of the world,” have “a conscious line of moral conduct,” and help “sustain a conception of the world,” or otherwise “modify it” by bringing into being “new modes of thought” (Gramsci 9).

Similarly, in *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*, Connell defines hegemony in terms of “a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and social processes” (184). Therefore, hegemony consists of “the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life” (*Masculinities* 77). Likewise, hegemonic masculinity entails “the configuration of gender practice which

embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy,” and thus guarantees “the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (77). Though the ascendancy of hegemonic masculinity is not “based on force,” the former is not incompatible with force to the extent “[p]hysical or economic violence backs up a dominant cultural pattern . . . or ideologies justify the holders of physical power” (*Gender and Power* 184). This ascendancy is “achieved within a balance of forces . . . a state of play,” which subordinates rather than eliminates other patterns and groups (184).

Moreover, the “cultural ideal[s] of masculinity” need not correspond at all “to the actual personalities of the majority of men” (184). Securing hegemony often involves creating “models of masculinity which are quite specifically fantasy figures . . .” along with publicized “real models . . . so remote from everyday achievement” that they become “an unattainable ideal” (184-5). Consequently, “[t]he public face of hegemonic masculinity” is not really “what powerful men are,” but rather “what sustains their power and what large numbers of men are motivated to support” by granting “a large amount of consent,” and therefore, complicity, to it (185). Such consent implies “men’s appropriation of women’s labour” as well as the ““human value”” of women themselves, both of which occur in social, cultural, political, and economic contexts created by patriarchy, “an impersonal and complex structure of relations among men which manages the exploitation of women” and, by extension, dominated men (*Masculinities* 38).

Even so, the consent and complicity dominant and subjugated men confer to patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity must be assessed cautiously, free from baseless generalizations. While “most men [certainly] benefit from the subordination of women”

as practiced in patriarchal societies throughout the Western world, hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily imply deliberate mistreatment of women or subordinate men by dominant men or groups (*Gender and Power* 185). Though the use of “direct violence” as a means to sustain and support masculinist authority remains a possibility, what makes male dominance hegemonic in the Gramscian sense of the word is the “successful claim” to such authority rather than the exercise of violence in and of itself (*Masculinities* 77). In turn, exploitation is made possible by “the maintenance of practices that institutionalize men’s dominance over women” through “a successful collective strategy” constructed “in relation to women and to subordinated masculinities” (*Gender and Power* 185-6).

Concomitantly, Connell and James Messerschmidt affirm in “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept” that the titular term “designates a form of social, cultural, historical, and ideological discourse used to punish dissent and enforce conformity in order to protect a particular social order built upon specific considerations of sex and gender” (832). Hegemonic masculinity entails “pattern[s] of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allow men’s dominance over women to continue” and justifies/naturalizes its claims of dominance over “other masculinities,” particularly those of men who benefit from patriarchy “without enacting a strong version of masculine dominance,” and who therefore perform and embody “a complicit masculinity”:

Hegemonic masculinity was distinguished from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men may

enact it. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men.

[. . .] Hegemony did not mean violence, although it could be supported by force; it meant ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion. (832)

Yet dominance in this sense should not be construed as an inevitable imposition of “a dominant group’s ideology” over an entire society (Brittan 5). Such reductionist views are inaccurate because men do not constitute a homogeneous social class that maximizes its “class interest” by forcing women and dominated men to accept “masculine ideology” as a “natural and inevitable” worldview “used by a ruling group to justify and legitimate its claims to rule” (5). Instead, hegemonic masculinity is constructed “in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women” through a series of “interplay[s] between different forms of masculinity,” which in turn constitute “an important part of how a patriarchal social order works” in modern Western societies (*Gender and Power* 183). Accordingly, Connell maintains that “[t]he most important feature of contemporary hegemonic masculinity is that it is heterosexual,” as well as “closely connected to the institution of marriage” (186). Since “a key form of subordinated masculinity is homosexual,” such subordination involves “both direct interactions and a kind of ideological warfare” (186).

In modern Western societies, masculinist hegemony functions as an “overall framework” structured by “specific gender relations of dominance and subordination

between groups of men,” specifically “the dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of homosexual men” (*Masculinities* 78). Heterosexual men are hence presumed to subordinate homosexual men through “an array of . . . material practices,” including “political and cultural exclusion, cultural abuse . . . legal violence . . . street violence . . . economic discrimination and personal boycotts” (78). Whether such a blanket equation of heterosexuality with domination and homosexuality with subordination is permanently applicable is open to argument, yet such debates occur and recur for most telling reasons:

Oppression positions homosexual masculinities at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men. Gayness, in patriarchal ideology, is the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity, the items ranging from fastidious taste in home decoration to receptive anal pleasure. Hence, from the point of view of hegemonic masculinity, gayness is easily assimilated to femininity. (78)

Masculine dominance forms what Foucault would term a cluster of relations built around “an inspecting [Panoptic] gaze” that apprehends individual men, who in turn interiorize it to such extent that they become “[their] own overseer[s]” by exercising “surveillance over, and against, [themselves]” and others (*Power/Knowledge* 155). Similar to the Panoptic gaze, hegemonic masculinity is “exercised continuously and for what turns out to be a minimal cost” because its subjects are compelled to police themselves and one another, thus removing the constant need to recur to official/institutional mechanisms of violence and coercion (155). Though such relations of power certainly encourage contempt for bisexual, transsexual, intersexual, and homosexual masculinities, as well as

inflicting violence against their practitioners, the former also subordinate other heterosexual masculinities, expelling the latter and their practitioners from what Connell terms “the circle of legitimacy” (79). Connell insists that rigorous practitioners of the “hegemonic pattern” of masculinity may be few and far between, yet “[t]he majority of men” benefit from this pattern to the extent they partake from “the patriarchal dividend,” the “advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women” (79).

Hegemonic masculinity consists of male-centered relations of power which function “[a]t the level of mass social relations” that define “forms of femininity” as well as masculinity by departing from “the global subordination of women” as “an essential basis for differentiation” and exclusion from higher spheres of power, wealth, and influence (*Gender and Power* 183). The former is inseparable from “emphasized femininity,” a form of female-centered discourse and practice defined around the “compliance” of women to subordination by/to men in order to accommodate “the interests and desires of men” (183). However, other forms of femininity and masculinity are “defined centrally by strategies of resistance or forms of non-compliance,” whereas others are defined by “complex strategic combinations of compliance, resistance and co-operation” (183-4). Rather than operate within isolated spheres, these forms of dominant, subordinate, complicit, and marginalized femininity and masculinity participate in complex “interplay[s]” with one another as part of “dynamics of change in the gender order as a whole” (184). Hegemonic masculinity strives to secure dominance and compliance by disciplining and conditioning dominant and dominated men and women alike to regard such dominance, as well as the discourses and praxes that accompany it, as “normal.” Masculinist dominance cannot exist without “the oppression of men” any

more than it can do without “oppression by men” because it is legitimized and maintained by power relations enacted by individual men and groups of men who dominate (and are dominated by) other men while simultaneously subjugating women (Connell and Messerschmidt 831).

Nevertheless, what Connell terms the “conditions for the defence of patriarchy” become subject to modification whenever “the bases for the dominance of a particular masculinity” are transformed or otherwise eroded in such a way that the upholders of a specific version of masculinity lose their hegemony within a given society (*Masculinities* 77). Since hegemonic power relations are “historically mobile” and subject to “ebb and flow,” and hegemonic masculinity “embodies a ‘currently accepted strategy’” for legitimizing male domination, it is possible for newly constituted social groups of men to “challenge old solutions [“to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy”] and construct a new hegemony,” just as it is possible for women to contest the dominance of any given group of men (77).

These power relations unfold in the Anglophone Caribbean in ways similar to the hierarchies of masculinities E. Antonio de Moya uncovers in “Power Games and Totalitarian Masculinity in the Dominican Republic.” Although such hierarchies are “mainly concerned with social power,” they do not exclude other considerations (72). Embodying and performing so-called true masculinity also consists of internalizing “gender relations” structured around “the cultural transmission of gender anxiety and homophobia to younger generations,” particularly boys, in order to sever all connections with “femininity” in “prospective true males” (72-3). These hierarchies place men into dominant, subordinate, complicit, or marginal raced, classed, sexed, and gendered

positions within the social echelon (76). Such divisions are themselves sanctioned by “[t]wo opposite *and* complementary cultures constructed around the stereotypes of the household and the street as sacred and profane places” or “*casa* (household)/*calle* (street) divide”:

In these two cultures, notions of social class intersect with ethnicity and race. The ruling class attempts to champion the sacred (respectable) component while the oppressed classes are expected to vindicate its profane (reputation) counterpart. . . . [B]oth classes reserve the right to conveniently endorse the values and norms of the opposite and complementary culture when opportune, in a kind of yin-yang interaction. . . . [T]he household, the inner aspect of life, is feminine. It is the reign of the wife and the mother. The street is masculine, and men belong to it. The dual nature of masculinity allows men to circulate through both worlds, at the same time keeping the monopoly of the street. (76-7)

The “household space” encompasses “those actions and institutions that are socially sanctioned by the dominant ideology,” namely heterosexual monogamous marriage and “heterosexual sexual practices,” the primacy of the nuclear family, dominant (i.e. Christian) religions, “formal economy” (officially sanctioned/taxed jobs and services), and “traditional [male-dominated] gender roles and mores” (77). Conversely, the “street space” sets limits to such institutions through practices that include “informal economy” (unregulated/untaxed jobs and services, usually deemed “illegal” or “disreputable”), prostitution and other forms of paid sex work, “extramarital relations,” and countless forms of opportunistic behavior that emphasize shrewdness,

initiative, competition, and aggressiveness as a way for prospective men to profiteer from rival men and vanquish them (77). These dual spaces are shot through by complimentary and contradictory power relations as well as their accompanying discourses and praxes:

Although gender work seems to be relatively generalized for the socialization of boys [in the Dominican Republic], a major distinction between the cultural perspectives of the household and those of the street seems to exist. Masculinity, virility and manhood have usually been regarded as synonyms, but the two cultures, according to the differential power associated with social class, seem to invest those concepts with distinct meanings, apparently based on ancient archetypes of social life patterned on the mythical “laws of the jungle.” (79)

For instance, “street culture” champions a subversive version of masculinity focused chiefly upon “the notion of ‘maleness’ or ‘virility,’” i.e. the capacity to have penetrative sexual relationships with women other than one’s wife (79). This “chasing behaviour” and flaunting of “male potency” is “largely unconcerned with family duties,” serving as “a defence against [men’s perceived] political and economic powerlessness” through the emphasis of heteronormative sexual prowess, as well as using street smarts and predatory cunning to achieve one’s desires and objectives despite the opposition of other men and similar constraints (79). This behavior falls under the rubric of what Connell terms “protest masculinity,” the embodiment/performance of “marginalized masculinit[ies]” that appropriate “themes of hegemonic masculinity” and repurpose them “in a context of poverty” (*Masculinities* 114). Protest masculinities become stylized “complicit masculinit[ies]” to the extent they distance themselves from “direct display[s] of

[masculinist] power” without simultaneously relinquishing the “privilege” customarily attached to the male gender in modern Western societies (114). On the one hand, these subversive/loyal praxes stem from “a pattern of motives” born in the context of lifelong “experience[s] of powerlessness” (111). Such contexts can prompt subordinate men to engage in hypermasculinity, that is, “exaggerated claim[s] to the potency that European culture attaches to masculinity,” manifested in over-performances of “masculine conventions” in an effort to claim a “gendered position of power” over women and other men (111).

On the other hand, what Moya defines as “household culture” endorses a dominant version of masculinity that emphasizes “manliness” or “manhood” as “courage, determination and power” (79). Unlike street-culture masculinity, this paradigm takes active interest in household affairs, particularly in providing for the economic welfare of the nuclear family, namely one’s wife and legitimate children (i.e. sired *in wedlock*) (80). Household-culture masculinity is linked to “the assumed authority and power of the breadwinner,” the fact that “the person who brings a wage into the household is presumed to have some kind of privileged status regarding other household or family members” (Brittan 113). Since “the role of breadwinner is considered a male prerogative,” the wages men (fathers and other male family members) bring to the home are often “privileged” at the expense of wages brought by women (mothers and other female family members) (114). Such privilege is also reflected “in the allocation of household tasks”: women tend to do the majority of unpaid work inside traditionally tended nuclear households, whereas males commonly monopolize paid work outside the home (114).

These interplays between household and street culture contribute to the formation of hierarchies of masculinities that pivot around “concentric circles centred on the notion of power and control,” dividing men into four interrelated categories of masculinity: “hegemonic” masculinities, “subordinate” masculinities, “marginal” masculinities, and “residual” masculinities (Moya 80). Such classifications organize men and masculinities as follows: hegemonic-heterosexual masculinities occupy the top position, followed by subordinate-complicit heterosexual masculinities, subordinate-bisexual masculinities, and marginal-homosexual masculinities, respectively (82-94). “Residual” masculinities occupy the lowest position, reserved for “virilized women” who develop “masculine attitudes and secondary sexual characteristics” judged to be customarily present in men and absent in women (94-5). Moya defines “[h]egemonic masculinities” as “those shown by virile and manly, exclusively heterosexual men,” who enjoy positions of power and influence in their society and are regarded as “true” and “real” men (81). Commonly treated with “respect and deference” by other men, these dominant men often exhibit glaring contradictions in their lives, behavior, and relationships inside and outside of the household:

All men in this household –culture category are embodiments of the Father figure in the ideology of the patrifocal Christian Sacred family. They are exclusively heterosexual and nominally monogamous, fathering children of both sexes who are kept and educated at least until eighteen years of age or until marriage. Sporadic or recurrent unfaithfulness to one’s wife, or having a mistress and [“outside”] children, may be a common power display, as part of a certain transgressiveness allowed to

the hegemonic male . . . Men's loyalty is directed towards their children, mostly to boys, who are supposed to "inherit" their father's masculinity . . . (82)

Hegemonic men are compelled to "produce and reproduce as a ritual the patriarchal power game of masculinities, primarily on the basis of sexual orientation" (99). They symbolically embody "the measure against which all men will compare themselves," and consequently must "define, patrol and preserve the borders of patriarchal 'normalcy'" (99). Doing so implies being the "exact opposite" of women by complying with "rules of sound, proven and 'balanced-gender' fatherhood," namely "having children of both sexes" (99).

Subordinate heterosexual men comprise the second category, itself divided into five subcategories: "incomplete," "virtual," "dubious" ("dudes"), "survivor," and "loser" men (84). In street and household cultures, the first subcategory of men tends to be regarded as "incomplete" due to some alleged lack or flaw in their virility or masculine character (84). Among other characteristics, these "lesser" men may be incapable of forming and sustaining a family, remain childless after marriage, or otherwise procreate only daughters, which is considered "a signal of male weakness, phallic deficit or female dominance" (84). Conversely, "virtual" men are biological males who do not act as men (84). They might be "victims of female infidelity" due to a presumed "lack of sexual potency," physically "small" and unimpressive, dismissed as "unimportant," removed from higher spheres of power and influence, or ridiculed because of their "passive" (not active, lacking initiative) and "weak" (non-assertive, non-confrontational, deferential towards others) character (84-5). So-called dubious men/"dudes" are suspected of not

being “real men” on grounds of having “feminine traits” such as “being delicate, handsome or physically attractive as a woman . . . being dependent on mother or wife” and/or “living off women” due to being “financially dependent” upon them” (85).

Lastly, “loser” and “survivor” men comprise the lowest subcategories in the hierarchy of heterosexual masculinities (86). Labelled and treated as “outcasts, pariahs or non-persons,” these men seldom manage to find and retain female partners because of their “social and economic powerlessness” (86). Being “socially and economically debased men,” “survivors” and “losers” subsist by performing odd-jobs, or undertaking “feminine” tasks in domestic service, such as cooking or gardening (87). Some might also turn to crime, confidence games, or other ways of taking predatory advantage over others, a trait treated with ambivalence in household and street cultures (87). The former regards such acts as disreputable and illegal, yet the latter treats them as evidence of a protest masculinity whose upholders survive (and sometimes thrive) by relying upon self-serving cunning and subverting the law, along with other mechanisms of power (87).

According to Moya, these hierarchies use various, often contradictory “[m]anifestations of virility and manhood” to “produce an attribution of the “kind of man” any male is, employing criteria akin to the *casa/calle* divide and superimposing them “on yin-yang dialectic[s] of household and street culture[s]” (80-1). Such attributions operate on a rationale of raced, classed, sexed, and gendered power relations that locate power and potency in hegemonic masculinities/men and distribute increasingly dwindling shares of power, wealth, and social prestige to subordinate, marginal, and residual masculinities/men. These effects of power create “relatively symmetrical” relationships “in terms of power” between “men classified within each

single category,” yet result in “relatively asymmetrical” relationships “between men belonging to different categories” (95).

Similarly, relationships and interactions between men in Caribbean island societies derive their patterns from “[c]ultural and historical norms and expectations,” with “dyadic [two-party] relationship between men” being defined by the “respective social positioning” of both parties (95). Furthermore, the histories of racism and European dominance common to Caribbean societies contributed to the formation of “ethno-class[es],” systems of social, cultural, political, and economic stratification that use “social class and ethnicity/race culture” along with sex and gender to determine the place(s) Caribbean social subjects occupy in echelons structured upon Eurocentric notions of masculine power and dominance (Moya 99). Even so, Moya warns of the complexities stemming from such relationships:

[M]asculine identity is an important part of the “problem of legitimation” for political and social life . . . opening or closing opportunities for men’s personal endeavors. Masculinity is thus a totalitarian notion that produces intricate strategies (power games) for men to oppress other men and to prevent oppression by them. In a sense, every dyadic relationship between men seems to be “gendered” or rank-ordered by actors’ characteristics and behaviour. The outcome . . . is a multiplicity of (situational) masculine identities displayed by each man. (98)

While masculinist power relations and ideologies are relatively resistant to change and contestation, the same cannot be said for masculine identities. Such identities are

“fragile” because “they do not depend only on a man’s behaviour, but also on the ways other men and women relate to him or to “his” women” (98).

Though the realms of household and street culture are considered “separate,” both constitute places, discourses, and practices that gauge masculinity and power (or lack thereof) through different, albeit related, criteria. Constructed around “the concepts of the feminine, the sacred and the respectable,” household culture defines masculinity as the possession and practice of “manliness” and “manhood,” both primarily manifested in fathering and economically sustaining children until they reach adulthood or emancipate themselves (99). Therefore, for a man to suffer destitution and homelessness is tantamount to losing what makes him a “real” man, that is, the capacity to exercise the “masculine” prerogative of breadwinning and, by extension, authority, power, and control over the household (99).

Built “on the basis of reputation as well as the masculine and the profane,” street culture defines masculinity as “maleness” or “virility,” namely sexual potency and capacity for sexually “conquering” women apart from one’s wife (99). While sleeping with several women and “stealing” other men’s wives or lovers bolsters a man’s reputation for maleness and virility, “male impotence” and “[f]emale adultery” emasculates men by stripping them of sexual potency, as well as the power and dominance men wield through their complicity in the subordination of women (99). The reputation and social standing of men (dominant or otherwise) is subject to outside scrutiny and “collective behaviour” (98). Therefore, the slightest deviation from tenets and praxes of “true” masculinity may result in the destruction of men’s reputation and identity (98). For instance, men accused of being “victims of adultery” are publicly

discredited, derided, and ostracized because such a “contemptible situation” is termed synonymous with “becoming a woman” (98). Moreover, the adulterer proves himself to be “more of a man” than the husband/lover he cuckolded, as the former managed to “steal” the latter’s woman and, by extension, the proof of his masculine dominance and power. Adultery and similar practices are a means for men to symbolically emasculate one another as part of “recursive, pervasive and deadly power game(s)” that compel men to relate to women and other men through power relations built upon achieving dominance while simultaneously avoiding being dominated themselves (98).

Subjected from early childhood to “an ongoing process of stringent, totalitarian “gender work” in order to “construct” hegemonic males, men become “self-conscious” (some to the point of paranoia) about “verbal and non-verbal behaviours” that could potentially cast their masculinity into question (98). By instilling “homophobia” in maturing boys at both public and private levels, men develop an “irrational fear of becoming a woman,” which in turn serves as a perpetual threat of “degeneracy” that aids in the compulsory construction and simultaneous deconstruction of male identity as only located/realized through “exclusive heterosexuality” and masculinist dominance (98).

Factors such as privilege on grounds of race, class, sex, and gender work in tandem with heteronormativity to secure and legitimize the social ascendancy of hegemonic men. As Allan Johnson states in *Privilege, Power, and Difference*, privilege unfolds within a given society “when one [social] group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the group they belong to,” rather than because of individual misdeeds or shortcomings (21). These socially instituted systems divide, exploit, and elide human beings by making “differences that would otherwise have little

if any inherent connection to social inequality” into “a basis for privilege and oppression” (x).

Using race as an example, Johnson argues that while “racial differences . . . do not define actual biological [human] groups,” they are nevertheless seized upon by social, cultural, political, and economic systems that structure them into “socially defined categories” which justify the monopoly on wealth, power, and prestige dominant groups derive at the expense of inflicting poverty, powerlessness, and degradation upon dominated groups (x). Just as “white Europeans . . . developed the idea of race as a way to justify” their systematic enslavement, exploitation, and subordination of “people of color” on grounds of the “supposed racial superiority” of European rulers and their representatives, privilege refashions difference into “something significant” in order to create and perpetuate itself throughout a given society (x).

Privilege encompasses a series of relations and effects of power by means of discourses and praxes that create, sustain, and justify social stratification and inequality. The former unfolds along with oppression throughout modern Western and Caribbean societies that use difference as grounds for deciding what share in the societal bounty of wealth and power social groups and particular persons are entitled to.

In “Oppression—A New Definition,” Ursula Egidius defines the titular concept as “an enclosing structure that, by way of institutional practice, harms members of a social group, while members of another, or other, corresponding social groups benefit from the harm suffered by those oppressed” (8). A “member of a social group” is considered to be “oppressed” if he or she meets the following criteria: the oppressed party suffers “a harm that comes from an institutional practice” (institutional harm condition); such harm is

“brought about by social constraints” that form “an enclosing structure that immobilizes the person subjected to the harm” (enclosing structure condition); the individual suffers harm due to his/her “membership to a certain social group” (social group condition); there are individuals who belong to “a corresponding group that “(unjustly) benefits from the harm” suffered by the oppressed party (8).

Marilyn Frye posits in “Oppression” that the term denotes a conglomerate of social, cultural, historical, political, and economic power relations, discourses, and practices performed by social subjects at individual and communal levels, as a result of which people are “molded” according to the privileged or unprivileged social groups they share membership in (42). Members of unprivileged groups are “flattened” by (mis)representations dominant groups make of them, and thus find their opportunities and capacities to achieve the best possible lives within the societies they inhabit more or less drastically “reduced” (42).

Likewise, as Diane Goodman asserts in “Oppression and Privilege: Two Sides of the Same Coin,” oppression consists of “a system of advantage (privilege) and disadvantage (oppression) based on social group membership,” where “some groups are advantaged—seen as superior, have greater social power, and receive unearned benefits, while other groups are disadvantaged—seen as inferior, have less social power, and face discrimination and violence” (2). Such systems deliberately disadvantage people who do not conform to “cultural norms, values, and ways of being” prevalent in a given society (6). As a result, disadvantaged people “are viewed negatively, marginalized and/or adversely affected” within power relations built upon dominance (6).

Since domination is built into the minds, bodies, languages, and desires of individuals, oppression manifests through “deeply embedded, systemic manifestations of inequality” rather than isolated incidents of “interpersonal bias” or abuse of power (6). Privileged and unprivileged persons alike learn to make distinctions between privileged and non-privileged through the “process of socialization,” a series of socially, culturally, historically, politically, and economically mediated discourses, praxes, constraints, and politics of power, truth, and knowledge, by means of which “[m]embers of a society learn about their own and other social groups, and the ideology, values and norms of the dominant society” through a “cultural conditioning” that “makes the current reality, with its inequality, seem normal and natural” (4).

Accordingly, while “access to privilege” (or lack thereof) does not inexorably determine “outcomes” in the lives of groups or individuals, the former “makes it more likely that whatever talent, ability, and aspirations” a person has will work to his or her advantage (Johnson 22). However, lack of privilege transforms social categories deemed the “opposite” of dominant ones into “*liabilities* that make it less likely that people’s talent, ability, and aspirations will be recognized and rewarded” (22). As a result, “privilege generally allows people to assume a certain level of acceptance, inclusion, and respect in the world,” as well as “operate within a relatively wide comfort zone” by granting them the means to ensure that situations or conflicts work in *their* favor (32). It permits a chosen few groups and individuals to “set the agenda in a social situation and determine the rules . . . standards,” and the ways the latter may be applied, granting such people “the cultural authority to make judgments about others and to have those judgments stick,” which allows them to “define reality and to have prevailing definitions

of reality fit their experience” (33). This enables privileged groups and persons to “decide who gets taken seriously, who receives attention, who is accountable to whom and for what,” thereby endowing them with “a presumption of superiority and social permission to act on that presumption without having to worry about being challenged” (33).

Thus, according to Lewis, privileged people tend to “internalize” the benefits privilege affords them (94). They regard their privilege as “normative” or as “something they have somehow earned,” which prevents them from interrogating the “basis” of such privilege, let alone “how it is made possible at the expense of others” (94). Similar to what Peggy McIntosh argues in “White Privilege and Male Privilege,” the resulting invisibility can cause privileged groups/persons to view themselves, others, and the world they inhabit through “pattern[s] of assumptions” which cause them to take for granted “conditions of daily experience” considered to be “neutral, normal, and universally available to everybody” (65).

Commensurate with McIntosh’s and Lewis’ positions, Johnson opines that privilege affects people at an individual and collective level because “although it is received *by* individuals . . . individuals receive privilege only because they are perceived by others as belonging to privileged groups and social categories,” irrespective of their personal qualities (34). Therefore, unwillingness to interrogate privilege subjects its beneficiaries to “[t]he paradoxical experience of *being* privileged without *feeling* privileged” because privilege makes itself invisible within advantaged social groups without depriving their members of its spoils (35).

Nevertheless, privilege is rife with manifold contradictions, particularly those caused by what Goodman terms “intersectionality,” those “[c]ategories based on social groups,” as well as the advantages/disadvantages attendant upon membership within different social identities that do not exclude one another (3). Shared identities notwithstanding, people may have other social identities they share with some persons, yet not with others, a fact that “affects the experiences of the social identity they have in common” (3). Such glaring contradictions not only have a negative impact upon individuals. They are also detrimental to the social groups they belong, for the former makes its members as likely to experience oppression as they are of inflicting it upon others.

Goodman elaborates upon the categories of persons that belong to privileged groups in Western societies from the twilight of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth and beyond: “men, heterosexuals, the dominant racial/ethnic group (whites), wealthier people, the dominant religious group (Christians), native born people, and able-bodied people” (2). Conversely, “women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people, marginalized racial/ethnic groups, low income and poor people, non-native born people, and people with disabilities are in the disadvantaged (or the subordinated or marginalized) groups” (2). Groups and individuals who cannot prove their belonging to groups privileged in modern Western societies (including, but not limited to, “white,” “male,” “heterosexual,” “middle-class” and “nondisabled”) risk becoming victims of social structures that exploit difference as a means to decide who is included or excluded from sharing in the greater bulk of wealth, power, and dominance available at a given society (Johnson 11). Even so, McIntosh argues that it is necessary

to distinguish between varieties of privilege, namely those that encompass “what one would want for everyone in a just society,” and those that grant privileged groups and persons “license to be ignorant, oblivious, arrogant, and destructive” toward unprivileged groups and persons (65). The former sort of privilege is pernicious because it “simply *confers dominance*, gives permission to control, because of one’s race or sex,” and may be widely desired without being in any way beneficial to the whole society (66).

Similarly, Lewis argues in “Exploring the Intersections of Gender, Sexuality, and Culture in the Caribbean: An Introduction” that Caribbean notions of race, class, sex, and gender are as inseparable from the region’s historical contexts as they are from ever-shifting social, cultural, political, and economic constructs of identity and culture:

What constitutes the Caribbean has long been a contested issue but has nevertheless masqueraded as settled and unproblematic. Different colonial powers laid claim to different parts of the region, leaving a legacy of national and cultural chauvinism. Cultural contradictions developed over time, with social identities split along the lines of North American and European affinities on the one hand, and regional and cultural commonality on the other. Much of this cultural duality was in fact overdetermined by the socialization of transnational capital of the political economy of the region. It is this duality—this ambivalence about belonging, location and cultural affinity—that raises so many vexed questions about the notion of the Caribbean and of Caribbean identity. (1)

Caribbean peoples engage such questions through “still evolving” discourses and practices of accommodation and resistance “refracted through the lens of sexuality and

gender relations” that unfold within crucibles of “European conquest and colonial resistance” (2). These interplays occur through ongoing retrievals, reconstructions, and rearticulations of social relationships and identities “in the context of the Caribbean,” and therefore cannot be reduced to the vicissitudes of particular persons and groups, let alone unambiguous compliance or defiance (2).

In order to survive the violence, poverty, and degradation inherent in colonial regimes, Caribbean people must negotiate between diverse modes of resistance and opposition. Burton defines “resistance” as “those forms of contestation of a given system” which are “conducted from *outside* that system” by utilizing “weapons and concepts derived from . . . sources other than the system in question,” whereas “opposition” consists of “those forms of contestation of a given system that are conducted from *within* that system” by repurposing “weapons and concepts derived from the system itself” (6). Caribbean cultures “tend to be . . . *cultures of opposition* [rather] than *cultures of resistance*” because “they draw heavily on materials furnished by the dominant culture” to modify them “without transforming them entirely,” turning them against “the dominant culture” to contest it (7).

Cultural opposition in the Caribbean enables “the dominated to oppose the dominant group on the latter’s own ground,” yet simultaneously draws “the dominated . . . further into the dominant group’s worldview” (8). The very “creoleness” of Caribbean cultures make it practically impossible to “get entirely outside the dominant system in order to *resist* it” because the former tend to “reproduce” the “underlying structures” of such systems even as they consciously challenge their visible dominance” (8). Exceptions notwithstanding, Caribbean cultural forms cannot “oppose the dominant

system without simultaneously confirming, and even reinforcing, the latter's hegemony" (8).

Cultures of opposition underlie Caribbean anxieties regarding gender, sex, race, and class, particularly on regards to island-based bourgeoisies from Trinidad, St. Lucia, Jamaica, and other current and former colonies of the English-speaking Caribbean. As Belinda Edmondson explains in *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women's Writing in Caribbean Narrative*, race becomes conflated with genre, gender, literary discourse, and other considerations in twentieth century West Indian contexts:

[T]he terms of writing "West Indian" novels for the male writers of the pre- and post-independence English-speaking Caribbean are founded on the interpellated meanings of manhood and cultural authority that have been passed on to them from British intellectual discourse of the nineteenth century. [. . .]. The tropistic relationship between nineteenth-century Englishness and twentieth-century West Indianness has structured the meaning of "authorship" and "nation" in anglophone Caribbean discourse such that what is now recognized as West Indian oppositional discourse to Britain is still marked by a utilization of a specifically English vision of what constitutes intellectual production. That English "vision" of intellectual authority is the idea that intellectual labor is the realm of "real" men, "gentlemen," middle-class/upper-class Englishmen. For nonwhite, non-English men to make a case for self-government, they must state their case as *gentlemen*, which means they must, in essence be "made" into Englishmen. (5)

Bourgeois Caribbean males constructed their masculinity in opposition to the colonial regimes of their time and place. Deeming resistance (in Burton's sense of the word) futile or unthinkable, aspiring West Indian gentlemen appropriated the imagined constructs of English "manhood" as a "dynamic ideological categor[y]" that unfolds "*through* loosely biological categories," transforming what imperial rhetoric presented as an "essential trait" into a ductile reproduction of dominant paradigms of masculinity in order to contest them, as well as enter into the worldview of colonial rulers (6). Such revisions reflected educated West Indian men's responses to their own desires and intentions in the midst of growing national consciousness, economic crisis, political turmoil, and concerns with possibilities of independence and local self-rule. Anglo-Caribbean males with the means and ability to pursue advanced colonial education could take advantage of glaring weaknesses in England's policies towards its colonies in the Caribbean basin:

The one chink in the English imperial armor was its domestic class policies; the degraded status of blackness could be renegotiated through black men's access to the status of "gentleman" through the critical knowledge of the artifacts of English cultural archaeology. If, on the one hand, nineteenth-century British imperialism defined England as superior to its nonwhite colonies, on the other it allowed for a handful of the nonwhite "elect" to be trained in the manner of the English gentleman. These men were to pass on the tenets of Englishness to their societies in their roles as civil servants and other kinds of "go-betweens" between the colonial government and the colonial society. The black men of this class

became the West Indies' first black middle class, and in them became articulated the apparently contradictory beliefs in Englishness as a transcendent category and pan-Africanism as a political ideology. (8-9)

This relationship between English masculinity, pan-Africanism, and West Indian nationalism played a vital role in the creation of “a culturally specific brand of nationalism and national identity” that links “the way . . . English-speaking West Indians view blackness” to “their relationship with Englishness” as well as English-derived notions of masculinity:

Victorian debates on whether or not the Caribbean region was deserving of independence—or, more specifically, whether or not its inhabitants were *fit* and *capable* of “ruling” themselves—often circled around the issue of black West Indian *masculinity*. . . . [F]or the English the idea of nation was essentially tied to the idea of masculinity, such that Caribbean men would have to prove themselves the masculine equals of the Englishmen who currently dominated the imperial landscape. (7-8)

These debates complicated the ways Caribbean males viewed themselves as men to the extent “Englishness” was termed to represent “manhood” as an “abstract, de-racialized ideal of individualism” worthy of emulation by colonized males (32). Common belief also held that the West Indies as an entity only existed as “a creation of the colonizing project” that labelled it both “a foreign land” and “the issue of Europe itself” (32).

Consequently, unlike African and East Indian men, Anglo-Caribbean males did not lead “a separate life” that preceded or transcended “their English legacy” (32). Such readings assessed the region as an impossible land of incomprehensible race, class, sex, and

gender dichotomies unpalatable to dominant Victorian notions of “true” masculine gentility:

It did not help their case [of black West Indian males] that black West Indian women were perceived to have the traits that Englishmen associated with men. Black men were seen as lazy and docile—though singularly ambitious to be scholars—while black women were described as hard workers, but loud and *aggressive*. The Victorian perception of difference in black labor . . . will undergird the way in which the intellectual “inheritance” of England will be passed on to West Indian men: . . . the question of who *ought* to be doing what will determine who *will* do what. The inversion of gender characteristics that the English imagined onto black West Indian society circumlocuted the discourse of later West Indian nationalism, such that the nationalist project became inseparable from the epistemological issue of defining West Indian manhood. (8)

By the mid-nineteenth century, gentility and education had become “[t]he only way out of blackness” for Caribbean males hoping to ascend within a “social hierarchy . . . predicated on levels of manliness and Englishness,” measuring so-called advances in “Negro” education and evolution “in terms of the degree to which English ways were successfully imitated” (30-1). However, this changed during the final years of the century, when “racialist theories of racial essence” replaced “assumptions about differences of class” as guiding criteria for assessing dominant English-style masculinity (31).

Seeking to escape the “constant association of [non-English/non-white] races with inferior class status,” Caribbean gentlemen played along with the “civilizing” project of education sponsored by the colonial establishment (31). Doing so, they hoped, would help them prove themselves worthy of being entrusted with autonomous national rule over their island territories, and thus validate their roles as mediators between the colonial government and the masses of disenfranchised West Indians (31). Such connotations of nationalism with masculinity and their accompanying contradictions coincide with John Willinsky’s critique of Western systems of education in *Learning to Divide the World: Education at Empire’s End*:

[O]ur schooling has not been so much the great redeemer of prejudices as the tireless chronicler of what divides us. Education is no small player in giving meaning to these differences. We are schooled in differences great and small, in borderlines and boundaries, in historical struggles and exotic practices, all of which extend the meaning of difference. We are taught to discriminate in both the most innocent and fateful ways so that we can appreciate the differences between civilized and primitive, West and East, first and third worlds. We become adept at identifying the distinguishing features of this country, that culture, those people. We are educated in what we take to be the true nature of difference. (1)

The “original lessons” of Empire-building emphasized “the distance between primitive and civilized peoples” established as consequence of “what was first made of the *discovery*” of the so-called New World (25). Such education sought to take “a knowing possession of the world” and set it “on public display for the edification of the West”

during the development of “the principal forms of schooling that might serve both colonial state and colonized native” (19). The resulting dichotomies not only secured “Europe’s place in the world after it was temporarily unsettled by the discovery of new worlds”: they also legitimated European claims to dominance over foreign lands and peoples by appealing to “a mandate for distributing civilization to the rest of the world in return for governing that world”:

Victorian intellectuals of all ideological persuasions believed in the moral responsibility of Britain to import civilization . . . whether or not they actually thought the natives would improve . . . The status of imperialism as a core British middle-class ethos combined with the national vision of imperialism as essentially a mission of “high moral content” to produce a national ideology that, like religion, was striking for its accessibility to *all* of Britain’s citizens, and gave everyone a stake in it. (Edmondson 25-6)

Although imperialism as mission and ethos was theoretically accessible to all British citizens, including prospective Caribbean gentlemen, in practice it served as a ready-made justification for perpetuating what Albert Memmi terms in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* as “an implacable dependence” into which “[t]he colonial relationship” fixed colonized and colonizer alike by molding their respective characters and dictating their conduct (ix). Wielding the trope of “the discursive feminization of the West Indies within English rhetoric,” some contemporary British writers presented colonialism as a morally binding civilizing mission charged with teaching “savages” the “correct” gender roles they were expected to emulate as surrogate English men and

women, thereby obscuring its status as a primarily economically-motivated relationship of dominance and exploitation (Edmondson 27).

Thus understood, black masculinities served a dual purpose. On the one hand they graciously awarded “physical virility” to black West Indian men as free (later sellable) manpower indispensable for the success of England’s colonial enterprise (28). On the other hand, it encumbered West Indian men with “a corresponding inability to be responsible for charting their lives without the intellectual direction of the British,” effectively disqualifying them as “real” (i.e. English) men (28). Dubious distinctions built upon Eurocentric masculinist racist sophistry established the “English conqueror” as “the standard against which black men are compared” (27). Exceptions notwithstanding, so-called “black *lack* of masculinity” is the reason why West Indian men were believed to fall short of the English gentlemanly masculine ideal, being therefore doomed to lose on regards to warlike conquest, virile decisiveness, manly initiative, and genteel leadership (27).

Also, Leah Pate demonstrates in *At Home in the World: Masculinity, Maturation, and Domestic Space in the Caribbean Bildungsroman* how this civilizing mandate manifested itself through “a curriculum based on a Manichaeian value system” that privileged “white” over “black,” “male” over “female,” and England over the Caribbean, removing knowledge “from the realm of experience” so that “[a]nything and everything worth knowing was foreign to the colonized student, and home was always elsewhere” (33-4). However, mere whiteness did not suffice to accede to the “export-variety concept of Englishness” present in colonial education:

Englishness is *not* interchangeable with whiteness; it is . . . a particularized form of whiteness that refers not only to ascendancy over blackness but to the way in which those qualities of whiteness are arranged. Thus, Englishness is clearly superior to Americanness or Spanishness. Moreover, it is *not* available to the white West Indian precisely because of that West Indianness, for Englishness is the essence of Culture itself.

(Edmondson 31-2)

Built upon predatory economic policies, political subjection, suspicious silencing, and selective forgetfulness, colonial systems of education taught prospective Caribbean gentlemen to see themselves as barely redeemable “natives” doomed to follow the common road of misery, poverty, and powerlessness most of their fellow men were doomed to walk if they failed to meet the ever-increasing demands of such an ordeal:

By attempting to indoctrinate students with ideology that privileged the metropolitan center and ignored Caribbean culture and history, colonial schools socialized students into a world apart from their own communities; [. . .]. Colonized students encountered colonial teachers, social codes, sports, and curricula that sought not to liberate but to indoctrinate them with imperial attitudes and train them mostly for mid-level civil service or teaching positions. Students were marginalized from their own people by virtue of the privileges to which education entitled them, and yet [they] still faced rigid, invisible lines demarcating race, class, and power boundaries that they could not cross, for the dominant culture’s power was predicated on exclusion. This experience created an

intellectual schism in students, a sort of double-consciousness that alienated them from their native communities . . . [. . .]. As a result, colonial education stymies the pursuit of *Bildung* for the educated subject by further complicating the relationship between development and community. (Pate 34-5)

Colonial education and its social, cultural, and political ramifications play key roles in Haynes's, Lestrade's, and Blackman's notions of self and other. These characters remain immersed in bourgeois ideologies of gender, race, sex, and class, and thus find it impossible to think in other terms besides those of colonized men of African-Caribbean descent, desperately trying to pass for Englishmen despite their lack of wealth and the "right" skin color. *Minty Alley*, *A Room on the Hill* and *An Absence of Ruins* thus contest the notion that Anglo-Caribbean middle-class men served as "guides" and "mentors" for the lower classes of their island societies before, during, or after the period of national awakening that marked the birth of the West Indian novel from the 1950s onwards.

Members of the English-speaking Caribbean middle-classes tended to remain aloof from the lives and daily realities of lower-class people because of their roles as intermediaries between the highest and lowest social strata of their island societies. This resulted in splintered alliances and conflicts of interest, as middle-class men needed the favor of their upper-class superiors to avoid backsliding into the poverty, debauchery, and degradation most "respectable" people at the time considered characteristic of lower-class life. Personal sympathies notwithstanding, bourgeois Caribbean men represented the will of new colonial "masters" before an ever-growing majority of Emancipated people, some of whom deferred to these divided sons of Empire in search of guidance

and validation on account of their “higher” education and privileged upbringing, as shown in *Minty Alley*.

While some middle-class males successfully negotiated such contradictions, others were unable to do so. The latter were torn on the one hand between an unattainable upper-class world that tantalized them with promises of economic ascendance and stability, social power, cultural prestige, and political respectability in exchange for their complicity with colonialist domination and economic exploitation. On the other hand, however, Caribbean bourgeois men were both threatened and fascinated by a lower-class world thought to afford greater freedom to pursue pleasure and enjoyment and live more “authentic” lives without the encumbrance of Euro/Judeo-Christian sexual mores and the prejudices of privileged classes, yet lacked the cultural prestige, political respectability, social power, and economic stability found in so-called civilized living.

Haynes, Lestrade, and Blackman inhabit and embody similar masculine roles as iterated above due to their upbringing as English-speaking Caribbean middle-class men. Nevertheless, this study is not intended to single out African-Caribbean men by espousing essentialist readings based on race, class, sex, and gender. It does not utilize colorism as a paradigm for reading and assessing the masculinities of subordinate social groups in the Anglophone Caribbean, any more that it serves as an exhaustive exposition of social classes impervious to transformation and adaptation throughout different epochs.

Being what Foucault would term “vehicles of power,” Caribbean men and women are capable of integrating themselves into overarching strategies of dominance,

contestation, accommodation, and resistance (*Power/Knowledge* 98). Constituted as gendered and sexed beings within specific social, cultural, political, and economic contexts, Caribbean males exercise masculinity as far as they are agents of power mediated by race, class, sex, gender, and other factors. The every word and deed of Caribbean subjects is therefore shot through with complex gendered micro-relations and mechanisms of power. Although Caribbean peoples never become entirely subject to such power and dominance, they also cannot achieve so-called detachment or independence from power, let alone the gendered realities made possible (yet not inexorable) by their male and female bodies.

Furthermore, despite sharing some commonalities on historically defined grounds of race, class, sex, and gender, the mulatto bourgeoisies of the Anglophone Caribbean comprise heterogeneous social groups rather than a homogeneous class. Such groups vary across different islands, time periods, and sociocultural, political, and economic circumstances. While the characters of these novels might pursue similar interests, the ways they go about reworking hegemonic or counterhegemonic discourses and practices dealing with masculinity, power, and related topics to suit such purposes are different. Their interests, needs, desires, and intentions do not always accord with those of other characters, particularly if there are gaps created by differing classes, generations, and outlooks on life, among other factors.

Although its findings resonate with the history of the Caribbean region as a whole, this study will focus upon former British island colonies that serve as historical backdrops informing James's, St. Omer's, and Patterson's novels. Racism, classism, poverty, unmaning, and related evils affect men throughout the Caribbean to greater or

lesser extent, yet the social, cultural, political, and economic contexts behind these practices vary throughout different epochs. They affect different men and social classes in different ways, and do not unfold uniformly or predictably across different epochs or in a specific historical period, let alone within a social class. While Haynes's, Lestrade's, and Blackman's experiences share some commonalities with those of real-life Caribbean men, they do not encompass, represent, or exhaust what historically living men of Caribbean descent have gone through from James's times to those of St. Omer, Patterson, and beyond. Indicative and relatable as they might be, the experiences and choices of James's, St. Omer's, and Patterson's characters are ultimately their own.

Chapter II: Lessons from the Yard: Masculinities, Unmanning, and Politics of Opposition
in C.L.R. James's *Minty Alley*

But help-/less my children are/caught leader-/less
are/taught fool-/ishness and use-/lessness and/sorrow.

Kamau Brathwaite, "Tom" (1967).

C.L.R. James's *Minty Alley* (1936) is part of a series of prose fiction written by Trinidadian bourgeois male authors who contributed to *The Beacon* (1931-3), a literary magazine that propagated autochthonous creative writing in Trinidad and elsewhere in the Anglophone Caribbean. This group was notorious for its criticism of the Trinidadian mulatto middle-class of its time. This privileged class was renowned for its allegiance with the metropolitan and colonial governments, servile aping of English cultural standards, and the much envied social ascendancy its male members achieved through colonial education and complicity with the British Crown Colony system. As Reinhard Sander states in "The Thirties and Forties," James and like-minded authors gave centrality to African and Indian-Trinidadian characters from the lowest echelons of colonial society, mainly working-class men, women, and children marginalized by society at large:

Disillusioned and repulsed by the hollowness of middle-class life, with strong socialist leanings, some of the [*Beacon*] writers quite naturally gravitated towards the life of the lower classes and 'took the material that [they] found in [their] backyards . . . and used that material for fiction.' [. . .]. With detached but sympathetic objectivity, James, [Alfred] Mendes, [Percival C.] Maynard and [C.A.] Thomasos recorded the spiritual, moral and sexual values of their barrack-yard characters, and attempted to

reproduce their dialect speech. They were particularly attracted to the life-style of kept women. (51-2)

Nevertheless, the themes and characters of *Minty Alley* and related works of fiction were unpalatable to the predominantly middle-class Trinidadian readership at the time. Patricia J. Saunders explains in *Alien-Nation and Repatriation: Translating Identity in Anglophone Caribbean Literature* that such revulsion stemmed from political agendas, class warfare, and moralistic concerns. Tasked with “defining a “uniquely” West Indian literature that saw itself as going against the grain of colonial culture,” James and other writers from the *Beacon* group opposed elitist “dominant value systems” that reserved “aesthetic and political discernment” for “those trained in the “finer” aspects of life” (27). Being the prerogative of “middle-class/upper/Englishmen” and their authorized Anglo-Caribbean protégés, the “intellectual labor” required for such discernment and its resulting “intellectual production” sustained and legitimized the rule of the British Empire and its Crown Colony governments, which in turn used the native bourgeoisie to gradually “breed” so-called savagery out of the masses (Edmondson 5). Because of this, James and the *Beacon* group ideated “new images and new ways of reading” to reformulate “aesthetic standards” and thus help their readers “traverse the contested and hierarchical landscapes of “taste” that defined modes of cultural expression and production in British colonies” at the time (Saunders 27). Yard stories and novels such as James’s “Triumph” and *Minty Alley* contested “system[s] of labor” that consider “women’s work” to be “unproductive” because the latter neither “develops [n]or contributes to the economy of the [British] Empire” (37). Such contestation entailed reconfiguring “the language of political economy” in such a way that “gender and

sexuality” publicly assumed “an overt market value” that was always a disavowed part of “colonial economy” in Trinidad and elsewhere in the Anglophone Caribbean (38).

Through their subsequent redefinition of sex as “a form of capital through which freedom and goods can be acquired,” *Minty Alley* and other yard literature separated sexual pleasure and enjoyment from strictly (re)productive and economic objectives (37).

Rather than maintain this “new market structure” cloistered within the reputation-centered “private” sphere of yard tenements populated by prostitutes, washerwomen, and other lower-class “undesirables,” James and the *Beacon* group brought their contestation of Empire to the respectability-centered “public” sphere hitherto monopolized by the privileged of 1920s Trinidad (38). Consequently, the group effectively “soiled” one of early-twentieth century capitalism’s loftier mechanisms for exercising power and coercion in the name of profit and progress. Unsurprisingly, such criticism, along with its attendant portrayals of “unregulated,” “unproductive,” “immoral” sexual behavior and other subversive actions, earned James and company the ire of the “respectable” pro-colonial mulatto bourgeois sector that comprised most of their readership (38).

The anticolonial criticism found in *Minty Alley* and other fiction by the *Beacon* group hinted at James’s later contributions as a Marxist theorist. Although the novel’s characters do not engage in large-scale revolutions against early-twentieth century Euro-American capitalism and the British Crown Colony system, the actions of Mrs. Rouse, Benoit, and other inhabitants of the barrackyard accommodate capitalist demands and pro-colonial interests to work for their benefit. While resistance in Burton’s sense of the term remained unfeasible, the characters’ oppositional stances allowed them to reformulate what constituted so-called productive work on their own terms rather than

those of colonial masters and their representatives. Consonant with James's Marxist theory and nonfiction, *Minty Alley* and other barrackyard fiction portrayed colonized subjects as active agents engaged in surviving and thriving under Western colonial oppression, thereby contesting hitherto prevalent representations of working-class people as mere passive victims and victimizers of Western hegemony.

Nevertheless, irrespective of the "good" intentions of individual writers, or the degree of care they display while creating a "faithful" or "authentic" representation of working-class persons, the choices made will benefit and detract from their enterprise in ways that not only impact the writers, but the very people they "represent." Since to write *about* the people is not the same as to write *for* the people, let alone speaking *for* them, *to* them, or *from* them, these choices can ultimately distance writers "from the very people [they] are talking about," thereby impeding identification on the part of their readership (Buckeye 412). Consequently, "the people" can end up as little more than a shallow trope at best or an inane cliché at worst if writers invoke them "in service of one ideology or another," forgetting that "there remain people among the people" (413).

Moreover, as Robert Buckeye argues in "The People, Yes, or The People, No: Decisive Moments in the Work of James, Kincaid and Mais," James and other authors also grounded their authorial practices in the literary movement of Modernism. The latter movement "set itself in opposition to bourgeois culture" and all it stood for as part of "a defining aesthetic gesture" that sought to reconcile "a disdainful, largely pessimistic, elitism" on the one hand, and "a utopian, sometimes romantic, populism" on the other (412). However, the fact that most modernist writers were part of the bourgeoisie themselves problematized such identification, as the anti-middle-class Caribbean

bourgeois male writer's relationship to "his" people departed from an "assumption" that "culture means the culture of the colonizing power" (412). Therefore, "to speak of one's own culture is to mean that of the people," that is, marginalized groups purportedly "uncorrupted" by colonial indoctrination and imperialist oppression, the opposite of the mulatto bourgeois enclaves James and his contemporaries so despised (412).

As Aldon Nielsen observes in *C.L.R. James: A Critical Introduction*, this distance becomes evident through the peephole Haynes uses "to spy out onto the barrack-yard from within the privacy of his room", which allows him to intrude "upon [his neighbors'] romantic interludes and arguments when they think nobody is watching" (29). Haynes's voyeurism "literalizes the panopticon effect of social hierarchy" in 1920s colonial Trinidad because his "surveying eye of middle-class morality" looks upon the inhabitants of the yard as sources of amusement and vicarious pleasure, while keeping interactions to a "safe" bare minimum (29). More concretely, Haynes is guilty of what Sander defines as "literary 'slumming'" (53). Just as James and his contemporaries wrote about "an environment" and characters who existed "outside [their] own immediate social experience but which [they] could visit occasionally," Haynes's relative wealth, social mobility, and other privileges as a Caribbean bourgeois man allows him to move in and out of the slums at will, a luxury denied to Benoit, Mrs. Rouse, and other characters (53). Similar to *Minty Alley* itself, Haynes "obviously made contact with the people, their problems, customs and beliefs" as a so-called representative of the colored bourgeoisie, but his ways of seeing and thinking that Other ultimately emphasized "the vitality and picturesqueness of lower-class life," sidelining "the poverty and squalor" present throughout the daily lives of his neighbors (53-4). Repulsed as he might be by their

violent and often sexually explicit dealings, Haynes still uses the barrackyard's inhabitants to titillate his curiosity and desire for a "reliable" knowledge of an Other he can procure and consume at leisure without endangering his pursuit of middle-class masculine respectability. More concretely, James's prose fiction problematizes literary slumming, as well as its ways of thinking and seeing the impoverished Other:

It is not . . . the direct, unmediated voice of the masses that appears in James's pages. What we have instead is a writer who, somewhat like the protagonist of his novel . . . attends to the lives of the masses with equal portions of curiosity, love, consternation, and confusion. This is crucial, because James believed . . . that the middle and upper classes have much to learn from listening to the masses. . . . James's middle-class protagonist is not simply enjoying an epiphany produced by his brief sojourn among the uncomplicated and lowly primitives. There is always more to be learned, as the masses themselves remain always in motion, always engaged in the struggle for happiness. (Nielsen 16)

James's novel is a locus where bourgeois fear, disdain, admiration, and envy towards the impoverished, disenfranchised Other coalesces with unacknowledged desires to vicariously possess/consume said Other without severing ties to the readers' safeties of race, class, sex, and gender. Thus, *Minty Alley* appropriates this stumbling block to conduct "an implicit attack on bourgeois society" by introducing "a middle-class character who from economic necessity has to find lodgings in a barrack-yard" (Sander 54). By limiting itself to "Haynes's interaction[s] with the barrack-yarders," the novel tasks readers with the role of bourgeois "eavesdropper[s]" that utilize "cracks in the

middle-class wall that separates them from the barrack-yarders” to “capture glimpses of the excitement outside” (54). Using Haynes’s own “point of view to destabilize ideology, *Minty Alley* sabotages “the very desire of the better-off to project their desires” onto lower-class people to assuage their guilt and arouse their desire for pleasure, comfort, and security, reducing “the noble but primitive poor” to ideological mouthpieces or outlets for publicly disavowed, albeit privately indulged thrills (Nielsen 27). Consequently, *Minty Alley* exposes this bourgeois interest on the so-called lowly as a thinly-veiled sham that seeks to sublimate the guilt and inadequacy which mediates the relationship between men like Haynes and the working-poor they misrepresent through their backward glance.

This chapter explores topics related to gender, sex, race, and class in a British-controlled colonial outpost by focusing on two male characters from the mulatto middle-class and the darker-skinned proletariat of 1920s Trinidad. James’s *Minty Alley* is a key work in any discussion of Caribbean masculinities, as it served as a precursor in the tradition of the West Indian novel prior to its mass dissemination during the 1950s. For that matter, James’s prose works provide invaluable insights for the construction of Anglo-Caribbean masculinities at the dawn of the twentieth century. Additionally, James’s nonfiction works, such as *The Life of Captain Cipriani: An Account of British Government in the West Indies* (1932), *The Case for West-Indian Self-Government* (1933), *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938), and *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In* (1953), examine the sociocultural, political, and economic experiences of English-speaking Caribbean persons of African descent without subscribing to

Eurocentric biases inculcated by colonial and higher education in Trinidad and the English metropole at the time. *Minty Alley* evinces James's lifelong preoccupation with African and Indian-Caribbean masculinities both as a possible means of social, cultural, political, and economic uplifting for impoverished Caribbean men, as well as yet another means of oppression used by metropolitan and colonial governments to maintain Trinidadian masses in subordinate and dependent positions within their colonial societies. By deconstructing the pursuits of masculinity and power undertaken by its protagonists Mr. Haynes and McCarthy Benoit, this novel illustrates the impossibility of constructing masculinities that might allow Caribbean males to escape colonial subjugation by effectively becoming bourgeois (gentle)men in the image and likeness of metropolitan middle-class Englishmen. Furthermore, *Minty Alley* explores the dialectics of "bourgeois" respectability and "lower-class" reputation Haynes and Benoit must negotiate to surmount the contradictions inherent in the masculinist colonial discourses and practices which permeate their constructs of masculinity, particularly their dependence upon women who aid and validate their endeavors through their work and complicity with masculinist domination. Such dependence ultimately sabotages these characters' transformation into "real" men. Unable to overcome the influence of his domineering mother, Haynes cannot aspire to versions of masculinity other than the mulatto middle-class paradigm championed by the late Mrs. Haynes. Furthermore, Benoit's practice of lower-class masculinity becomes untenable after his desertion of Mrs. Rouse and eventual abandonment by Nurse Jackson. The novel also engages in dialogue with racist discourses, stereotypes, and practices prevalent in early-twentieth century Trinidad, thus correlating Benoit's "degraded" African and Indian-Caribbean

ancestry with the character's unbridled appetite for food, money, and sex, exploitative relationships with women, utter disdain for predominant standards of conduct required from so-called "true" men, and disregard for anyone other than himself.

Additionally, *Minty Alley* introduces topics that later novels, such as Orlando Patterson's *An Absence of Ruins* (1967) and Garth St. Omer's *A Room on the Hill* (1968), would expand upon roughly thirty years after the publication of James's novel. St. Omer and Patterson elaborated on James's critique of colonized Caribbean masculinities through their examination of John Lestrade and Alexander Blackman, two male characters who belong to the mulatto bourgeoisies of 1950s St. Lucia and late-1960s post-independence Jamaica, respectively. Although removed from one another by historico-geographical distance, cultural differences, and other factors, Haynes, Lestrade, and Blackman share commonalities on grounds of race, class, sex, and gender, which in turn manifest in ever newer forms of foreign domination and exploitation that ultimately impinge upon these characters' possibilities of achieving English-style middle-class masculinity.

Set in 1920s Trinidad, *Minty Alley* explores conflicts of race, class, sex, and gender during the period of West Indian nationalism, yet Haynes and Benoit, the novel's male protagonists, remain blind to their immediate realities as colonized subjects of African and Indian-Caribbean descent. They are affected by what Frantz Fanon defines as an "inferiority complex" in *Black Skin, White Masks*. This inferiority complex involves economic debasement of colonized peoples of African descent, as well as "internalization" of European-derived social hierarchies of gender, sex, race, and class designed to privilege hegemonic men (European/white/upper-class) at the expense of

non-European people (4). Under such hierarchies, the masculinities of Caribbean men of African, East Indian, Asian, and Creole-European descent stem from “a series of aberrations of affect” that leave colonized men “rooted at the core of a[n] [Eurocentric] universe” which systematically devalues and emasculates them the more they strive to meet its lofty, contradictory demands (2). Thus, “[t]he colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards,” becoming “whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle” (18). Since “[t]o speak a [colonizing] language is to take on a [particular] world” and “a [particular] culture” that are privileged above others, the “retaining-wall relation between language and group” compels “[t]he Antilles Negro who wants to be white” to dupe himself into believing he will become “whiter as he gains greater mastery” of language as a “cultural tool” (25). Similar to mastery of French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch elsewhere in the Caribbean, mastery of the English language promised bourgeois-aspiring males in the Anglophone Caribbean possession of “the world expressed and implied” by the language of the metropole (9). In turn, such a world made emulating “whiteness” as a cultural ideal, as well as the highest regarded version of masculinity, all but compulsory for colonized men seeking to escape poverty, marginalization, and other evils the British Crown Colony system inflicted upon their island societies (9).

Nevertheless, while “[m]astery of language” certainly “afford[ed] remarkable power,” African-Caribbean males did not equally share in that power with Euro-Caribbean males, much less with metropolitan males (9). Furthermore, the ways such power was disseminated in the English-speaking Caribbean ensured that gentlemen-in-training would regard the illusions of “Englishness” and English-style masculinity as the

embodiment of all that “blackness,” black masculinities, and their practitioners were not, namely the illusions of civilization, power, agency, freedom, progress, social ascension, etc. (Edmondson 7). Thus, Kenneth Ramchand argues in the “Introduction” to the 1997 edition of *Minty Alley* that language and education in early-twentieth century Trinidad and elsewhere in the British-controlled Caribbean were predicated upon “the mutually impoverishing alienation of the educated West Indian from the people” (13). These attitudes were also determined by implicit notions of English-derived masculinist privilege that gave some Caribbean bourgeois gentlemen license to benefit from the labor of lower-class people, as well as speak *for* the latter at a time when the possibility of autonomous rule tantalized respectability-seeking colonized males who aspired to one of the few venues for accruing wealth and power available to them. In turn, many Caribbean gentlemen sought to legitimize their roles as self-appointed guides of debased proletarians who, so they claimed, required such leadership to overcome poverty, racism, and other evils brought about by colonial rule. In practice, however, such justifications were couched in the ideology and practice of Englishness, and therefore served complex stances of simultaneous compliance and opposition to colonial rule rather than resistance in Burton’s sense of the words. By styling themselves as gentlemen called upon to lead “ignorant,” “expectant” lower-class multitudes, bourgeois men ultimately reproduced and sustained the colonialist rhetoric and practices that subordinated Caribbean peoples to imperial Europe. Their so-called civilizing mission failed because it was unsustainable in the face of the sociopolitical, cultural, and economic contradictions and limitations of colonial regimes.

As Nicole King posits in *C.L.R. James and Formulations of Caribbean Cultural Identity*, *Minty Alley* illustrates the connection between “intellectualism and masculinity” characteristic of late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century Anglophone Caribbean literature, while simultaneously juxtaposing “the relationship between sex and class within a Caribbean context” (95). Moreover, in *C.L.R. James and Creolization: Circles of Influence*, King adds that James’s novel employs the “white European, bourgeois form” of the *bildungsroman* to craft “a revolutionary and/or radical narrative” that examines “[t]he relationship of the individual to the community” through its disruption of “the cultural norms of respectability of early-twentieth-century Trinidadian society,” along with some of the conventions of the European novel of education and formation (52-3). In *Posts and Pasts: A Theory of Postcolonialism*, Alfred J. López explains that the *bildungsroman* explores “the trials and struggles of the young protagonist as she or he grows into adulthood” (97). This, he argues, comprises “the coming-of-age and coming into (self-) knowledge of the young subject as she or he negotiates a position in relation to a society that has mediated—and often hindered—their personal progress” (97). Consequently, by the end of the text, the protagonist not only achieves “social and material success,” but also “a measure of *agency* . . . of empowerment over, or at least happy coexistence with, the larger forces that acted upon them over the course of the text” (97).

Nevertheless, the Anglophone Caribbean colonial order subverts these ideals because the former is built upon subjugating its subjects for the benefit of the “mother country.” This is especially evident in the troubled history of colonial education examined by Ramchand in *The West Indian Novel and Its Background*. Public education

systems in the early-to-mid twentieth century Caribbean were plagued by “a history of administrative incompetence, unimaginativeness, lack of purpose and conflicting interests within [pervasive] social and economic depression” (3). Decades after Emancipation, these systems were barely capable of imparting the most rudimentary lessons, and were not sufficiently far-reaching to “create a public able to read and write even by the least demanding criteria” (3). These and other limitations had deleterious effects upon “the practical conditions” for aspiring Caribbean gentlemen during the first half of the twentieth century (3):

The lack of material resources available to the colonized is inherently problematic for self-cultivation; the colonized Caribbean lacked printing presses, museums, libraries, and widely-accessible schools. Even for that rare scholarship student who did get a secondary education, professional opportunities were strictly limited. The economic structures of colonialism assured that the vast majority of colonized subjects in the Caribbean toiled in poverty so dire that their lives were consumed by ensuring the satisfaction of their basic needs. [. . .] [T]he colonial superstructure . . . far from giving its subjects freedom and opportunity, was predicated on the colonized’s lack of freedom. . . . [T]he basic economy of colonialism is based on depriving colonized subjects of freedom. To be colonized, by definition, is to not be free. (Pate 13-4)

Additionally, as Gareth Griffiths states in *A Double Exile: African and West Indian Writing Between Two Cultures*, colonial education was carefully structured to “direct its aspiring pupils” into imitating “the values of their masters” (81). Therefore, such

education fostered “an attitude of distaste and rejection towards those [values] retained or developed in the Caribbean,” so that “[h]istory and achievement was English, poetry was Wordsworthian splendours in the grass, and human endeavour and pride was something which happened elsewhere” (81):

Everything seems to have taken place out of [the colonized’s] country. He and his land are nonentities or exist only with reference to the Gauls, the Franks or the Marne. In other words, with reference to what he is not: with Christianity, although he is not a Christian; to the West which ends under his nose, at a line which is even more insurmountable than it is imaginary. The books talk to him of a world which in no way reminds him of his own (Memmi 105)

In turn, what little communication took place between instructors and students unfolded within “a world which [was] too different from [the colonized’s] family environment” and failed to teach colonial pupils to “find [themselves] completely,” creating “a permanent duality” in these beneficiaries of so-called metropolitan largesse (106). The resulting “cultural homelessness” caused “a crisis in identity formation” in educated Caribbean men to the extent colonial deprivation afflicted them with “an absence of affiliations,” which effectively “exiled [them] from [their] own homeland”:

[The colonized] does not choose his identity; instead, he is merely “what the colonizer is not,” in a place where he does not belong. In addition to the personal trauma this causes the colonized subject . . . this lack of opportunity . . . perpetuate[s] and sustain[s] colonial rule by ensuring that the colonized persist in a stage of suspended development that renders

them incapable of civic participation and self-government, and thereby remain in a condition of childlike-dependency on the colonizer. (Pate 15-6)

Colonialism, colonial education, economic exploitation, unmaning, and related evils unfolded as competitive masculinist power relations that affected all men in the English-speaking Caribbean. In “Boys of the Empire: Elite Education and the Construction of Hegemonic Masculinity in Barbados, 1875-1920,” Aviston Downes argues that “[h]egemonic masculinit[ies]” in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Barbados (and, by extension, Trinidad and elsewhere in the Anglophone Caribbean) attained their preeminence through “ideological linkages with socially dominant men” (107). Consequently, “the masculinity of superordinate men” became equivalent to “legitimacy and normative status,” whereas that belonging to infraordinate or “oppressed” men was systematically “devalued or negated” (107). Eurocentric hegemonic masculinities acquired sociocultural, political, and economic currency in the English-controlled Caribbean precisely because they achieved “the co-optation or complicity of ‘lesser masculinities’” (107). By privileging erratic systems of education built upon “imperial dictates,” “functional linkages with Euro-Christianity,” and a “civilizing” enterprise undergirded by economic exploitation, metropolitan authorities and their colonial representatives created “a version of masculinity intended to sustain the dominance of white ruling-class men” (107). These discourses and practices barred Caribbean men of non-European descent from citizenship and subsequently pushed them to compete with one another for “surrogate” masculinities:

The features of hegemonic masculinity . . . were precisely those which were privileged within England in the Victorian and Edwardian periods: sociopolitical leadership; economic dominance; heterosexuality; headship of nuclear family; chivalric defence of property, empire and family. . . . [T]here was a renewed emphasis on physical prowess, expressed in sports and war, which served to reinforce the “naturalness” of male power. This expression of masculinity was also aggressive, racist and expansionist, but Euro-Christianity played a pivotal role in lending moral authority to this version of masculinity. (107)

Competitive emulation of whiteness notwithstanding, most Anglo-Caribbean males could never achieve such masculinist preeminence. These discourses and practices of British imperialism categorized the English male as “the active, strong, *masculine* counterparts to the passive, infantile, feminine [African-Caribbean] colonized” (Pate 78). Marked by hegemonic ideologies and practices disseminated through educational and religious establishments structured around Eurocentric notions of sex, gender, class, and race, the “cultivation of . . . gender identit[ies]” became problematic for Caribbean men:

[P]rivileging of and training in hegemonic masculinity . . . constructs as normative a performance of gender premised on options that are not accessible to colonized men. Because [the Caribbean male subject] is a member of a colonized population, he has no way of pursuing a political leadership role; under colonialism, his property is not his, and economic dominance eludes him, even with an education. (80)

Since most Anglo-Caribbean males of African descent occupied subordinate positions in their societies, many of them became debased due to colonialism's perpetuation of "the natural order of [British] male domination" that interpreted "lack of political autonomy as a symptom of [the] effeminacy" and concomitant "unfitness" to rule that purportedly characterized Caribbean men under the Crown Colony system (78).

Thus, in *Minty Alley*, though Haynes and Benoit internalize these discriminatory discourses and practices, they nonetheless fail to understand the multiple ways in which gender is enacted in 1920s Trinidad. In *Men's Lives*, Michael Kimmel and Michael Messner see this lack of understanding of discriminatory and racialized sex/gender roles performances as a result of the "complex of social meanings . . . attached to biological sex" (xv). While both men are aware that their social worlds are organized through gendered, sexist, classist, and racist hierarchies of domination, Benoit and Haynes assume that such hierarchies are "natural" rather than socioculturally constructed and enforced. Blind to the political, racial, gender, and economic realities of colonial Trinidad, James's characters lack the critical apparatuses necessary to impugn the emasculatory effects of Eurocentric hegemonic ideologies and masculinities that promise wealth, power, and pleasure implicit in dominating women and others, yet threaten them with poverty, impotence, and misery should they fall short of these standards.

Although these characters act and are acted upon through this "prism of gender," they are not completely excluded from possibilities of change and transformation (xiii). Some of them, particularly Maisie, escape the stagnation of colonial Trinidad by severing ties with their communities and country of origin. Conversely, others like Haynes are left in a state of limbo after the community at No. 2 Minty Alley disperses, losing old

certainties and former privileges, yet gaining the potentiality to reformulate their masculine identities in less oppressive terms. Still others, specifically Benoit, are seduced and ultimately destroyed by promises of power, wealth, and enjoyment allegedly derived from embracing versions of masculinity predicated upon criminality and dominance over women and other men.

Minty Alley also examines power relations and community-building through its critique of “the dialectic of inside and outside . . . private and public” and of [“male”] “reputation” and [“female”] “respectability” that permeates notions of class, race, sex, and gender throughout the English-speaking Caribbean (Burton 157). As Shalini Puri points out in “Beyond Resistance: Notes Toward a New Caribbean Cultural Studies,” respectability in the Caribbean gravitates toward “bourgeois valuations of the centripetal, toward standard English, home, family, hierarchy, decorum, stability, honesty, economy, delayed returns, and transcendence,” whereas “reputation” leans “toward the centrifugal, toward carnival, toward Creole, the street, autonomy, mobility, trickery, display, and transience” (23). More specifically, “respectable” people, usually upper to middle-class women and men, as well as lower-class aspirants of both sexes, like Mrs. Rouse, regard “home and church” as “key institutions” for the affirmation of ideals and practices relating to family and society (Burton 158). Therefore, marriage must be monogamous, the family structured around the male-headed nuclear family, and work, thrift, and higher education, as well as “purposeful self-construction and respect for social hierarchies” based on class, race, and similar considerations, must be enforced and maintained (158). On the other hand, upholders of reputation, usually, but not exclusively, lower-class males, stress “self-affirmation” and “self-dramatization” by “boasting of their prowess as

hard drinkers, fighters, womanizers, gamblers, and sportsmen” (159). By doing so, they assert “the value of self by . . . systematically devaluing the other” and entering into “a world of stylized, not actual, aggression” that sustains the participants’ “superiority *as individuals*” and “their equality *as a group*” (159).

Reputation and respectability mediate “fundamental and structuring tension[s]” characteristic of “two related and conflicting sets of cultural desires, practices, and allegiances that are elaborated to an unusual degree in the Caribbean” (Puri 23). They encompass “a series of binary oppositions between the female-dominated world of the home and the male-dominated world of the street and the rum shop” (Burton 160). The latter serves as “a retreat from, and reversal of, the values of both the workplace . . . and the home,” allowing Caribbean men a temporary escape from places where “the self-identity of the lower-class black male in particular” is continually disparaged “in the face of a female-centered value system that stresses work, economy, self-restraint, discipline, and order” (160). Feeling “marginal and undervalued” in such places, colonized men seek the company of their fellow men to “affirm and enhance their sense of their own value and identity” through “processes of self-projection and self-dramatization” that repurpose language as “power with and over words . . . the principal instrument by which the individual affirms himself in the presence of, and over and against, others” (160-1).

Nevertheless, this “respectability/reputation dualism” is not meant to compartmentalize Caribbean people into self-contained structures that neatly and seamlessly distinguish between “reputable-male” and “respectable-female” spaces and practices (Puri 24). Rather than mutually self-exclusive categories, dialectics of male/female, inside/outside, private/public, and reputation/respectability comprise

“*structuring tension[s]*” between “mass performances of transgression and mass desires for acceptance and assimilation . . . popular desires for work and popular celebration of respite from its exploitative conditions” in the context of “the complex contemporary cultures of work in the Caribbean and the contestations of dominant ideology that occur within the realm of respectability” (24). Moreover, because the cultural performances of male reputation and respectability have been extensively “creolized” in the Caribbean, “neither is the same as it was in the parent colonial society” (Burton 168). Being “mimetic [and “oppositional”] cultures,” they helped colonized peoples to “define [themselves] over and against the colonial order” despite their mutual contradictions (168). While these distinctions unfold as part of struggles for “status and power” throughout the English-speaking Caribbean, women and men do not limit themselves to public/masculine or private/feminine spaces and their accompanying undertakings (166). Thus, “female forms of reputation” coexist with “male pursuit[s] of respectability,” thereby gauging power, status, wealth, and other considerations in the context of socioculturally, historically, politically, and economically relevant “systems” that subsist in the aftermath of “the colonial past” and the power relations that are both its cause and effect (167).

Paradoxically therefore, the colonial context of 1920s Trinidad both aids and impedes Haynes’s emulation of English-derived masculinist bourgeois discourses and practices. Furthermore, while colonial education and unquestioning acceptance of Caribbean middle-class ideologies and practices grants Haynes some illusion of masculine “authority” in the barrackyards, which “further motivates his maturation” as a prospective West Indian gentleman, it simultaneously creates “unbridgeable social

gap[s]” between him and “the uneducated plebeians” at No. 2 Minty Alley (Pate 72).

The sociocultural, political, and economic background of early-twentieth century

Trinidad frames Haynes’s aspirations in terms derived from the European

bildungsroman, which the novel subverts to critique “colonialism’s effects on its [male]

subjects” who attended “colonial schools that present[ed] them with disconcerting

curricula and gender ideologies that hinder[ed] their intellectual and social development”

(i). Such interplays were rife with deleterious consequences for would-be Caribbean

gentlemen, similar to the Kenyan colonial context Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o critiques in

Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature:

Colonial alienation takes two inter[li]nked forms: an active (or passive) distancing of oneself from the reality around; and an active (or passive) identification with that which is most external to one's environment. It starts with a deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualisation, of thinking, of formal education; of mental development, from the language of daily interaction in the home and in the community. It is like separating the mind from the body so that they are occupying two unrelated linguistic spheres in the same person. On a larger social scale it is like producing a society of bodiless heads and headless bodies. (28)

Subjected to “a curriculum based on a Manichaeian value system whereby white was

privileged over black, male over female, and . . . England over the Caribbean,” Haynes’s

colonial schooling removed him “from the realm of [Caribbean] experience” (Pate 33-4).

Thus, “[a]nything and everything worth knowing was foreign” to him and other

“colonized student[s]” indoctrinated with “ideology that privileged the [English]

metropolitan center and ignored Caribbean culture and history” (34). Thus, Haynes and other prospective gentlemen “encountered colonial teachers, social codes, sports, and curricula” that “indoctrinate[d] them with imperial attitudes and train[ed] them mostly for mid-level civil service or teaching positions” (34). Although such students were “marginalized from their own people by virtue of the privileges to which education entitled them,” they still had to contend with “rigid, invisible lines demarcating race, class, and power boundaries that they could not cross” (34). Power relations prevalent throughout the British-controlled Caribbean were therefore “predicated on exclusion” and exploitation, creating “intellectual schism[s]” and “a sort of double consciousness” in both victims and victimizers of colonial domination (34).

Additionally, the narrator portrays the mother-son relationship at the Haynes household as an inversion of “normal” (i.e. hegemonic-masculinist) gender behavior. Through his mother, Haynes learned he is a bourgeois Caribbean man of disavowed African and conflicted European descent immersed in a capitalist world ruled by early-twentieth century British colonialist interests: ““You are black, my boy. I want you to be independent, and in these little islands for a black man to be independent . . . he must have money or a profession. I know how your father suffered, and you are so much like him that I tremble for you”” (James 22). Furthermore, it was his mother rather than his father who socialized Haynes into life in 1920s Trinidad, teaching him his first lessons of what it means to be a middle-class African-Caribbean man under the British Crown Colony system:

In the West Indies, to get a profession meant going to England or America, and [Haynes’s] mother had decided she would send him to

England. She was a headmistress and in her spare time taught unwearingly. First she had bought the house on a stiff mortgage. Haynes was to work in the island for a year or two and then, when the mortgage had been paid off, she would send him abroad and keep him there. Medicine it was to be. ‘Law wouldn’t suit you, my child. You are your father’s son.’ She got a job for him in the only book shop in the town, and Haynes worked in the day and came home and read the books in the evenings. For all the change it made, he might have been still at school. (22)

Since her son exhibits passivity, indecisiveness, “softness,” and other so-called unmanly traits commonly associated with females, Mrs. Haynes assumes the young man would founder if he pursued a career in law, which “necessitates the [“masculine”] ability to be confrontational, argumentative, and assertive,” and therefore chooses medicine as the next best career prospect, believing it to be more forgiving towards the young man’s deficiencies (Pate 97-8). More importantly, however, the matriarch presents law and medicine as the only viable options for “an educated black man” in Haynes’s position, further exemplifying how the Crown Colony system and the sociocultural, political, and economic discourses and practices it disseminated granted educated colonized men few possibilities of acquiring real power in Caribbean society (97):

Whereas education reform facilitated the creation of a non-white (predominantly male) middle class, relegation to the lowest ranks of business functions in the commercial or plantation enterprises and confinement to the lower rounds of the civil service was still their lot. A

persistent patriarchal-racist ideology represented black men as “boys”— permanently infantilized and thus not yet ready for leadership, certainly not where whites were available. (Downes 128-9)

Following her husband’s death, Mrs. Haynes takes over the “masculine” duties of breadwinner, protector, and head of the family. Haynes feels emasculated because his mother’s act of taking over the male role in the family is a “transgression” of gender roles that reduces him to “feminine” passivity and dependence. However, these personal foibles are not isolated character flaws. They are closely linked to Haynes’s deculturation as a colonized bi-racial Caribbean man in a colonial cultural space: “kept away from [political] power” by the Crown Colony system and barred from doing anything of consequence by his mother, Haynes has long since lost “both interest and feeling for control” over his own life on account of being “so resolutely excluded” from exercising power and taking responsibility for himself as a man and citizen (Memmi 95). Prolonged exclusions from the larger Caribbean culture and society did not allow Haynes to practice his citizenship or imagined masculinity in any meaningful way. Therefore, he is ill-prepared to assume his putative role as a Caribbean gentleman, let alone a leader of the disenfranchised masses:

The colonized enjoys none of the attributes of citizenship; neither his own, which is dependent, contested and smothered, nor that of the colonizer. He can hardly adhere to one or claim the other. Not having his just place in the community, not enjoying the rights of a modern citizen, not being subject to his normal duties, not voting, not bearing the burden of community affairs, he cannot feel like a true citizen. As a result of

colonization, the colonized almost never experiences nationality and citizenship, except privately. Nationally and civically he is only what the colonizer is not. (96)

Constantly monitored by Mrs. Haynes and cared for by her loyal servant Ella, the matriarch's control over the young man stunts his capacity to show initiative and resolve. Her surveillance of his life hinders Haynes's independence, initiative, self-possession, and other illusions of "real" English-style bourgeois masculine leadership. Unable to learn from his father's example, Haynes is left at the mercy of a well-meaning but domineering matriarch who monopolizes "masculine" duties her son arguably should have assumed, allowing the would-be gentleman little chance to venture into the world beyond the confines of his African-Caribbean middle-class family home:

Most of [Haynes's] childhood and . . . youth had been passed here [at the Haynes household], untroubled about anything except his own adolescent dreams. He had spent seven years at the secondary school, a shy, solitary boy, doing his lessons, playing games but making few friends, no friends—no, not one. [. . .]. He had grown up under the shelter of his mother, to whom he was everything and who was everything to him. Ever since he had known himself, he had known and accepted her plans for his future. (James 22)

Moreover, Mrs. Haynes's own position as a teacher simultaneously confirms and challenges the constituted roles for men and women in public and private spaces in early-twentieth century Trinidad. Although she occupies a position of power monopolized by men, the teacher does not use it to subvert or otherwise contest the gender order prevalent

at the time, but rather disseminates masculinist discourses and practices she in turn imparts to her son. Mrs. Haynes remains complicit with colonialism and its evils precisely because she derives privilege from her endorsement of the colonial project, which in turn makes her at least partially responsible for perpetuating the *status quo* enforced by the Crown Colony system. Similarly, Mrs. Haynes essentially took over her son's life and made vital decisions *for* him rather than *with* him, depriving her son of valuable opportunities to practice taking initiative, exercising self-control, and other qualities expected of future male heads of Caribbean bourgeois nuclear families, let alone forthcoming political leaders. Nevertheless, while Mrs. Haynes's actions accord with the colonial mindset at the time, they unwittingly call such a regime into question because she assumed the roles and attributes of "real" men, effectively replacing/displacing the late Dr. Haynes as breadwinner and head of her nuclear family. As a result, Mrs. Haynes inadvertently sabotaged her own plans for the young man's future. By granting her son no say in plotting his life-course, the matriarch isolated Haynes from all human experiences, save for those intended to socialize him into his roles as a Caribbean gentleman, leaving him unprepared to contend with the realities of life in 1920s Trinidad, which in turn casts Haynes's supposed "masculine" role as destined guide of the lower-classes into question.

Still, Mrs. Haynes herself is not entirely to blame for the way the young man turned out. While her overprotectiveness and subscription to pro-colonial mulatto bourgeois ideologies certainly helped pave the road her son ended up following, Haynes himself does little to reformulate the terms of the middle-class masculine paradigm he seeks to attain, and he also appears incapable of conceiving of any other way of

becoming a man in 1920s Trinidad. More importantly, Haynes makes little effort to disprove his mother's initial assessment of him as a "deficient" gentleman-in-training. Not long after her death, the young man wastes away in his family home, passively living day in and out in loneliness and boredom, entrusting Ella to make and oversee all important decisions on his behalf because he is too shy, inexperienced, and weak-willed to do so himself. Therefore, while Mrs. Haynes played a vital role in Haynes's rearing, the young man is ultimately responsible for whatever he does or fails to do, as his mother's decisions need not determine who Haynes is or can become, let alone what he might do throughout his life.

The prominent characters in *Minty Alley* evince "[t]he difficulty of representing positions and positionalities" in a colonized world ruled by Euro-American hegemony (Saunders 2). Similarly, Haynes displays an astounding inability to comprehend or appreciate "the complex nature of being-in-the-world" as experienced by British Crown colonial subjects in the Caribbean at the start of the twentieth century (2). Passivity and overdependence upon the work and validation of women blind Haynes to the realities of his time and place, preventing him from becoming conscious of colonialism and its impact on his own life as well as those of his fellow tenants:

Colonialism's absence in the novel highlights one of Haynes's major problems: his inability to recognize the source of his own oppression. The novel does not pay attention to colonialism because Haynes does not pay attention to colonialism, a blindness which is symptomatic of a colonized subject who subscribes to hegemonic belief systems. (Pate 54-5)

Socialized as a mulatto middle-class male in a colonial setting, Haynes most likely grew up believing himself to be racially “superior” to darker-skinned African and East Indian-Trinidadians, himself being “inferior” only to the local European-Creole elites, who themselves were “lesser” than metropolitan representatives. Although Haynes himself does not consciously avow these racist-masculinist hierarchies, he eventually learns to exploit them for his own benefit, perhaps believing himself entitled to use the women in his life as sources of economic sustenance, self-validation, and self-gratification, particularly after Benoit initiates him into being sexually assertive with Maisie.

Accordingly, Haynes, the dim-witted young man, claims a superior racialized social position in 1920s Trinidad as a birthright rather than through hard work and merit, as prescribed by the ideology of English-style masculinist gentility. A lifetime of maternal overprotection has turned this prospective gentleman into an acritic manchild, indecisive to such extent that it falls upon Ella, an elderly lower-class servant of African descent, to make suggestions that Haynes perhaps should have arrived at on his own. For instance, when Haynes informs Ella about his plans of retaining “half the house [Mrs. Haynes’s old bedroom and the study] and let[ting] the other half” for rent, he at first believes he can manage “with the rent from the house [“eight dollars a month”] and the rooms in George Street and [his] salary” from his job at the bookshop (James 19-20). Ella disagrees. She posits that renting out the entire house would earn Haynes a good “sixteen dollars or even sixteen-fifty,” while letting it out partially would cut the profits to less than half that amount. This, she argues, would not compensate for the “nine-fifty” he still has to pay for the bedroom and study alone, along with the cost of keeping a servant and paying off the mortgage (20). Unwilling to dispense with Ella’s services, Haynes finds

himself in a rut even after the latter promises to find “a large room” for the young man, as well as oversee the auction of certain household items to procure needed funds (20).

Nevertheless, Haynes’s reluctance to even consider dismissing Ella does not solely stem from any sense of gratitude or attachment he might have towards his mother’s loyal servant. Besides cooking and cleaning, Haynes depends on Ella to carry out tasks he does not know how to do himself, such as making budgets for paying debts and covering daily expenses, finding cheaper lodging, and deciding which items to sell at the upcoming auction. Overwhelmed by the tasks he must perform after his mother’s passing, Haynes reacts like a helpless child forced to assume responsibility for himself: “‘God, I wish I were rid of all this bother’. [Haynes] put his elbows on the table and rested his face on his hands” (20).

Facing bankruptcy, Haynes decides to rent out his mother’s house and move into the slums at No. 2 Minty Alley. Here he eventually realizes that his gendered, classed, and raced position in colonial Trinidad affords him certain advantages over his fellow tenants. Nevertheless, despite this change of location, Haynes remains blind to the source of his privilege, namely his education, bi-racial phenotype, and the British Crown Colony system that ruled Trinidad at the time, and thus contributed to the creation of a small bourgeoisie as part of “the . . . attempt to reproduce colonial subjects in [the colonizer’s] own image through the inculcation of colonial values, ideologies, and norms as a tactic of political control” (Pate 59). Although Haynes is “[an] educated man preparing to administer the lives of others,” he has next to no knowledge of “the facts of daily life” in his own house, let alone at No. 2 or throughout the rest of Trinidad (Nielsen 28-9). While his education, bi-racial skin-color, and upbringing certainly elevate Haynes’s value

among residents, the novel highlights multiple instances in which he proves “neither particularly bright nor particularly perceptive,” allowing his so-called friends to take advantage of his unreliable “acumen” (Pate 55-6).

An example occurs during “the episode of the beef,” where Mrs. Rouse questions Philomen about some missing meat to no avail, ending with Rouse accusing Maisie as the culprit (James 101). However, when Maisie denies this accusation, Haynes must make a choice:

Haynes knew how this would end. It meant Mrs. Rouse abusing Maisie, Maisie giving her back, and a quarrel which one day might end in violence. [. . .]. Quite instinctively he felt it his duty to make peace . . . He had a short but sharp battle with himself. Hitherto whatever part he had taken in the upheavals at No. 2 had been inadvertent and, in fact, against his will. Should he go out or not? His old timidity was still strong upon him, but he knew the respect with which [his neighbors] listened to anything he said. After all, why shouldn't he? (102)

Moved by Maisie’s “shrill and tearful” public protestations of innocence, Haynes sides with her and placates Mrs. Rouse, thus defusing a potentially violent altercation, only to realize he has been deceived when Maisie confides to him that she indeed took the beef (103). Knowing Mrs. Rouse and others would listen to Haynes out of respect for his middle-class position, Maisie exploits their deference to her advantage, and at the same time manipulates Haynes’s “generally kind, well-intentioned” demeanor to secure his allegiance against her aunt and her cronies (Pate 76). However, in addition to unmasking him as a naïve dupe, Haynes’s intervention undermines his bourgeois masculine authority

because he thoughtlessly used it to defend a young woman renowned throughout the yard as “an inveterate liar” who unapologetically takes advantage of others and makes them look like fools in front of other people (56). More concretely, Haynes’s claims to middle-class masculinity become questionable because his “authoritative” speech act on Maisie’s behalf was twisted into aiding and abetting thievery. His power and influence at No. 2 Minty Alley are turned into oppositional tools by a young woman who is barely seventeen years old, yet already surpasses Haynes himself in the practice of appropriating bourgeois male dominance and other cultural tools of 1920s Trinidad, making them work for her at the expense of dominant institutions (e.g. the nuclear family) and their representatives (Mrs. Rouse, Haynes). Furthermore, Maisie’s trickster techniques and other such metanarratives bear significant implications for the novel and Haynes himself:

In most instances readers [of *Minty Alley*] receive information as it is unfolded by the narrator, and thus the relationships of knowledge and authority as they exist among James’s characters are replicated in the relationships of reader to text. The same suspense that allows for the comedic effects of James’s stories also places readers in a situation where the power of their social position, probably at a higher socioeconomic level than that of most of James’s characters, is mitigated somewhat by their inability to know prior to information being related within the fictive community of the text. (Nielsen 21)

Thus, Maisie acts like a foil to Haynes. Instead of complying with colonial dominance and the demands of early-twentieth century capitalism, she uses lying, trickery, theft, and other proverbial “tools of the Master” for her own benefit rather than that of others.

Moreover, it is through her that Haynes begins (at least superficially) to disassociate himself from English-style middle-class masculinity and the hierarchies of race, class, sex, and gender he was groomed to uphold.

Nevertheless, while the novel presents Maisie as an intelligent, strong woman who subverts colonial domination, her subversion of the Master's tools makes her a figure of opposition rather than resistance because it entails working from *inside* the dominant culture rather than outside of it. Furthermore, all of Maisie's acts and words are designed to help herself first and foremost, and therefore are not conducive to the goals of Anglo-Caribbean masculinist-nationalist resistance to colonialism and related agendas espoused by James and other likeminded West Indian writers and theorists at the time.

Haynes's "lack of social knowledge" plagues him throughout his time in the barrackyards, as shown by his constant "failure to comprehend his immediate surroundings and culture," a flaw that seriously hampers the young man's alleged capacity to lead the lower-classes (31). Fortunately, Maisie facilitates Haynes's "accession to social comprehension" by bearing "knowledge" (carnal or otherwise) and offering to interpret it for him so that "what Maisie knew is far more important to Haynes than what she offers him sexually" (31). Interestingly, Haynes's relationship with Maisie replicates his earlier codependence on Ella and his mother in most aspects. His dependence on her invaluable, albeit potentially unreliable intelligence to assess and relate to his lower-class neighbors, themselves versed in the art of "the outwitting of the powerful by the weak" or, more specifically, evading and manipulating "a power that, if used directly, can and must only destroy them," is obvious (Burton 61). As demonstrated

by the incident of the beef, Haynes has no way of discerning fact from fiction in Maisie's stories, let alone in anything Mrs. Rouse, Benoit, and others tell him, as their narratives and apologies stem from "the realm of the polymorphous perverse, of endless deviation, deflection, and switching of roles . . . of subterfuge and multiple meanings" (61). Their trickster antics employ "particular mode[s] of concealing and revealing, of revealing *by* concealing, of continually switching voice and register, of leading the listeners away from and back to the story," thus delighting listeners with "display[s] of verbal virtuosity" which trap "the unwary" (i.e. Haynes) in "scarcely visible threads of deception" (61-2).

Similarly, after Benoit's final break with Mrs. Rouse, the landlady regales Haynes with the story of how she prays to God for strength and solace "[f]our times a day," which causes Haynes to candidly wonder at the "heroic vigils" such a regimen must demand from the already overworked owner of the barrackyard (James 129). However, the guileless Haynes does not realize that Rouse's performance of religion is mostly a self-serving power play. Up until her parting with Benoit and Nurse Jackson, Mrs. Rouse rarely shared her opinions with Haynes, as she only began to make a public spectacle of her faith after their betrayal and desertion. Unbeknownst to Haynes, Rouse is repurposing the colonizing Judeo-Christian religion to secure his sympathy and favor. The landlady seeks to bolster her claims to mulatto bourgeois-like respectability because she feels her authority and personhood threatened and undermined by what she perceives as Benoit's and Maisie's respective embrace of the culture of reputation. Additionally, Mrs. Rouse has designs upon Haynes himself, as Miss Atwell confesses to him while he is nursing his injured foot:

‘[T]hem people,’ [Atwell] pointed towards the Rouse household, ‘them people is a set of thieves and liars. They wants to put you against Ella. [. . .]. . . . [D]on’t believe a word they say. They wants to get you on board and then rob you. [. . .]. They does nothing but sit and conspire how to get you into their clutches. When [the nurse] is talkin’ to you in here, be careful. She is talkin’ very unsuspectin’, but all the time she is cross-pickin’ you to find out you’ business. They see you look soft . . . and they wants to jostle you. . . . (52-3)

Her own vested interests notwithstanding, Atwell’s warning is far from groundless, as shown when Mrs. Rouse boasts to Haynes about how she has Benoit and Jackson “in the hollow of [her] hand” because the nurse once told her where they hid the money and jewels Jackson routinely stole and which Benoit would wear despite Rouse’s admonitions (127-8). Although the landlady threatens to “go down to the Constabulary and lay my information and the two of them will sleep in the cell tonight,” she excuses her inaction by claiming that “[Jackson] told me in confidence when she was my friend and I wouldn’t use it now [that] she is my enemy” (128). However, the real reasons behind this silence are far less altruistic. If Ma Rouse made good on her threats, she would likely be arrested as an accomplice, as she knew about the thefts, failed to report them, and allowed Jackson and Benoit to hide the loot in her house. Moreover, the nurse could easily shift blame to Rouse, and even Benoit himself, in hopes of somehow proving her “innocence” and being exonerated, or at the very least receive a lighter sentence. Irrespective of outcome, the colonial police most likely would not trust the word of Alice Rouse, a dark-skinned, lower-class landlady mimicking respectability, and McCarthy Benoit, her bad-

john boyfriend of mixed African and East Indian descent, over that of Nurse Jackson, a woman of Creole-European extraction who holds a respectable job and caters to no less respectable people.

Previous incidents further highlight Haynes's overall ineffectiveness. When Jackson physically assaults her son Sonny, the lad escapes to Haynes's room, yet the young gentleman's half-hearted protests cannot save the child from his fate. The incident says more about Haynes himself than about the nurse:

[Haynes] would not stay a moment longer than was necessary in the same house with [the nurse]. He dreaded the thought of seeing her again. Had his foot not been damaged (and also for Mrs. Rouse's sake) he would have left at once. He should have saved Sonny. But what right had he to interfere? There were no laws about child-beating on the island. [. . .]. He thought of his own peaceful childhood and limpid life in his mother's house and wished that he could go back to it and never leave it again. (46-7)

When his privileged middle-class position is not enough to dissuade the nurse from punishing her son, Haynes pleads a lack of right to intervene in the lives of others, along with powerlessness to mend Trinidad's legal system. Still, deep down Haynes realizes he failed to save Sonny because he lacks "masculine" courage to stand up to a "poor white" woman, who not only outranks him racially and socially, but also reminds him too much of his own mother. These parallels become clearer later that evening, when the nurse tries to justify her actions: "I suppose that you [Haynes] think me a cruel mother. But

Sonny is my only child and all my hopes are on him. I'll give him anything he wants and that a child should have, but he will obey me until he is a man for himself" (47).

Although the late Mrs. Haynes never "even hinted at the possibility of [Haynes] being beaten," the matriarch's monopoly over her son's life was no less violent than the nurse's assault upon Sonny (44). Much like Jackson herself, Mrs. Haynes oppressed her son through what Katie Thomas defines as "the border of feminine space" in "Sins of the Mother(land): Presence, Absence, and Self in Caribbean Literature" (1). According to Thomas, "Western colonization" twisted "the parent-child bond" into a relationship akin to that of "Other and overseer" which unfolded in plantocratic colonial societies in the Caribbean and elsewhere in the European-dominated world (3). Although "instigated by and touting the philosophy of patriarchy," colonization was mostly "realized through the feminine form . . . after the large scale physical departure of the Western colonialist" compelled oppressors to "entrust the perpetuation of [their] ideals to the oppressed themselves" (3). Such duty, Thomas claims, was readily carried out by colonized women to the extent they were "the most severely oppressed" and "most easily controlled" victims of colonial subjugation (3). Undergirded by the "presence of terror masked as a mission of familial cultivation," such power relations brought about "a docile compliance in native peoples," resulting in "a psychic state of unrecognized conformity to Western social mores" (3). In turn, such conformity allowed for the birth of "the colonial hybrid," a "new cultural race" engendered through "the colonizer's sublimation of the native [Caribbean] mother and "the mother's sublimation of her own progeny due to her adherence to Western cultural standards" (4). This sublimation unfolds in two key aspects: "the colonial casting of the native mother as paradise," and "the Caribbean

mother's status as "surrogate" or "nanny," both of which reflect "popular colonial myths of the Caribbean as "Edenic" (4). By equating Caribbean mothers with "paradise," colonial hybrids learn to "confuse natural desire," and thus perpetuate the "agenda" of Western colonizers through "a peaked affection towards the mother" (4). Since the mother thereby represents and enacts a vitiated miscegenation of "nurture" and "paradise," she "continue[s], in the oppressor's absence, to demand colonial tribute" by calling upon her children to sustain the colonial project through active participation and passive acquiescence (4).

The maternal bond between Haynes and his mother and between Nurse Jackson and Sonny presents similar parallels, as both women perpetuate colonial discourses and practices as part of rearing their sons. Like Haynes and Sonny, Mrs. Haynes and the nurse most likely suffered trauma from their own subjugations based on sex, gender, class, and race. According to outlines provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in "Trauma Definition," individual trauma stems from "an event, series of events, or set of circumstances . . . experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening" and which has "lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical social, emotional, or spiritual well-being" (3). Such harm is brought about by "[e]vents and circumstances" that comprise "actual or extreme threat of physical or psychological harm or the withholding of material or relational resources essential to healthy development" (3). Furthermore, the individual's "experience" of such events/circumstances helps determine how the former "labels, assigns meaning to, and is disrupted physically and psychologically" by them:

How the event is experienced may be linked to a range of factors including the individual's cultural beliefs . . . availability of social supports . . . or to the developmental stage of the individual . . . The long-lasting adverse *effects* on an individual are the result of the individual's experience of the event or circumstance. These adverse effects may occur immediately or over time. In some situations, the individual may not recognize the connection between the effects and the events. (3)

Long-term adverse effects include, but are not limited to, "inability to cope with the normal stresses and strains of daily living," as well as impaired capacity to "trust and benefit from relationships" or "manage emotions, memory, attention, thinking, and behavior" (3). Trauma as "physical or psychological harm" is evinced by the nurse's public torture of her son, whereas its second aspect, "withholding of material or relational resources essential to healthy development," manifests in Mrs. Haynes's rearing of her son. Her virtual monopoly over Haynes's life compromised his ability to confront quotidian demands, create and maintain mutually nurturing and beneficial relationships with others, handle complex emotions such as anger or sadness, and lastly, to think and act in ways different from the ones he was reared in as a young Caribbean mulatto bourgeois male. The traumas mothers and sons experience unfold "in a context of community" understood in a geographical, organizational, and virtual sense. Located in early-twentieth century colonial Trinidad, No. 2 Minty Alley is "a place of work" and "learning" for both Haynes and Sonny, as well as a dynamic locus that encompasses "shared identit[ies], ethnicit[ies]," and "experience[s]" mediated by discourses and practices dealing with race, class, sex, and gender (4). Thus, the barrackyard comprises a

space where individuals and the community itself can inflict trauma, as well as experience it by being subjected to “community-threatening *event[s]*” and having “shared *experience[s]*” of traumatic events, along with accompanying “adverse, prolonged *effect[s]*” (4). Irrespective of events, circumstances, or results, the traumas that ensue tend to be “transmitted from one generation to the next” in patterns of “historical, community, or intergenerational trauma” (4). Similarly, the community at No. 2 transmits such traumas to its younger members, as demonstrated by the nurse’s physical and verbal abuse against Sonny, Mrs. Rouse’s hostile, domineering relationship with Maisie and Philomen, and lastly, Haynes’s exposure to such violations on a nearly daily basis.

Nevertheless, the concept of trauma itself must be approached critically. Similarly, as Maurice Stevens posits in “From the Past Imperfect: Towards a Critical Trauma Theory,” this concept is customarily understood in Western academia as a series of “institutional and discursive practices” that perpetuate and rely upon “concepts of trauma critically restricted by classifications based on race, class, gender, sexuality and religion” (1). From its inception during the late-nineteenth century, the “ideological and fiduciary struggle[s]” over the term have “shifted and transformed” its “meanings” throughout the twentieth century and beyond (1). Since “trauma has really never functioned transparently or equitably,” it has never been a mere “descriptive term” unaffected by “scientific determinations,” ideological underpinnings, or the intentions of groups or individuals (1). More concretely, trauma entails “a kind of situated knowledge that emerges from the specificities of the moment in which it is invoked as an appropriate or obvious label” by “forces of social emplotment” imbedded/invested in the concept

itself (2). Consequently, using such term involves engaging and manipulating discourse, practice, and what Foucault terms “constraints of truth,” self-regulating mechanisms of power that mediate the ways in which dissemination and use of knowledge unfold in Western societies by deciding what qualifies as “true” (i.e. “scientific”) knowledge, as well as what constitutes its opposite (“The Discourse on Language” 232). Being “flexible and adroit,” trauma “can pass from one context of expertise to another, slipping across borders to be readily recruited to new discourses and new contexts of explanation” (Stevens 2). Consequently, it is overdetermined from its inception by “racialization, sexualization . . . the tyranny of the visual,” and other considerations dictated by Eurocentric “institutional practices” and divergences of “signification” which arbitrarily delimit “whose sensibilities can be disturbed by near-death experiences, whose civility can be upset by the horrific, and who can be overwhelmed by fear,” namely “who . . . can be traumatized”:

On one hand, the ability to pinpoint the traumatic even or symptom with spatial and temporal coordinates (necessarily past and completed) makes it particularly powerful in the clinical or diagnostic setting. The traumatic even possesses specificity, there is an agent and victim of injury, a place and time of occurrence, and a blooming narrative of accountability or innocence. On the other hand, its unknowability . . . the degree to which trauma exceeds signification or eludes description, makes it particularly susceptible to becoming something else as well. The event is also enigmatic. (Stevens 2)

Similar to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and related ailments, trauma “create[s]” its subjects and their experiences as much as it describes them (2). Therefore, it can be used to categorize characters like Haynes and the community at No. 2 as racialized, sexed, gendered, and classed subjects that are “produced as vulnerable to traumatogenic injury” under so-called scientific guidelines, yet in practice are regarded as somehow being immune to trauma (4).

These afflictions not only affect Mrs. Haynes, Nurse Jackson, and their sons: they also influence relationships with subordinates and outsiders. In turn, the former could have caused the nurse and Mrs. Haynes to develop obsessive compulsive personality disorders, particularly Dependent Personality Disorder (DPD). As Theodore Millon *et al.* explain in *Personality Disorders in Modern Life*, sufferers of DPD are characterized by “caring to a fault, allowing others’ well-being to come first no matter what the cost may be to themselves or their identity” due to misapplied commitment to “their personal relationships, especially to their spouses and the institution of marriage” (260). Since they basically “live their lives through others and for others, to whom they offer warmth, tenderness, and consideration,” “dependents” tend to “assume the more passive role in their relationships, deferring to the opinions and desires of those they love, whose pleasure and fulfillment they then enjoy vicariously” (260).

For instance, being “a perfect mistress,” Mrs. Haynes impressed upon her son the need to uphold social hierarchies on Eurocentric grounds of race, class, sex, and gender, as demonstrated when the usually obtuse Haynes realized that, unlike himself, his mother would never have invited Ella to sit down and exchange opinions on crucial matters (James 19). As a headmistress, Mrs. Haynes unwearingly disseminated Eurocentric

masculinist ideologies to prospective Caribbean gentlemen, enforced the use of standard British English, and disparaged Trinidadian English lexifier-Creole. She instilled in her male students the so-called values of bourgeois masculinity, such as civism, self-control, respect towards authority figures, and reverence for Empire (22). Mrs. Haynes certainly played a vital role in her son's schooling, and perhaps even tutored him herself to ensure his success.

Contrastingly, while Nurse Jackson does not appear to participate as actively in Sonny's formal education, she still considers it essential, as she "pa[ys] two dollars a month" for him to attend "an exclusive private school" (41). Furthermore, the nurse prioritizes Sonny's long-term wellbeing above all else. She "dresse[s] him expensively . . . g[ives] him frequent pocket change," and pa[ys] someone to cook "a good hot lunch" for him on schooldays (41). Nevertheless, the nurse's doting on Sonny is as pernicious as Mrs. Haynes's close grip upon her son. Jackson accompanied her "string of mammy's darlings, sonny boys, honeys and the like" with "almost sensual" embraces and kisses, prompting Benoit's jealousy every time his lover "indulg[ed] in one of these rhapsodies over her son" (41). Consequently, Jackson's claims that she always gives Sonny "anything he wants and that a child should have" are suspect, as her displays of affection towards the boy are both inappropriate and hypocritical (47). At several instances, her indulgent behavior becomes punitive, as she metes out brutal corporal punishment and public humiliation for relatively minor offenses (47). Although Jackson does not elaborate on the subject, the fact that she saw the need to scourge Sonny like a dog illustrates what she might have meant. According to the nurse, a good boy should respect grown-ups, particularly those who look after him, irrespective of whether or not they are

related by parentage, the opposite of what Sonny did when he claimed Benoit had no right to physically punish him because he is not his father (42). Good boys should also refrain from speaking or behaving “lewdly” towards women, like Sonny did when he got “very fresh” with Maisie and asked her for a kiss as a reward for winning a game of marbles (42). More importantly, a child training to become a gentleman should obey his mother at all times under penalty of violence. Sonny will be free to imitate men like Benoit in his dealings with women only when he can financially sustain his own nuclear family, as well as look after his mother to repay her love and abnegation throughout the years. Rationalizations notwithstanding, the nurse’s mercurial relationship with her son closely mirrors the colonial dynamics of Caribbean slave societies discussed by Hilary Beckles in “Black Masculinity in Caribbean Slavery.” “[C]onstructed . . . upon the demographic basis of a dominant white-black male encounter,” these colonial societies revolved around the transatlantic slave trade, which itself depended upon “the military defeat and subsequent violent subordination of black males by white men” who thus project a “white male triumphalism” through mass conscription of “defeated [African] male warriors” to work in plantations (228). Jackson’s relationship with her son emulates these social arrangements in multiple ways. One moment, she tries to “buy” Sonny’s love, giving him “anything he wants and that a child should have,” yet at the next she discards all pretenses and beats him to a bloody pulp for defiance, insolence, running away, and other so-called offenses their slaver ancestors punished in the enslaved peoples they sought to dehumanize for the sake of profit and power.

Nevertheless, while Nurse Jackson and Mrs. Haynes exhibit these traits in relationship to their sons, both women assume an “active” rather than “passive” role in

familial relationships, as shown by Mrs. Haynes's tendency to make important decisions without consulting her son, as well as the nurse's insistence that Sonny should obey her until he reaches adulthood, and the physical and verbal abuse she inflicts upon the lad whenever her expectations are not met. Additionally, it is likely that Mrs. Haynes herself suffers from some form of Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD) as defined by Holly G. Prigerson and others in "Prolonged Grief Disorder: Psychometric Validation of Criteria Proposed for *DSM-V* and *ICD-11*." Correlated with precedents such as "a history of childhood separation anxiety . . . controlling parents . . . parental abuse or death . . . close kinship relationship with the deceased . . .," excessive, inappropriate "attachment styles," coupled with "marital supportiveness and dependency" and unpreparedness for the death of loved ones, PGD likely influenced the matriarch's relationship with her son, who perhaps exhibits passiveness and similar "unmasculine" traits after a lifetime of dependence upon a person plagued by unresolved grief over the death of a loved one to whom she could have been as emotionally attached as Haynes himself was to his mother (2).

Different as they are, Jackson's and Mrs. Haynes's approaches to parenting are similar to what Foucault defines as the "means of functioning," that is, those "strategies," "covert discourses and ruses" that "assure the permanence and functioning" of an "institution," such as the monogamous, heteronormative Caribbean middle-class (or middle-class aspirant, in Jackson's case) nuclear family (*Power/Knowledge* 38). Rather than homogenous unities, these discourses and practices comprise "strategic connections" that ensure the compliance of groups and individuals by means of "ruses" that "are not ultimately played by any particular person," yet are still "lived" at a communal and

individual level (38). They constitute an acephalous power in terms of which structures, practices, and discourses (institutional/non-institutional, official/non-official, etc.) are disseminated by particular institutions, groups, and persons throughout their daily action or inaction, independently of, yet not *disconnected* from, the desires and intentions of those who enact them, and who in turn are enacted by them. In other words, acephalous power is exercised even if there is no formally avowed intention to wield that power, let alone a figure or “ruler” deemed to possess/embody it. Furthermore, rather than deny “the reality of the body in favour of the soul, consciousness,” and “ideality,” this “exercise of power” unfolds in “material,” “physical,” and “corporal” contexts to the extent it makes the body both the subject and the site to be “conquered” through its discourses and practices (57-8). For that matter, both women also differ in their approach to discipline. Whereas Mrs. Haynes most likely used mechanisms of “surveillance” and persuasion to direct her son’s life well into adulthood, the nurse combines mechanisms of disproportionate reward and punishment in the form of “exemplary penalt[ies]” to secure Sonny’s compliance with her own goals and desires *for/in* him (38). While these women arguably use their treatment of their sons as a way to find redress for their own raced, classed, sexed, and gendered oppression in 1920s Trinidad, their chief aim is to benefit their children and themselves by surmounting such oppression through skillful manipulation of cultural, social, political, and economic tools available at the time. Consequently, Mrs. Haynes and Nurse Jackson simultaneously sustain and oppose patriarchy, colonialism, and Eurocentric British-style hegemonic masculinity through their own actions and intentions as part of rearing their sons toward Caribbean middle-class masculinity and respectability.

Despite their different approaches, Mrs. Haynes and the nurse embody and perform the role of the Caribbean Edenic mother/surrogate-nanny as Thomas describes it. They have raised their only sons to emulate the ideal of the English gentleman for the sake of social ascension and material gain in a colonized society that allows its subjects few other options for embodying and performing masculinity. Thus, both women dominate their sons' lives and mold their worldviews through physical and verbal violence (Jackson), or emotional manipulation and overprotectiveness (Mrs. Haynes). In turn, Sonny's plight compels Haynes to idealize life under his own mother, and therefore he refuses to acknowledge how much it has damaged him. Whether or not Haynes's mother used physical violence against her son is ultimately moot. To rear a child in a colonial context, groom him in the image and likeness of an absentee, authoritarian metropolitan "father," and teach him no viable alternatives to oppressive versions of masculinity is no less damaging than whipping him for the perverse delight of a captive audience.

The power relations between these women and their progeny delineate the politics of parenthood in the English-ruled Caribbean. Some impoverished families regard their offspring's acquisition of colonial education toward a prestigious profession, such as law or medicine, as an investment for social ascendency in "a diseased society in which internal dynamics" cannot create "new structures" and thus "dissolve the conflicts of generations" due to its incapacity for transformation (Memmi 98-9). Paying little attention to the quality and content of education, parents like Nurse Jackson and Mrs. Haynes zealously protect their "investment" in their male children. This, they reason, is their only chance to bridge the imbalance of power created by colonial society on

grounds of gender, sex, class, and race. Nevertheless, participating in such competitions for wealth, power, and respectability ultimately perpetuates the very injustices these families seek to escape, particularly when parents use violence (physical or otherwise) to keep their prospective doctor, lawyer, or petty civil servant from doing anything that might sabotage their social ascension. Moreover, by forcing their children to stake their future in the colonial education system, these parents unwittingly help create the unmanned state likely to plague their sons when they reach adulthood, thus graduating into possible victims and victimizers that might keep the colonial grind running for another generation in the name of love and good intentions. Even so, non-participation is not a viable option either, as it would leave these families with still fewer possibilities of improving their quality of life in colonial society. Lastly, while partaking in colonial education might denote some degree of complicity with the colonialist regime, participation does not necessarily imply acquiescence, any more than it always entails conformity. Not all beneficiaries of colonial education become victimizers, just as not all people it marginalizes become victims. Violence, coercion, and predation take several forms in the colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial Caribbean. Rather than a clean-cut, vertical hierarchy of subjections and constraints, oppression constitutes a continuum which not only is in constant transition and evolution, but is often affected by ingrained self-contradictions in such a way that one form of oppression reinforces other forms, yet cancels out others, or at least makes it possible to contest them.

Just as Sonny is unable to stop his mother from assailing him, Haynes cannot extricate himself from his mother's influence. Subjection to maternal authority and middle-class mores rendered Haynes incapable of "do[ing] anything for himself," leaving

him without any “sense of who he is or what courses of action he should take” (Pate 66). Beset by “a lack of social relations,” Haynes’s masculinity remains inchoate due to lifelong withdrawal from “the social realm” of his time and place, as well as a shortage of options to overcome such withdrawal:

[Haynes’s] development occurs most significantly in that he learns to speak up, he becomes more confident, and he begins to perform masculinity; these changes . . . help him to make friends and assume a position of domestic authority. Unlike the classical *Bildungsheld*, who has a wide array of options, these are the only ways Haynes *can* grow . . . these changes are both slight and unsupportable outside of the space of Minty Alley and do not quite line up with those in the classical Bildungsroman. (66)

Life in a British colony does not merely limit Haynes’s vision of personal growth. It also exacerbates his inbred passivity and reticence, rendering him a social isolate who “often cannot assert his more obvious needs and wishes,” let alone “communicate on a social level with other people” (67). James’s protagonist exhibits behaviors similar to those described by Janice Kuo and others in “Childhood Trauma and Current Psychological Functioning in Adults with Social Anxiety Disorder, (1). According to Kuo, Social Anxiety Disorder (S.A.D.) entails a “persistent fear of social or performance situations in which an individual is at risk for embarrassment, humiliation, or possible scrutiny by unfamiliar persons” (1). Haynes exhibits some of the symptoms of S.A.D. Having spent most of his life under his mother’s control, Mrs. Haynes’s lofty expectations could have occasioned the young man to develop “low self-esteem” whenever the former proved

difficult or impossible to meet (3). More concretely, the matriarch's stringent upbringing allowed Haynes few opportunities to cultivate interpersonal relationships outside of his home, as she made sure her son poured most of his time and efforts into his studies at the expense of other endeavors. Coupled with emotional manipulation and other forms of coercion, the "emotional abuse" Mrs. Haynes unwittingly inflicted upon her son contributed to his suffering from "low self-esteem" later in life (3). Since the young man must overcome a lifetime of emasculating silence imposed in the name of good upbringing, learning to perform masculinity by embracing the dialectic of reputation becomes a key lesson during Haynes's "apprenticeship" at No. 2, as shown during his conversation with Benoit:

‘Man, any girl like Maisie will like a nice young fellow like you [Haynes].

Ask for what you want. If you don't ask, you don't get.' [. . .]. ‘Though, by Christ, plenty of them today don't even wait for you to ask.’

‘She likes somebody else,’ said Haynes.

[. . .]. ‘Haynes, man, you are afraid. She always in your room. Choose your chance, hold the girl and kiss her. You needn't even tell her anything. You just hold her and kiss her well. Boy, if I was up there I'd show you.’ (James 141)

While Haynes has had previous experience in these matters, the outcome was a far cry from the conquests of a seasoned womanizer like Benoit. Once during his adolescence, Haynes skipped the preliminary stages *de rigueur*, “put his arm around a girl's waist,” and was swiftly slapped for his troubles (37). This discouraged further pursuits and made it difficult for him to so much as look at “young women fully in the face,” so he

compensated by avidly reading about women to fan his passion for them, even though he “had never since he was grown up kissed or being kissed by a woman who was not related to him” (37). Unable to experience female affection from someone other than his mother or other close relatives, Haynes falls into voyeurism as a source of the “primitive” pleasures ordinarily denied to him. He peeps through “a wide crack of light” in the boards of his room at No. 2 one night and watches Benoit kissing Wilhelmina, one of Mrs. Rouse’s servants, until they disappear into the nearby kitchen to consummate their lust; and he also observes how Benoit had his way with the nurse immediately after dismissing Wilhelmina, much to Haynes’s delight (36-8).

Although Haynes’s initial quietness and aloofness eventually give way to more assertive masculine behavior demonstrated by his “sexual success” with Maisie, he remains bound to the values and worldviews of the Trinidadian mulatto middle-classes (Pate 69). Simon Featherstone makes a similar point in “Sport and the Performative Body in the Early Work of C.L.R. James”:

The narrative of Haynes’s ‘voyage in’ becomes one of social consolidation rather than discovery despite the chaotic conflicts it precipitates. By leaving class deference to go unchecked, re-stating racialised evaluations of his co-dwellers and exercising, albeit ineptly, sexual privileges allowed by his perceived status, Haynes not only fails to analyse his own predicament and transform it but effectively re-colonises Minty Alley without knowing it. (156-7)

Furthermore, King argues that Haynes’s compliance with mulatto bourgeois ideologies and subsequent complicity with Trinidad’s colonial government make him a

representative of “the isolated and self-absorbed existence of the colored middle classes” through his consistent failure to “increase his understanding or awareness of the community he has ostensibly joined” (*C.L.R. James and Creolization . . . 57*). Kindness and good intentions notwithstanding, Haynes contributes to the poverty and oppression that allow Minty Alley to exist in the first place because he does not reevaluate his goals and worldviews, let alone his definitions of “true” masculinity, in light of his experiences, as shown by his maintaining “a certain distance from [the neighbors at No. 2],” which bars him from becoming “part of the Minty Alley collective community” (Pate 76):

The sojourn of Haynes . . . at No. 2 can be seen as a period of socialization during which his understanding of his middle-class position and its attendant privileges is made complete. [. . .]. . . [A]t the end of the text Haynes is more firmly rooted in the patriarchal discourse of colonial subjectivity and, after facilitating that rootedness, the women and the working-class characters return to the margins of his life. (*C.L.R. James and Creolization . . . 56*)

Once Mrs. Rouse sells No. 2 and the community disperses, Haynes’s masculine “development” is undone “without the community of women to empower him,” and he returns to “the exact same condition” he was in at the beginning of the novel (Pate 76). Being little more than a human “*tabula rasa*,” James’s protagonist is ill-prepared to assume his place as a leader in a colonial society that “exercised total control over his life and impeded his own development” as a man (62). James’s protagonist is not merely colonized by education and middle-class ideology. Blindness to the source of his privilege and oppression, as well as ignorance of his liminal position as a would-be

mediator between the colonial government and the Trinidadian masses, make any rupture with colonial history, identity, and practice all but unlikely. These factors ultimately cause the young man to return to his middle-class surroundings at the end of *Minty Alley*, leaving him trapped within the island limits of 1920's Trinidad, as unmanned by his inability to move beyond the colored bourgeoisie and its mores as he was when he first came into the eponymous neighborhood.

Similarly, the novel presents McCarthy Benoit as an alternative model of colonized masculinity. Having espoused a hyper-masculine reputation-based ideology, Benoit considers sleeping with as many women as possible an entitlement and constantly flaunts his sexual exploits in front of others as part of “competing performances of race and class within a frame of colonial power” (Featherstone 156). This character embodies the *casa/calle* divide in a Caribbean context of reputation and respectability, as he constantly steals away from Mrs. Rouse’s home to participate in illegal or unregulated occupations for material gain (Moya 77). Benoit also engages in “extramarital relations” inside and outside of No. 2 Minty Alley and, being a “shrewd and slick” opportunist, manipulates and exploits other people, particularly women, by living off their work, thus spurning tenets of respectability, particularly the role of male breadwinner, monogamy, and respect for social hierarchies (77). In addition to male reputation, Benoit also strives for masculine respectability through his marriage to the Creole-European Nurse Jackson. However, his economic dependence upon women, hedonistic lifestyle, and lack of loyalty to anyone other than himself impede his ascension in both realms.

Colonial discourses and practices about masculinity performance have reduced Benoit into “an inordinately black hollow” that personifies “the most immoral impulses”

and “the most shameful desires” that the mulatto middle-classes disavow in themselves (Fanon 146). Similarly, M. Jacqui Alexander postulates in “Not Just (Any) Body Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas” that colonial rule simultaneously racialized and sexualized colonized populations as part of efforts to naturalize “whiteness” (12). Doing so entailed creating “psycho-social codices of sexuality” inseparable from Eurocentric notions of race, class, and gender, “mythic meta-systems” which crystalized “polarities, contradictions and fictions” about colonized persons of African, East Indian, Asian, and Creole-European descent into “truth about character” that could therefore be used to disqualify most colonized men who aspired to English-style bourgeois masculinities (13):

Black bodies, the economic pivot of slave-plantation economy, were sexualized. Black women's bodies evidenced an unruly sexuality, untamed and wild. Black male sexuality was to be feared as the hypersexualized stalker. [. . .]. Indian femininity (in Trinidad and Tobago) was formulated as dread and desire, mysteriously wanton, inviting death and destruction, although it could also be domesticated. Indian manliness was unrestrained, violent and androgynous, the latter construction drawn from Britain's colonial experience in India. (12)

As Kaneesha Parsard writes in “Douglarise de nation”: Politicized Intimacies and the Literary Dougla,” such efforts overwrote the Crown Colony subjects of Trinidad and Tobago with a “popular discourse” that lionized “hybridity,” yet at the same time obscured “subjects formed in-between” the twin pluralities of African and East Indian races (13). Commonly encapsulated under the semi-pejorative term “dougla,” Benoit

and similar “mixed-race figures” contest “the distinct [African] and Indian pluralities in Trinidad and Tobago” championed by respectability-seeking Caribbean gentlemen who subscribe to “discourses that deem Trinidadian hybridity a broad, national project” by eliding “small-scale Afro-Indo intimacies” (2). Similarly, Puri claims in *The Caribbean Postcolonial: Social Equality, Post/Nationalism, and Cultural Hybridity* that such intimacies constitute a “dis-allowed identity” because the very existence of *douglas* threatens “the racial accounting that depends on clearly differentiable races” (190-1). Parsard further argues that Benoit, a *douglah* or “[m]ixed-race” Trinidadian of “African and [East] Indian parentage,” is a product of the English-colonial enterprise (“Douglarise de nation” 1). Benoit’s *douglah* existence is predicated upon “the memory of the Middle Passage,” the transatlantic slave trade, and the “*kala pani*,” or “oceanic voyage that transported Indian men lured by the promises of recruiters to the Caribbean” (1). Having become “sexualized” as “justification” for “labor” and other “colonial and civilizing imperatives,” Benoit’s douglarized body was “marked” by colonial “[f]ear[s]” as a site for the “exotic unfamiliarity” of Indian women and the “assumed predatory impulses” of black men (14). Consequently, this hybridized masculinity amplifies Benoit’s “undesirable sexual proclivities,” thus undermining his masculine character in the spheres of reputation and respectability (14).

In turn, Parsard posits in “Barrack Yard Politics: From C.L.R. James’s *The Case for West-Indian Self Government* to *Minty Alley*” that James’s novel delineates “a *barrack yard politics* whereby African and [East] Indian people” lived and worked as “neighbors who collaborate, clash, and are intimate with one other” by negotiating dialectics of reputation and respectability to survive in hostile English-colonized societies

(14-5). Similarly, Benoit's negotiations between masculinist reputation and respectability are characteristic of a time when traditional discourses and practices of articulating and performing gender, sex, race, and class were reformulated in Trinidad and the rest of the English-speaking Caribbean. Lewis describes this in "Caribbean Masculinity at the *Fin de Siècle*." Being "socially constructed set[s] of gendered behaviours and practices of men . . . mediated by notions of race, class, ethnicity, religion, age and sexual orientation," masculinities thus changed "the way[s] [Caribbean men] act[ed] out . . . maleness," as well as the ways they "exteriorize[d] the gender-specific behaviours" they had learned (245). Nevertheless, while such contestations transformed the ways masculine power was disseminated and exercised at the time, the former did not do away with the reality of colonized male dominance based on "emulation of patriarchal [European] tropes" upon women and socially inferior men (Pate 77). Rife with artificiality, this "power-based masculinity" presented colonized men with two choices: they could "reproduce the aggressive, patriarchal domination they experience[d] from the colonizer" and inflict it upon colonized women, or they could "strive to embody an idealized colonial manhood" (78). Nevertheless, both options were sure to fail because Caribbean men were immersed in a sociocultural, political, and economic system of foreign domination structured to deprive them of freedom, wealth, and similar attributes attached to privileged versions of masculinity (78).

In turn, these contexts mirror the situation Martin Summers describes in *Manliness and Its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930*:

In [North] America . . . manhood seemed to be a national preoccupation. From individual concerns about one's own masculine character to larger collective anxieties over the nation's manliness, definitions of manhood—ones that were fundamentally racialized and class bound—pervaded everyday discourse. Everything from definitions of success and citizenship to national conversations over expansion and empire was shaped, in part, by a gendered set of ideas that also informed the identity formation of white middle-class men. The overarching question of what constituted manhood . . . dominated the ways in which most men and women in the United States conceptualized, among other things, economic prosperity, national belonging, and, for many, their position within racial, ethnic, and class hierarchies. (1)

At “the turn of the twentieth century,” Caribbean males who lived in the United States and elsewhere in the Western hemisphere could fashion themselves into middle-class men through the practice of “honesty, piety, self-control, and . . . commitment to the producer values of industry, thrift, punctuality, and sobriety” (1). However, such standards were simultaneously contested by “[a] modern ethos of masculinity” that unlinked “manhood” from “[r]espectability,” the market, and its attendant producer-oriented values of “industry, thrift, regularity, and temperance” (8). Consequently, men from the middle and lower-classes began to “define [manhood] in terms of consumption,” namely “the consumer goods one owned, the leisure practices one engaged in, and one's physical and sexual virility” (8). Concurrently, this ethos coalesced with what Connell terms “a masculin[ist] ideal” that privileged “domination of women, competition between

men,” displays of aggression, “predatory [heteronormative] sexuality and . . . [sexist] double standard[s]” (*Masculinities* 31).

As Ramchand explains in “Calling All Dragons: The Crumbling of Caribbean Masculinity,” these shifts became especially fraught with conflict in the Anglophone Caribbean, a region where “the constructions of both masculinity and femininity have been ordered by the imperatives of organized systems of oppression and exploitation,” stemming from “histor[ies] of enslavement, indenture and colonialism” (312). Moreover, “the figure of the bad-john” originated under such imperatives and assumed central importance for Trinidadian “[n]otions of masculinity” (313). Strongly associated “with the yard, the ghetto and lower-class Afro-Trinidadian life,” the term “bad-john” designated males who “repeatedly “flout[ed] colonial attempts to regulate and civilize them” and were “not consider[ed] worthy of individual notice,” hence the usage of the common male name “John” to emphasize generalized lower-class male criminality, deviance, and subscription to reputation-seeking behaviors (313). However, despite their apparent refusal to conform to Eurocentric standards and capitalist demands, bad-johns were figures of mimicry rather than resistance regarding what they sought to undermine.

Irrespective of the needs, desires, and intentions they serve, the dialectics of reputation and respectability in *Minty Alley* are cultures of opposition that reproduce the “underlying structures” of colonial domination while “consciously challeng[ing] its visible dominance” (8). More concretely, such dialectics unfold in the Anglophone Caribbean as part of a culture of colonial mimicry. As Homi Bhabha argues in *The Location of Culture*, colonial mimicry consists of “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other” rendered into “*a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*”

because it is “constructed around an *ambivalence*” which operates by continually producing “slippage,” “excess,” and “difference” as constitutive elements of such mimicry (122; emphasis in the original). Simultaneously structured upon “the tension between the synchronic panoptical vision of domination—the demand for identity, stasis—and the counter-pressure of the diachrony of history—change, difference,” mimicry constitutes “an *ironic* compromise” to the extent it is “the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal” (122):

Mimicry is . . . the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate . . . a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent [*sic*] threat to both ‘normalized’ knowledges and disciplinary powers. (122-3)

Colonial mimicry thus comprises a “dialectics of rerouting” predicated upon “political strength,” as well as “multiple relationship[s] with the Other” at a communal and individual level (Glissant 16). Glissant posits in *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* that such diversion encompasses a “mingling of experiences . . . at work” in producing and making known a “process of being” that has abandoned “the idea of fixed being” (14). Forced to “desecrate” and “view critically” what constituted “a permanent, ritualized truth of . . . existence” in “the old order of things,” the enslaved African populations of the Caribbean and their descendants were transformed by contradictory experiences of “domination by the Other” (14-5). Such domination primarily manifested in “the insidious promise of being remade in the Other’s image” through “the illusion of

successful mimesis,” namely those “models of existence” domination provides to people suffering under its “stranglehold” in such a way as to thwart resistance while simultaneously making it possible (15).

Faced with the impossibility of achieving “reversion” or a return to so-called originary lands and cultures, this “obsession with a single origin” (i.e. “European,” “East Indian,” “African,” etc.) becomes imperative to the extent it proves untenable (18). Since “populations transplanted by the slave trade were not capable of maintaining for any length of time the impulse to revert,” such impulse waned “as the memory of the ancestral country fade[d]” under the yoke of slavery and the passing of centuries (18). Apart from being “[un]natural” and comprising a specific “kind of [“insidious”] violence,” this “futile” obsession became “intolerable” to those subjected to its contradictory demands and their “resulting trauma,” regardless of how much time it took for them to “realize its consequences collectively and critically” (18). Consequently, diversion is “formed, like a habit, from an interweaving of negative forces that go unchallenged” and unacknowledged before a nation is fully formed and “a general sense of responsibility . . . has resolved, in a provisional but autonomous way, internal or class conflicts,” or “when the community confronts an enemy recognized as such” (19-20):

Diversion is the ultimate resort of a population whose domination by an Other is concealed: it then must search *elsewhere* for the principle of domination, which is not evident in the country itself: because the system of domination (which is not only exploitation, which is not only misery, which is not only underdevelopment, but actually the complete eradication

of an economic entity) is not directly tangible. Diversion is the parallax displacement of this strategy. (20)

Therefore, while such performances can elicit cooperation and solidarity from the community of No. 2 Minty Alley, they can also reveal fragmented identities, contradictory discourses, and practices linked to badjohn-like predatory opportunism. Although all characters participate in these forms of community-building, Benoit excels in taking advantage of others as part of his performance of hegemonic masculine reputation. He unashamedly and boastfully justifies his adultery to Haynes: “[T]his one [Mrs. Rouse], I can’t understand her, she so stupid. I am still here, helping with the cake; I checking the book; I doing everything as before. All men go out. Why she making such a fool of herself for?” (James 80). Being a “student of human nature,” Haynes states the obvious: Mrs. Rouse is “jealous” because she wants Benoit “for herself alone, and feels neglected and shamed by Benoit’s brazen public performance of his masculinity through exaggerated hyper-sexuality in his numerous affairs (80). However, Benoit denies that he neglects Mrs. Rouse: “I don’t neglect any woman belonging to me,” demonstrating how he regards women as his possessions (80). In addition to dismissing Mrs. Rouse’s jealousy as female “foolishness,” Benoit also exaggerates his contributions to life at the Rouse household. He certainly keeps finances in order and takes part in the baking business, yet Mrs. Rouse and others (minus Maisie) do most of the work, particularly when he is away on account of business and/or pleasure.

Similar to Haynes, Benoit fails to recognize colonialism and the Crown Colony system as the sources of his oppressive behavior and predatory sexuality. Though they may not realize it, Benoit and Haynes suffer “from not being . . . white [men]” to the

extent the colonial government and its representatives discriminate against them and make them feel uncomfortable in their skins (Fanon 73). Having robbed them of all “worth and “individuality,” colonialism teaches both men to regard themselves as unmanned “parasite[s] on the world,” who must “bring [themselves] as quickly as possible into step with the white world” by “mak[ing] [themselves] white,” thus compelling the white man who oppresses them to acknowledge their humanity (73). For instance, one reason behind Benoit’s liaison and marriage to the nurse stems from a series of “inferiority complex[es]” inherent to a colonial society that “derives its stability” by proclaiming “the superiority of one race [English] and the concomitant inferiority of another race [Africans, East Indians, Asians, and Creole-Europeans/“poor whites”]” (74). Benoit’s reputation as a womanizer also grants him access to ill-gotten money and expensive goods he acquires by simulating the practice of honesty, thrift, and other such “respectable” values, as he admits to Haynes: “Where [Nurse Jackson] work the other day they send for her, give her a big bottle of lotion, a bottle with a gold stopper and ten dollars as a present. Five was mine” (James 67).

Benoit’s embrace of the dialectic of masculinist reputation is also evident in his physical appearance. He is described as “a rather big man with a slight paunch” from frequent eating and drinking between meals, which makes him the virtual opposite of Haynes: ““You [Haynes] different to me [Benoit]. I not going to eat till near two, but I will eat four cents nuts and roast corn, I’ll suck orange, eat fig, mango, anything, the whole morning; and that wouldn’t prevent me eating my regular”” (30-1). Although the novel has little to say regarding Haynes’s childhood, the strict Mrs. Haynes in all likelihood monitored her son’s diet as he grew up. Exceptions notwithstanding, the

matriarch likely forbade the young man from eating outside of regularly scheduled hours (i.e. breakfast, lunch, supper), and most certainly urged him to mind his manners while eating, whereas Benoit dispatches his ration of ground-nuts in “short quick bites” (30). Additionally, as Parsard argues, Benoit’s endorsement of ground-nuts denotes a “gendered dietary advice,” as well as “a preoccupation with virility and strength,” which is a central concern for men who adhere to dialectics of masculinist reputation (“Douglarise de nation . . .” 12). Driven by an all-encompassing appetite, Benoit has no qualms about indulging himself when it comes to food, drink, or women, as demonstrated when he made his sexual interest in Ella, Haynes’s “nice, fat cook,” crystal-clear, despite the fact that he has lived and worked with Mrs. Rouse for over ten years (James 31). Benoit warns Haynes to “. . . guard [his] property [Ella],” as he is “a man girls like,” then claims that “[i]f [Ella] fall in my garden I wouldn’t have to lock the gate to keep her in” (31).

Benoit’s unabashed admission of his hypermasculinity is rife with “shocking insinuation[s],” as evinced by Haynes’s forced, “sickly smile” (31). The action (and inaction) of both men revive submerged memories of slavery, the transatlantic slave trade, the Middle Passage, Emancipation, and the struggles of the incipient African-Caribbean bourgeoisie for wealth, power, and respectability in a world dominated by Western interests and standards. With only a handful of phrases, Benoit transforms Ella from a loyal and trusted member of the Haynes nuclear family into a chattel “slave,” a piece of property forced to labor and endure sexual exploitation on behalf of her “master” (Benoit). Since Haynes is as strongly attached to Ella as he was to his mother, he likely

feels disgust at Benoit's verbal reduction of her to a fetishized object of predatory sexual desire among countless others.

Nevertheless, Haynes himself is far from innocent, as his relationship with Ella is quite similar to Benoit's insinuations. Although the young man does not exploit Ella sexually, he still benefits from her labor, just as he once benefitted from his mother's work as a teacher. Moreover, the fact Ella receives a wage for her labor does not change the dynamic of her relationship with Haynes, as she is still subordinate to him on Eurocentric grounds of race, gender, sex, and class. Although Ella is arguably "free" to leave Haynes and seek employment elsewhere, she probably refrains from doing so because she is no longer a young woman, so her chances of obtaining employment are thus severely curtailed. Coupled with loyalty to the late Mrs. Haynes, fear of destitution in her twilight years makes Ella as dependent upon Haynes as the latter is upon her. Whether Haynes realizes it or not, he has witnessed a "distorted" reflection of such a dynamic in Benoit's sexually explicit confession. Similar to what happened the day Nurse Jackson publicly scourged and humiliated her own son, the timid Haynes finds himself speechless before yet another act of colonial violation. Lacking the "manly" courage to stand up for Ella and himself, Haynes not only fails to defend his "property": he also fails to guard the labor, sexuality, and welfare of a woman who for all intents and purposes has become as much a part of his nuclear family as his mother. Benoit's callous remarks and Haynes's subsequent reaction further evince their mutual unmaning. By subscribing to reputation-based masculinist discourses and practices reliant on the subordination and exploitation of women, Benoit has unwittingly revealed his dependence upon their labor and validation to survive and thrive as a *dougla* man in

colonial Trinidad. For his part, the mulatto bourgeois-aspirant Haynes fails to fulfill his so-called duty as a respectability-aspirant man by allowing a boor like Benoit to drag his and Ella's good name through the mud.

Furthermore, Benoit's excessive eating, drinking, spending, and womanizing not only demonstrate nonconformity to respectability-based masculine values. By refusing to compartmentalize his biological needs and differentiate them from reckless hedonism, Benoit deviates from social values structured upon principles of restraint and abnegation predicated on prevalent ethical, moral, and religious grounds, which can simultaneously serve Western capitalist interests as well as oppose them. Additionally, Benoit's behavior mirrors that of planters who colonized Trinidad and other Caribbean territories during the mid-seventeenth century and beyond. As Richard Dunn explains in *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713*, English colonizers implemented "the distinctive social and economic formula" that resulted in the "sugar and slave system of plantation life" prevalent in the Anglophone Caribbean until Emancipation:

This social mode, a small cadre of white masters driving an army of black slaves, was totally without precedent in English experience. Once established, it shaped three centuries of Caribbean life. The plantation system lasted without significant alteration throughout the eighteenth century and continued in modified form even after the slaves were freed in the nineteenth century, and its legacy? still survives in large measure in Jamaica, Barbados . . . the Leeward islands [and elsewhere in the English-speaking Caribbean] today. (335)

The so-called entrepreneurs who first settled these islands “evolved a[n] . . . extreme pattern of social stratification” that dichotomized its subjects into antagonistic groups and splintered allegiances, namely “rich versus poor, big planter versus small planter, master versus slave, white versus black,” and all of them against the nascent mulatto middle-class (341). Tempted by “the opportunity for making a quick fortune,” early settlers replicated the mercantilistic proto-capitalist societies they left behind, yet necessity forced them to accommodate new ways of life (188):

Sugar and slavery developed hand in hand in the English islands, two faces of a single phenomenon. Sugar making was also a highly volatile business; with the right combination of skill, drive, and luck, a planter could make a quick fortune, but careless management, a tropical storm, an epidemic disease, a slave revolt, or a French invasion could ruin the most flourishing plantation overnight. Sugar planters were always painfully exposed to external pressures. They depended on English merchants to extend them credit for acquiring slaves and equipment and to take their sugar in exchange for the home commodities they needed. They depended on the royal government for military and naval protection. They depended on the Royal African Company for Negroes. They depended on North American ships for food and transportation.

All of these factors—positive and negative—gave the sugar business . . . a peculiarly hectic, frantic character. The boom-and-bust style of sugar making helps explain why Englishmen in the Caribbean tended to behave differently from Englishmen at home or in mainland America. (189)

Like mainland Englishmen, colonizers “conceived of food and clothing in hierarchical terms” (263). Since each rank in this “social order, from aristocrats at the top to beggars at the bottom, had its own distinct style of dress, diet, and habitation,” Caribbean island societies operated through “a graded social system in which the big planters, small planters, servants, and slaves were meticulously ranked and segregated” (263). Centuries later, descendants of enslavers and enslaved alike imitated their forebears’ desire to “distinguish themselves” from so-called social inferiors “by the clothes they wore and the food they ate,” indulging in “conspicuous consumption” and spendthrift ways, thereby living “in a more showy fashion than persons of their station would do in England” (263-4):

The clothes a man wore in the status-conscious seventeenth century identified his social position more readily than the food he ate. Every occupation had its own designated wardrobe. The rich took care to dress richly, and the poor were expected to dress poorly. (282)

These and other social arrangements differentiated upper-class men from lower-class men, as well as from the mulatto bourgeoisies that emerged over the centuries, as “English sugar planters” established in the Caribbean “slept with their slave women and sired mulatto children” and “white women in the islands cohabitated with black men” (252). Duress, coupled with masculinist notions of race, class, sex, and gender, resulted in exploitative sexual practices:

Many of the planters, merchants, managers, and overseers who operated the sugar industry were young bachelors or married men who left their wives and children in England. There were always fewer white women

than white men living in the islands in the seventeenth century. [. . .]. The master enjoyed commandeering his prettiest slave girl and exacting his presumed rights from her. Many planters whose wives and children lived with them in the islands openly kept black concubines. (253)

In *Black Breeding Machines: The Breeding of Negro Slaves in the Diaspora*, Eddie Donoghue posits that colonizers assumed that “Negro women” had an intrinsic “*animalistic and seductive nature*” that made them prone to “*promiscuity*,” as well as “strong “appetites and passions” (286). Under this “master-slave dialectic,” white men were privileged with a “license to rape” enslaved African or Afro-Creole women with virtual impunity, and any “alleged sexual acts by Black men against White women” were indiscriminately categorized as “rape,” particularly if linked to slave rebellions (285). Slave women bound to the “plantation system” were forced to serve as simultaneous “asexual unit[s] of production” and “*sexual unit[s] of reproduction*” as planters and other dominant men saw fit (301). Being regarded as incorrigibly “animalistic,” enslaved “Black women” could be “forced to undergo sexual abuse under any circumstance” by white men, who also benefitted from their manual labor without fear of consequence (303).

Benoit reproduces these colonized ways of thinking and acting through his actions. He regularly indulges himself on peanuts and other junk foods in-between meals, spends freely, dresses well, and amuses himself selfishly and recklessly, even when Mrs. Rouse and others make sacrifices to subsist economically. More concretely, Benoit regards the sexual conquest and possession of women as a privilege he is entitled to on account of being the so-called man of the house, as he sleeps with Nurse Jackson,

Mrs. Rouse's servants, and Mrs. Rouse herself. When his marriage to Nurse Jackson falls apart, Benoit tries to return to Mrs. Rouse's good graces, yet makes threats upon learning she intends to take in another man: "[Benoit] hang his head like a dog. So when I [Mrs. Rouse] finish he say: "Tell me, A., promise me you not going to take him." "I going to take him," I tell him. He say: "I'll prevent you." [. . .]. "You are mine until death," he say" (James 183). Like former colonizers, Benoit lives off the labor of women like Mrs. Rouse and Jackson, believing them to be under his control. However, Benoit's extravagant lifestyle becomes unsustainable after his desertion of Mrs. Rouse, when his inability to get a job following his strains his relationship with the nurse and damages his physical health. Sometime after Jackson is released from prison, she migrates to the United States along with Sonny, yet abandons the sickly Benoit. When the former landlord dies, he receives a pauper's funeral and is promptly forgotten by all, save for the woman who still loved him, even after he publicly humiliated and scorned her.

Rather than being mere foils to one another, Haynes and Benoit demonstrate the contradictions inherent in two different, albeit related, modes of embodying and performing Caribbean masculinity. Whereas Haynes's respectability-seeking masculinity is rooted in education and the practice of thrift, temperance, respect for social hierarchies, and other middle-class mores to pursue long-term goals of social ascension and economic betterment, Benoit's reputation-seeking masculinity pursues short-term satisfaction through overindulgence in eating, drinking, sex, callous disregard for other people, and lastly, disdain towards books, education, and the will to truth and will to knowledge prevalent throughout the Western world and its colonies, as shown by his admission that he has not opened a book since he left school (30). Aversion to schooling

notwithstanding, Benoit displays interest in the occult. He asks Haynes if he had books authored by Lauron William de Laurence, “an American writer on magic and psychic science, whose books had some vogue in the islands” at the time (79). As Parsard explains, in Anglophone Caribbean contexts the word “science” is “an euphemism for obeah, a set of religious practices that enslaved Africans developed throughout the colonial Caribbean,” and which is “linked to colonial understandings of race” because its adepts are “historically of African descent” (“Barrack Yard Politics . . .” 24-5). Among other practices, obeah uses consultations, ritual baths, and effigies to enhance the practitioner’s “relationships and fortunes,” or otherwise sabotage those of others, as depicted in Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and other West Indian fiction (24). Benoit himself attributes the nurse’s improving fortune to such “science”:

'When [Nurse Jackson] first came here she was nothing. Nobody used to watch her, didn't use to give her no jobs, nothing. [. . .]. . . . I talk to that one in there [Mrs. Rouse], she say yes, we take her into the house and I work on her. I put her to stand up before me naked as she born and I say the prayers over her for nine days. We boil the bath and I bathe her myself and tell her what to do. In three months you wouldn't know was the same woman. The woman start to get jobs, We lend her some money, she put in telephone, she buy glasses, she start to dress and she begin to make some good little money. It's I who fixed her up. If wasn't for me she would have been still down to the ground.' (James 63-4)

In accordance with his colonial education and mulatto middle-class upbringing, Haynes probably regards Eurocentric sciences and African-Caribbean practices like obeah in

ways akin to the Enlightenment-derived beliefs Jane Flax discusses in “Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory.” Being “the exemplar of the right use of reason,” Western science is also “the paradigm for all true knowledge” because it is allegedly “neutral in its methods and contents but socially beneficial in its results” (625). Furthermore, reason and science allegedly provide “an objective, reliable, and universal foundation for [“true”] knowledge,” which in turn represents “something real and unchanging (universal)” about “[human] minds and/or the structure of the natural world” (624).

However, since obeah is practiced mainly by disenfranchised, uneducated persons of African descent, it hence stands in opposition to European “enlightenment” science. Obeah’s oppositional location generates fear, causing the former to be dismissed as tentative “knowledge” predicated upon quackery and badjohn-like opportunism. A survival from Africa, obeah has no consistent methodologies of belief or rituals of performance. Thus, any results it produces are suspect, and tend to benefit marginalized individuals only. More importantly, obeah as knowledge and practice reveals that human minds and the natural world constitute mutable phenomena that both preexist and thwart the knowing subject’s acts of naming, compartmentalization, and quantification. Similarly, in “Obeah Acts: Producing and Policing the Boundaries of Religion in the Caribbean,” Diana Paton discusses the reasons why these African-derived practices were criminalized and rejected as religion in the Eurocentric sense of the word. Being “a race-making term with multiple, complex, and power-laden meanings,” the word “religion” originated as an articulation of “truth claims” which defined “the boundary between “true” religion and “false” superstition and paganism” in the Roman Christian world (2).

From the eighteenth century onwards, the term became “a race-making category” used to differentiate between “supposedly “civilized” peoples (who practice religion) and “primitive” peoples (who practice magic),” that is, “*witchcraft . . . superstition, and charlatanism*” (2; original emphasis).

In turn, Benoit’s knowledge and use of obeah seems to confirm commonly held beliefs regarding these practices:

‘I used to tell [Mrs. Rouse] to let me go out and do a little business. I have good luck. I understand science . . . and I know when to start a business and make it successful. Some things, if you start on a Friday must turn out bad. And some things, again, Friday is your only day. . . . [S]he always hamper me. She never want me to go out. I could have made money as a commission agent. She could have got another servant to do the cake business. But no, whatever she doing, parlour, cake, everything, I must be there.’ (James 140)

Although some of his complaints are valid, Benoit conveniently forgets that he himself is not blameless. He lived “high” at his lover’s expense, wasted money at horse races, “[ate]” and “[drank] the best,” and indulged in wearing expensive clothes while Mrs. Rouse struggled to pay mortgages and cover daily expenses (125). As Rouse herself eventually realizes, Benoit exploits her with impunity: ““When [Benoit] want money, he make a row if I didn’t borrow it. He borrow here, he borrow there, and now when things really turn bad he leave me”” (125). As if that were not enough, Benoit suggests that Rouse prostitute herself with a grocer for a loan of “fifty dollars” to see them through “difficulty,” when in reality he only wanted a new suit and funds to attend races: “. . . if

Mr. Nesfield scrupling to lend you [Mrs. Rouse] the money and he offer to you [solicits sex], that wouldn't be nothing if you take him. As long as you don't do it in secret behind my back i's all right" (127).

Factuality and illusion notwithstanding, these and similar instances disqualify Benoit's claims to masculinity. While he adheres to certain tenets of male reputation, namely profiteering through clandestine/criminal activities and sleeping around with multiple women, Benoit's masculinity is untenable in a context of respectability, as he depends upon Mrs. Rouse and Nurse Jackson to survive economically in 1920s Trinidad. Furthermore, such dependence is detrimental to his overall health, as Haynes learned when he saw Benoit sometime after his wedding:

[Benoit's] face was blotchy, which, with his black skin, gave him a particularly unhealthy look. His cheeks were hollow, his eyes were a dirty brown colour, and he was unshaven. His paunch, a sign of his well-being much admired at No. 2 . . . was almost gone, and the white suit was dirty. The trim and slick Benoit, who used to be such a delight to the eye of Mrs. Rouse when he took the street was no more. And the man had not been married two months. (138)

Benoit fails as well when it comes to controlling the sexuality of the women in his life, which is a key expectation of masculinist respectability. This masculinity also proves questionable due to Benoit's tendency of having his way with any woman who falls into his "garden":

'If I had stayed there [at Mrs. Rouse's house] a little longer [Maisie] wouldn't have escaped me. I used to kiss her and squeeze her when I get

the chance; playing Pappy, you know. But how the nurse and me was nice, I didn't trouble her too much. And as she was young, I was in no hurry. I hear she filling out pretty. I wish I was you [Haynes].' (141)

Benoit's lust after a girl he practically raised from childhood bolsters his masculine standing through the praxis of reputation, where men's heteronormative promiscuity is encouraged and rewarded. Nevertheless, it disqualifies him as a man according to the dialectic of respectability, as such doings are the opposite of that zealous guarding of potentially "wayward" female sexuality customarily expected from hegemonic men. Furthermore, Benoit's knowledge of obeah is ultimately turned against him, if Miss Atwell's claims that somebody "fix[ed] [Benoit] up" to compel him to go through the wedding with the nurse are to be believed:

'You has to be careful what you [Haynes] eats and where you eats it. If you is visitin' a house and makes you'self very familiar in the place, and then doesn't show marriage intentions, they puts a little thing in you' food, and I tell you, you never gets away. Whatever was you' previous intentions you finds you'self married. And is so the nurse catch Mr. Benoit. . . . (108)

Irrespective of whether this story is true or false, it demonstrates Benoit's utter loss of masculine self-possession and domination of women. The landlord not only falls victim to obeah himself: he is ensnared by a woman to whom he presumably taught how to "bewitch" men into doing her bidding, only for Jackson to turn his teachings against him. Since Benoit's practice of obeah allowed the nurse to manipulate the former landlord's own emotions and desires for her own ends, he ends up being ruled *by* women to the

extent Jackson takes advantage of “the zebra striping of [his male] mind,” exploiting Benoit’s “desire to be suddenly *white*” and be acknowledged as such (Fanon 45).

Although Benoit is largely formally uneducated, his worldview is just as warped by colonialism as that of Haynes. Both men have been socialized into regarding white women as “a form of [raced, classed, sexed and gendered] recognition” upon which they can articulate successful claims for hegemonic masculinity (45):

Man is motion toward the world and toward his like. A movement of aggression, which leads to enslavement or to conquest; a movement of love, a gift of self, the ultimate stage of what by common accord is called ethical orientation. [. . .]. The person I love will strengthen me by endorsing my assumption of my manhood, while the need to earn the admiration or the love of others will erect a value-making superstructure on my whole vision of the world. (28)

Beguiled by false self-assessments influenced by colonized ways of thinking, Benoit falls victim to Jackson’s manipulations, similar to how he oppressed and exploited Mrs. Rouse during their time together. Realizing that “[o]ne is white above a certain financial level,” the landlord seeks the nurse’s favor in hopes of improving his social and economic standing in 1920s Trinidad (31). Duped into thinking that the Creole-European Jackson loves him, Benoit, the *douglah*, spurns his lifelong relationship with the darker-skinned Mrs. Rouse, and marries into “white culture, white beauty, white whiteness” (45). Since Benoit falsely believes that he has proved himself a man because a white woman deemed him “worthy of white love,” as well as of being “loved like a white man,” such ways of

thinking provide him with a temporary way out of blackness, even as it fulfills a vital function in the colonial imaginary (45):

In Europe [and the Caribbean] the Negro has one function: that of symbolizing the lower emotions, the baser inclinations, the dark side of the soul. In the collective unconscious of *homo occidentalis*, the Negro—or, if one prefers, the color black—symbolizes evil, sin, wretchedness, death, war, famine. (147)

Through his liaison and marriage with the nurse, Benoit endorses colonial discourses and practices that attribute (illusionary) masculinity and power to darker-skinned men who sleep with white women, and thus seeks to prove to his lighter-skinned “superiors” that “he is a man, their equal” (47). Moreover, 1920s Trinidad does not consider Benoit to be a “true” or “authentic” Negro because he is a *douglah*. His dual African and East Indian heritage does not fit neatly into hierarchies of race, class, gender, and sex predicated on dichotomous differentiations, exclusionary power structures and effects of power that grant “greater” masculinity/power to men of “pure” European extraction, followed by bourgeois Creole men of European descent, then lighter-skinned middle-class men of mixed African and European ancestry, with darker-skinned lower-class males of Creole-European, African, and Asian descent being relegated to the lowest, most disenfranchised rungs. Benoit and Jackson regard “white” and “black” as “the two poles of a [“genuinely Manichean”] world” which are kept “in perpetual conflict” with one another to the extent that white is regarded as inherently endowed with “beauty and virtue” untainted by blackness, whereas the latter is considered “the

incarnation of a complete fusion with the world, an intuitive understanding of the earth,” and “an abandonment of [the] ego in the heart of the cosmos” (31).

Nevertheless, Jackson and Benoit do not meet such standards. Being subjects and practitioners of colonial mimicry, both characters remain stranded in liminal states so that they are always “almost the same, but not quite” what they believe themselves to be (Bhabha 122). Although “to all appearances white,” the nurse’s Creoleness is evinced by those “tell-tale finger-nails” that demonstrated “[her] coloured blood” to the ordinarily unperceptive Haynes (James 48). On the other hand, Benoit’s “very black face” was not particularly distinguished, being “neither handsome nor ugly,” yet his “very dark skin and curly hair showed traces of [East] Indian blood,” accentuated by “a rather cruel mouth below [his] sparse moustache” (30). Furthermore, although practice of obeah and other clandestine activities afford Benoit relative wealth, power, and enjoyment compared to Haynes and other inhabitants of the barrackyard, they bring him nowhere closer to incarnating “a complete fusion with the world,” let alone achieving “an abandonment of [the] ego in the heart of the cosmos” or an “intuitive understanding of the earth” (Fanon 31).

In other words, the fact of Benoit’s blackness does not permit him to “make a meaning for [him]self” as a man because its attendant meanings are “already there, pre-existing, waiting for [him]” (102). This “almost, but not quite” Negro excites “the fecund antennae of the world” by being turned through discourse and practice into a “magic[al] substitut[e]” that rains its “poetic power” upon the white world through his embrace of hedonism and opportunistic masculinist behavior (97). Yet despite being endowed with a “sensitivity” allegedly inaccessible to whites, the colonial society he inhabits only allows

Benoit to embody and perform blackness as a state of impossibility. Valuable and desirable as this commodified “unreason” might be, it will always be countered by “[white] reason,” which is also superior to “[black] reason” and experiences (101). Thus, Benoit’s construct of masculinity is undermined in three central aspects: his *douglah* heritage stops him from being considered as “typically Negro”: his desire to become “white” through marriage to Nurse Jackson is nothing more than a “joke” he unwittingly plays upon himself with the connivance of the colonized world; lastly, any attempt he makes to “reclaim [his] negritude” will see the latter “snatched away from [him]” (101). White reason is ever ready to thwart black masculinities, regardless of their embrace of so-called white or black reason or unreason. Darker-skinned men like Benoit are enslaved anew by a Eurocentric world that reduces them to emotional/affective outlets for indulging disavowed white desires for “primitiveness,” “instinctiveness,” and other characteristics deemed innate in persons of Caribbean descent. Rather than making him a more “authentic” human being by stripping away bourgeois prejudices learned from the white world, Benoit’s clandestine practices deform his masculinity because they are complicit with the colonial project and its subjugation of colonized subjects. The former consolidate Benoit’s colonized condition while simultaneously allowing him to contest it, yet not escape it altogether.

Benoit’s character flaws thus coalesce with these racialized attributes to cement his downfall and eventual death. Unapologetically selfish and callously amoral, Benoit’s profligacy of flesh and riches grants him some degree of masculine status and reputation, yet ultimately destroys him when the nurse forsakes him, leaving him at the mercy of Alice Rouse, the woman he scorned. While Mrs. Rouse’s all too convenient embrace of

European-Christian sexual mores and bourgeois-like female respectability contributes to driving him away, Benoit allows lust, ambition, and greed to sever decades-long ties to the only woman who truly loved him. Lastly, colonial discourses and practices bestialize Benoit's *douglah* identity, interpreting him as a human "mongrel" who belongs to two politically, racially, culturally, and economically debased racial groups rather than one. Neither African nor East Indian, Benoit's mere existence disrupts racial binarisms prevalent in 1920s Trinidad. The landlord threatens colored bourgeois masculinist claims to autonomous colonial rule because he does not fit reductionist either/or paradigms of "true" masculinity, citizenship, and national belonging, and therefore must be erased from the emerging Trinidadian "nation." Othered and marginalized on grounds of race as well as class, Benoit's opportunistic "parasitism" disqualifies him as a man according to the dialectics of reputation and respectability, as he is derelict in his obligations to guard the sexuality of the women he lives with, and depends upon them to subsist economically, helping himself to their labor and its spoils, only to abandon them as soon as he finds better prospects. Having proved unwilling to rein in his "uncivilized" sexual urges, the landlord also fails to curb his desire for wealth and enjoyment by exercising respectable, "masculine" reason, restraint, and objectivity, and instead uses the "science" of obeah to manipulate the world around him as it best suits him, thus expediting his downfall when the nurse turns it against him. While Benoit's version of masculinity grants him freedom to explore the world and enjoy himself in ways unimaginable to someone like Haynes, the former makes him easy prey for women who wish to exploit him for their own advantage, only to discard him when he has outlived his usefulness.

Chapter III: Black Masculinities and Hybridity: Colonialism, Nationalism, and
Unmanning in Garth St. Omer's *A Room on the Hill*

I am not a people, I am not a nation.
I only wish from time to time to make my actions be
the actions of a people, to make my actions be the actions of a nation.

Jamaica Kincaid, *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1996).

Garth St. Omer's first novel, *A Room on the Hill* (1968), was published after the collapse of the West Indian Federation (1958-62), a geopolitical attempt to unify British Crown colonies in the Caribbean such as Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, and St. Omer's native St. Lucia, into a collectivity of nation-States capable of ruling themselves both as individual island-nations and as a group without British intervention. St. Omer began publishing in the early-1960s, around the time Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and other Crown Colonies gained their independence from Britain. In the "Introduction" to *The Fiction of Garth St. Omer: A Casebook*, Antonia MacDonald claims that from the 1960s onwards, members of the West Indian academic establishment undertook a "selection of teaching texts" for inclusion in higher education curricula, thereby "shaping a West Indian literary canon," as well as promoting some works while sidelining others (8). Although St. Omer's prose fiction garnered "a fair amount of critical interest" at the time, none of his novels or short stories gained "a place of permanence" on English Departments' syllabi at the various campuses of the University of the West Indies (8). St. Omer also had to compete with other writers struggling to "secure a prolonged place in the literary spotlight" of the small West Indian reading public of the late-1960s and early-1970s (8-9). Furthermore, St. Omer's works were often dismissed as "nihilistic" because of their "less-than-optimistic portrayal" of post-

independence West Indian “political leadership,” as well as their apparent preoccupation with “the themes of inevitable defeat and existential meaninglessness” during a time when most Caribbean critics stressed “the positive role and responsibility of literature in the transformation of Caribbean societies” (9). Thus marginalized from the burgeoning West Indian literary canon, St. Omer had virtually faded into obscurity by the dawn of the twenty-first century (9). Luckily, an Omerian oeuvre has resurfaced with Peepal Tree’s republication of his novels, beginning with *A Room on the Hill* in 2012, followed by *Shades of Grey* and *Nor Any Country* in 2013, the previously unpublished *Prisnms* in 2015, and *J—, Black Bam and the Masqueraders* in 2016. Despite St. Omer’s marginalization in canonical Caribbean literary studies, there are a substantial number of scattered reviews and critical essays dealing with his works. Thus, the recent compilation of older and recent studies and criticism dealing with St. Omer’s prose fiction, released as *The Fiction of Garth St. Omer: A Casebook* by Peepal Tree in 2018, is regenerating some interest in the author and his work.

St. Omer’s oeuvre is crucial for understanding, critiquing, and elaborating upon “the Caribbean’s narrative of self-fashioning” from the perspective of middle-class English-speaking Caribbean men (9). His work provides invaluable insights into West Indian history during the mid-twentieth century, a time of social upheaval that saw the rise and fall of the West Indian Federation, as well as the declaration of independence of former Crown colonies such as Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and St. Lucia. In the “Introduction” to the 2012 Peepal Tree edition of *A Room on the Hill*, Jeremy Poynting posits that St. Omer’s fiction is inseparable from “the project of decolonisation” that took place before, during, and after the Federation (5). Although St. Lucia itself did

not become independent until 1979, St. Omer foresaw the turmoil of the post-Federation/postindependence years, thereby acknowledging that “the legacy of colonialism in the Caribbean psyche was far more deeply embedded than critics swept up in the enthusiasms of the independence years were prepared to admit” (MacDonald 9). Writing about “the relatively privileged mulatto middle class” at a time when “the authenticity of the Caribbean novel was located in its “peasant” credentials,” St. Omer went against the grain of most Anglo-Caribbean prose fiction writing at the time (Poynting 5). Omerian West Indian characters reflect what Edward Baugh terms in “Since 1960: Some Highlights” as a “very sensitive witness to the deep divisions of race and class” that plagued the West Indies before and following independence (81). As John Robert Lee states in “Garth St. Omer: An Introduction to His Novels,” such works “examined the very aspects of society that young intellectuals and revolutionaries” in the West Indies and elsewhere were revolting against during the late-60s and the early-70s (55). These aspects include “the rootlessness and individualistic selfishness of the St. Lucian mulatto elite . . . the absolutes of class division, the hypocrisy of the institutional church,” and other related “incestuous suffocations of small island life” which plague St. Omer’s characters (Poynting 6). Omerian protagonists confront “the condition of alienation at home” as part of “the ‘will to meaning’” (Baugh 85). Characteristic of their location as colonized subjects within “a world that seems more absurd the more closely it is scrutinised,” these characters combine a critique of colonialism with its alienating effects on the colonized, compounded by “the problems of guilt, choice and responsibility” of colonizers and colonized alike, preconized by French existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus (85).

Along with the novella *Syrop* (1964) and various uncollected short stories and sketches, *A Room on the Hill* is the first of St. Omer's four novels set in a fictional Caribbean island society mirroring 1950s-60s St. Lucia, then ruled politically as a British Crown Colony while culturally dominated by the French-controlled Roman Catholic Church. Coupled with social, political, and economic constraints imposed by the Crown Colony system, clashes between dominant and marginalized religions, particularly different versions of Christianity, created tensions between British political and French religious cultures. As Arthur Dayfoot opines in "Themes from West Indian Church History in Colonial and Post-colonial Times," West Indian Christianity, already underscored by Eurocentric "[c]lass-and-color [and gender-and-sex] stratification[s]," engaged diverging "forms of Afro-Caribbean practice and belief" mingled with diverse "Asian and African religious traditions," themselves influenced by variegated versions of Catholicism, Protestantism, and other Christian denominations (80). Although "the spiritual aspirations of [West Indian] people run very deep," "the story of Christianity in the English-speaking Caribbean is marked by a number of motifs" which were greatly affected by "the colonial experience," which "are still working themselves out in the life of the new West Indian nations" and in Caribbean peoples' masculinity constructs (80). "[W]idespread poverty resulting from centuries of exploitation by the metropolitan powers," real and artificial scarcity of local "natural resources," and other factors have "hindered the establishment of strong economic [and social, cultural, political] foundations for indigenous development" by fostering "attitudes of colonial dependence and imitation [which] still persist even since the achievement of political independence," a factor that further complicates prevalent gender, class, and race anxieties among

Caribbean peoples (80). In *From Nation to Diaspora: Samuel Selvon, George Lamming and the Cultural Performance of Gender*, Curdella Forbes defines gender as “the allocation, investiture, assumption and performance of social roles and identities based on biological sex,” thus “identifying types of social and political processes and systems” to articulate “the [West Indian] nation . . . its instruments and symbols as gendered entities” during “the drive towards self-government in the first half of the [twentieth] century” and “the independence and post-independence struggles against the colonialism which after independence still dominated the territories in all but political name” during the second half (4). Having defined the West Indies as “a region in search of itself,” predominantly male West Indian intellectuals informed by “idea[s] of history as both socio-political process and representational praxis” ascribed paramount importance to “freedom, identity, race, class, colour, society and the[ir] implications” for the emerging nations, sidelining sex and gender matters as so-called common knowledge and “natural” practices that required no further explanation (4). With the exception of St. Omer, V.S. Naipaul, and other like-minded dissenters, West Indian intellectuals at the time defined the nation as “the distinctive political and cultural identity both of individual [West Indian] territories and of the region as a whole” during “the movement towards West Indian Federation in the 1950s” (4). According to Forbes, such shifts unfolded at a time when “all “right-thinking” West Indians” were expected to uphold “national imperatives” at the expense of “individual, subcultural and sectarian interests” (5). Thus, “the gender-erasing imperatives of the nationalist movement” sought to rationalize and elide “[r]acial and cultural differences within the [West Indian] populace . . . into a singular rhetorical representation of the nation as One” (5-6). The latter representation was informed as well

by “[early] doctrine[s] of creolization,” which posited that “the vast complexities of difference in the West Indies merge or are merging to form an ultimate synthesis: out of many, [“a heterogenous” *sic* one]” (6). Despite its narrowness of vision and ideological blindspots, creolization thus understood problematized that purportedly ubiquitous Eurocentric “[democratic] principle of equality among various groups, religions and languages” espoused by West Indian nationalists who argued that the resulting “national synthesis should privilege the [“traditionally . . . denigrated and marginalized . . . black peasant”] majority” above all other groups (6-7). Informed by “historical texts in which it was men who were principally named,” their centrality expounded upon “through the discourses of an academic world dominated by men,” who in turn recurred to “public political platforms on which male figures loomed large,” the “rhetoric of nation assumed a single gender” into which all West Indians would be “subsumed,” irrespective of sex, class, race, and other considerations (7). In practice, however, this allegedly implicit inclusion of “[non-Afro-Creole/non-working class] races and social groups” under such “rhetoric[s] of West Indian plurality and difference . . . occlude[d] the huge and active involvement of women in the crafting of political freedom and national identity” (8). It also elided “the astonishing traumas . . . that [West Indian] men encountered in the process of acquiring the type of masculine identity the ideology of nation assumed or seemed to demand,” paying little mind to bourgeois and working-class Afro-Creole males who failed to acquire and enact such vaunted gendered identities (8).

These raced, classed, sexed, and gendered demands proved difficult to meet in 1950s St. Lucia. As Patricia Ismond posits in “The St. Lucian Background in Garth St. Omer and Derek Walcott,” from the eighteenth century onward, the St. Lucian French-

controlled Catholic Church “played the key role in transmitting and establishing the codes and values of the alien [French/English] culture” by means of “a rigid code of orthodox morality,” which helped extend “[t]he influence of the Church” to “every sphere of the island’s secular life” (59). The French-Catholic insular “theocracy” appropriated “the role of political and civic system” (60). Ruling practically unopposed over St. Lucia’s “essential institutions and general social conduct,” church-controlled schools imparted primary and secondary education laden with “heavy content of religious and moral instruction,” stringent censorship of what little “cultural activity” transpired in the colony, and near absolute monopoly over St. Lucian religious life, as evinced by an overall lack of Protestant revivalist denominations that appeared elsewhere in the English-speaking Caribbean (60). Moreover, 1950s St. Lucian society is “pervaded by a sense of privation” and “a prevailing atmosphere of constraint” that binds all social classes to “the norms and codes of Christian morality” and “[t]he Catholic code of sin and expiation” (62). However, these trenchant “abstemious norms” cannot prevent patterns of “ill-assorted family arrangements” and “man-woman relationships” which are all but inescapable in St. Omer’s fiction (63). “[F]atherless homes” are salient among such “irregularities,” the former originating from “members of the white [and mulatto] privileged class” who claim “the right to keep two [or more] separate families, one legitimate [white], the other illegitimate and half-black” as part of Eurocentric masculinist racial, classed, sexed, and gendered practices that taint “love relationships” and “courtships” (63). Thus, “unmarried mothers” are made to bear “the brunt of child-rearing” on their own, their lives “rigidly circumscribed by poverty and religion” through the observance of “passive endurance in degradation, conditioned to the norm of

sacrifice, and dedication to the routines of piety” in hopes of attaining Paradise after death (62). In turn, the joint Euro-Catholic/Crown Colony rule twists “love-sex relationships” into “degrading, brutal affairs” and “failed, abortive marriages” (63). Such dynamics “disrupt and despoil” social relations between men and women by severing “the links between the parent generation and the younger one,” as shown in *A Room on the Hill* by the conflicts between Lestrade, Harold, and their respective fathers (63). Burdened with a “pathological fear” of taking so-called masculine responsibility for himself and other people, the “St. Omer persona” virtually condemns himself to self-destructive or otherwise “inauthentic, externally dictated actions” (65). John Lestrade, the protagonist of *A Room on the Hill*, finds himself unmanned by his incapacity to escape his colonial condition, let alone come to terms with his personal shame at his illegitimacy, his mother Lena’s social ostracism, unresolved issues with his father, and prolonged grief over his mother’s death and the alleged suicide of his friend Stephen. In “Garth St. Omer Biography,” Gerald Moore suggests that Omerian characters are plagued by “an unrest which they themselves cannot define or explain . . . a malaise of the islands which makes them hesitate even before [“apparently dazzling”] opportunities,” compels them to “hurt and abandon those they love,” or otherwise desist from “courses of action they have embarked on with every sign of conviction,” an angle which informs the present reading of *A Room on the Hill* (1).

St. Omer’s next novel, *Shades of Grey* (1968), builds upon *Room* through its two novellas. The first novella, *The Lights on the Hill* (1986), deals with the protagonist Stephenson’s return to his island and the rekindling of his relationship with Thea, “the beautiful and original girl whom he has long desired” and who returns his feelings (1).

The novella constantly flashbacks between Stephenson's past, from his humble origins as a charcoal-burner in the St. Lucian *mornes*, his escape from the Castries fire of 1948, and his "corruption, trial and dismissal as a petty official in the Civil Service" (1-2).

Stephenson is overtaken by an "air of unreality and irrelevance" that makes him question his previous strivings for success as a mulatto bourgeois man, as well as his relationship with Thea amid waning "possibilities of unthinking contentment in his little island," as Kenneth Ramchand states in "The West Indies" (35). The second novella, *Another Place, Another Time*, deals with the boyhood of Derek Charles, who also appears as a secondary character in *A Room on the Hill*. Informed by the deviant behavior of local males, Derek learns to equate masculinity with physically, psychologically, and sexually abusing women, and thanklessly exploits their unpaid labor for his benefit, as demonstrated in his inability to appreciate his mother's "selfless struggle" to see him through "secondary school" (Ramchand 35). Years later, by the time the events in *A Room on the Hill* take place, Derek has come back to the island as a cynical returnee who has been seduced by what passes for "success" in colonial society. Being "[a]n anxious man who cannot escape his body," Derek needs to convince colonial representatives, his fellow colonized, and himself that "he is a man, their equal" (Fanon 47). However, persistent doubts trouble him at "the roots of his soul, as complicated as that of any European," and therefore removed from that "simplicity of the Negro," which he and other socially-ascending males ascribe to the West Indian peasantry and working classes they claim to represent (47-8). Unable to gain full admittance into the "white race" of colonial representatives, yet also incapable of accepting (and being accepted by) his fellow African-descended West Indians, Derek constantly seeks the approval and

“authorization” of the former, but is unable to sever all ties with the latter (48-9). Since he has “nothing in common with real Negroes,” colonial and metropolitan society alike reduce Derek and others like him to a liminal, albeit relatively privileged, position as mediators between colonial rulers and colonized subjects (50). Falling to solve this “purely subjective conflict,” Derek’s identity and allegiances as a mulatto bourgeois West Indian male remain splintered. He marries an unnamed white British woman, hoping to prove himself worthy by exercising “authentic” black masculine mastery over an European female, thus spurning his former lover, the lighter-skinned Creole Anne-Marie, and other West Indian women, in exchange for exercising a semblance of European-like male privilege and enjoyment through so-called white love (50). Derek’s decisions cement his reputation as a self-absorbed, opportunistic, race-straddling snob who has long forgotten about Berthe, the “simple girl” he once seduced and brutalized, and cannot even be bothered to pay his mother a visit upon his return home (Moore 2). This final omission seals Derek’s fate. By failing to acknowledge the sacrifices Mrs. Charles and other women have made to (re)make him into the man he has become, Derek unwittingly reveals his masculinist mulatto bourgeois self-fashioning to be an unsustainable sham, as flimsy and inauthentic as his claims to West Indian working-class masculinity and affinities.

St. Omer’s next novels, *Nor Any Country* (1969), and *J-, Black Bam and the Masqueraders* (1972), convey the story of Paul and Peter Breville, two brothers whose lives are diversely impacted by what the anonymous reviewer of “Brothers in Inaction. Garth St. Omer: *J-, Black Bam and the Masqueraders*” terms the “mark” of the Caribbean islands, the “effect” their “seclusion . . . poverty, the narrowness of their

culture and their social oddities” have on their inhabitants (39). Peter and Paul treat the women in their lives as inferior subalterns whom they are entitled to physically, psychologically, and sexually abuse, while also benefitting from their unpaid labor, yet their dominance meets with opposition from wives, lovers, and other women. Nevertheless, while Patsy, Phyllis, and others contest such imbalances of power, their resistant/oppositional stances are as flawed as Peter and Paul’s masculinity constructs. The former mostly limit themselves to turning female economic dependence and political subordination into counter-practices whereby the exploited exploit the exploiters to meet short or long-term personal needs, desires, and intentions, yet leave intact the power structures that allow oppression and inequality to exist in the first place. As Lee posits in “Peter Plays for Paul”: Review of *J—Black Bam and the Masqueraders*,” both novels concern themselves with “West Indian[s] growing out of their society through [colonial] education,” which produces “crises in [the] personality” of prospective Caribbean men subjected to “class/colour prejudice[s]” brought about by education and colorist stratifications, which reserved “positions of power” in the French-controlled Catholic Church and other dominant institutions for European males, sidelining Caribbean men of African, East Indian, Asian, and Euro-Creole descent (45). Colonial education was thereby structured to “create a low-level laboring class sympathetic to the colonial enterprise” (Pate 30). After Emancipation, such institutions socialized African, East Indian, Asian, and Euro-Creole Caribbean working-class men to occupy subordinate social strata as mediators between the West Indian peasantry and proletariat, and colonial and metropolitan representatives, “creat[ing] the illusion that the [British] empire was in fact preparing its denizens for a future which they might rule” (Pate 30). However, since

“imperial masculinit[ies] were predicated on “military valor and triumph,” political independence, and strong leadership, Caribbean men were largely rendered ineligible for such dominant masculinities (36). Their “lack of military prowess” and subsequent political/economic dependence evinced the colonized/unmanned state of Caribbean men to the extent the “construction of imperial masculinities” premised “the feminization of colonized men,” who were barred from sharing that “superior brand of masculinity” lionized by “British discourses of power” as natural, normative, binding, and universal (36).

Having grown up under such historical circumstances, the Breville brothers are exposed as failed colonized men, unable to attain colonial models of masculinity as defined through Eurocentric cultural, religion, class, and education standards. Their very emulation of such masculinities unmans them, revealing their “unmasculine” dependence upon women’s labor, along with their incapacity to overcome colonial society’s obstacles against aspiring Caribbean masculinities. According to Lee, Paul Breville, “the brother of promise who never escaped from his island society,” becomes unmanned by poor life choices and external circumstances (45). He refuses to marry Patsy, the woman he impregnated, and sidesteps his fatherly responsibility to nurture and guide his son Michael as the young man matures and constructs his own masculinity (45). Paul’s act of defiance results in his dismissal from his teaching position at a Catholic university. As a result, he feels entrapped “in the land of his birth,” which nearly drives him insane and leaves him “bitterly resentful” towards his brother, lover, parents, and island (“Brothers in . . .” 39). Frustrated by “a small society governed by a strict triangular force of sin/guilt/punishment,” Paul realizes his entire life has been reduced to fruitless “expiation

for the sin of defiance” he committed by abandoning Patsy and Michael (“Peter Plays . . .” 46).

Moreover, as William Gifford explains in *Garth St. Omer’s Existential Parlance*, Paul is “St. Omer’s only fully developed antagonist” (135). He deviously avoids taking responsibility for his life, blaming his actions on mental illness and other external factors, which certainly contributed to his downward spiral, but were not its direct cause (135). Paul was “created anew by the educational requirements of [colonial] society,” which favors foreign-imposed models of knowledge, aesthetics, politics, and economics that detrimentally influence the lives of colonized subjects (Lee 46). Thus socialized into “codes and values foreign to him,” Paul allowed himself to foster “contempt” toward his uneducated fellow West Indians, echoing colonial society’s negative valorization and disdain against “local and therefore inferior” institutions and practices, like the island’s masquerade procession and his school’s steelband group (46-7). To offset his “self-contempt,” Paul feels “a fierce desire for acclaim,” which ill-conceals a “desperate need to gain favour from the whites and mulattoes of Columbus Square,” itself driven by fears of being “identified with the black mass following the steelband” his brother Peter plays in (47). However, Paul’s successes as a cricketer go largely unnoticed by the time his self-loathing spills over to his parents and sibling (47). His previous triumphs fall to the wayside the moment Paul begins his affair with Patsy, whom he soon turns into another target for the “frustration and anger” he harbors against Peter, his family, society, and himself (47). Stigmatized after his refusal to marry Patsy, Paul’s scorn and arrogance trap him within “the greater closed circle [colonial] society itself has created,” which ends up destroying him when he “refuses jobs he considers below his worth” until “there

is nothing more to refuse” (48). Such blows against his masculinity cause Paul to feel “humiliated, blackmailed, and punished” under the repressive, punitive “value system” enforced under the joint British Crown Colony/French-controlled Catholic regime (48). Nevertheless, Paul’s obdurate perseverance in that “exclusion of everyone outside himself,” which cost him his job, social standing, interpersonal relationships, and masculinity, ultimately seals his fate when he allows wounded pride, envy, and spite to take control of his life and alienate him from his brother, parents, and society (49).

Though motivated by legitimate frustration and outrage against the privations he and other Caribbean men experience under the British Crown Colony regime, Paul’s self-destructive egotism and obstinacy lead him into “bad faith” through “complex and winding detours” (Gifford 144). In *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism*, Lewis R. Gordon defines the aforementioned concept as “effort[s] to hide from responsibility for ourselves as freedom” by “flee[ing] . . . displeasing truth[s] [in pursuit of] . . . pleasing falsehood[s],” thereby “convinc[ing] [ourselves] that . . . falsehood[s] [are] in fact true” (8). Departing from Sartrean philosophy, the concept of bad faith requires a thinking, self-aware subject who, by thinking about who he is, ponders his “name” and “biography,” namely “what [he] ha[s] been up to this point” (8). Having done so, the subject realizes he is not “identical with these phenomena,” yet is aware of them as “bits of knowledge” that appear to be “complete,” “frozen,” self-evident abstractions which require no further explanation (8). As the subject “wonder[s] about what [he] can become,” he gains awareness of “a multitude of possibilities” within his reach (8). Therefore, the choices he makes henceforth will “unfold into the continuation or construction of a biography” of that “unfinished story [“in progress”]” whose “author” is

the subject himself (8). Yet while the subject-author can “choose an end,” he can “never know the end in advance,” as the former can choose to change it as he sees fit, as long as he is alive, able, and willing (8). While other people certainly intervene in such self-fashioning, often by “forcing situations upon [the subject-author] that may limit [his] options,” the latter is not inexorably bound to accept such situations or their attendant limitations as binding (9). Because of this, the subject-author can “never declare [him]self as having been found” without making a continuous decision to “preserve the version[s] [of self] discovered” (8). Thus, the subject-author “[him]self will always be [his] responsibility” because it falls upon him to decide which versions of himself he will preserve, regardless of what others might prefer (8).

Such interplays are also exemplified by Peter, the second Breville sibling. Peter had left the island to study in England, and had remained behind to work abroad, but achieved very little. Because of this, he is compelled to return home eight years later “to pick up the pieces of a shattered marriage” (“Brothers in . . .” 39). Unlike Paul, Peter succumbed to social pressure and married Phyllis after impregnating her, a decision that trapped them both in a loveless, abusive relationship built upon mutual deceit, exploitation, and self-destruction. Peter’s actions demonstrate “unmasculine” lack of willpower and authenticity. He carries on his marital infidelities despite Phyllis’s protests and projects his own fears and shortcomings unto her instead of “trying to uncover the source of his unhappiness in himself” (Gifford 158). Peter thus becomes unmanned by his failure to achieve success, wealth, and status after leaving his island to study and work abroad. Frustrated and unfulfilled, Peter takes out his frustrations on his wife, and physically assaults her in a vain effort to assert masculine dominance because

he is too gutless and cowardly to defy colonial society's expectations of what "real" men should be. Being a "respectable" middle-class man, Peter is supposed to serve as primary breadwinner, nuclear family head, protector, and guide to Phyllis and their son, yet he neglects these and other related duties by performing reputation-based masculinity. While Peter tries to reconcile mutually contradictory masculinist dialectics, Phyllis's covert and overt opposition coalesce with his own fears and insecurities, undermining his emulation of Caribbean masculinity. On the one hand, masculinist dialectics of reputation demand that Peter keep outside women and exercise autocratic authority over his wife and son, yet his emulation of the latter severely compromises Peter's masculinity as laid out by masculinist dialectics of respectability, as the young mulatto cannot exercise full control over an "unruly" wife who constantly berates him for keeping "outside" women.

Having made her husband "her whole *raison d' être*," Phyllis "falls into the old orthodox rituals expected of the good wife so inculcated into her conscience by an uneducated Catholic upbringing," because doing so allows her to gain "what she wants (or has been programmed to get): marriage, financial security, a home, and children" (Gifford 158-9). "Instead of treating herself as an individual," Phyllis allowed herself no purpose or aspiration other than meeting her husband's every need, turning her devotion against Peter by constantly berating him for his infidelities (158). Being as "guilty of inauthenticity" as her husband, Phyllis exploits her subordinate position for her personal advantage (159). She cunningly inverts the dynamics of their relationship, placing Peter into a dependent position to the extent he is unable to perform masculinity without her enabling him to do so. Therefore, Phyllis effectively traps her husband in an endless

cycle of psychological abuse and manipulation by appealing to “Catholic ethics which forbid birth control, divorce, and self-improvement for women” (160). Phyllis thus uses trickery and deceit to hold on to the man she depends upon to survive economically, and whom she has burdened with sustaining her identity and self-worth. She is guilty of bad faith because she abdicates personal responsibility by exploiting Peter, as well as allowing him to do the same to her. Nevertheless, the fact that his wife regularly manipulates and humiliates him does not excuse Peter’s adulteries or violence against Phyllis. Similarly, Phyllis’s subordinate position and frustrations over Peter’s infidelities do not justify her underhanded tactics, let alone the emotional abuse she perpetrates against her husband. Peter, Paul, and the women in their lives end up unmanned by a combination of external and internal factors. Nevertheless, while the Brevilles’ colonial upbringing severely limited the ways they could construct and practice masculinity, their persistence in promiscuity, domestic violence, and other praxes of toxic masculinity demonstrate their unwillingness to reevaluate and change the ways they operate as socially-acting men. The Breville brothers thereby illustrate the fears and anxieties that accompany Caribbean men’s articulation and performance of masculinity, particularly when they travel abroad for extended periods of time, as demonstrated in St. Omer’s final novel.

Lastly, Eugene Coard, the protagonist of *Prisnms*, evinces what Malica Willie defines in “The Essence of a Peripheral Existence: The Philosophy of Psychic Exile in *The Lights on the Hill*,” as “the outsider status of the person who suffers mental and physical colonisation” (109). As Willie expounds in “The Existential Symptoms of Exile in Garth St. Omer’s *Prisnms*,” though written and set “outside of the Caribbean” some

twenty years after St. Lucia's independence, this island society and its people remain in thrall to colonial ways of thinking and doing (30). Despite his long absence from the Caribbean, Coard is still embroiled in an "existential crisis," which stems from "the universality and inescapability of [Caribbean men's] feeling[s] of unbelonging and the need to be many things for many different people" (30). After learning of the murder of his boyhood friend C.B., Coard realizes he has become so "dehumanised and desensitised by . . . constant bad faith" that he cannot come to terms with his past, let alone come clean about his countless lies and abuses against the women in his life, and therefore avoids undertaking that inward journey into himself that might allow him to awake into lucidity and authenticity (30). The black masculinities he enacts in England, the United States, and elsewhere are built upon deceit, manipulation, and other forms of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse he perpetrates for his own benefit. However, Coard becomes unmanned in the process. He forever wanders in "a state of somnambulism" wherein "he has lost himself, his voice and . . . feels powerless and weak" because he is not loyal to anybody, except himself (49). As Willie states in "The Legacy of Colonialism: Existential Crisis in Garth St. Omer's *Another Place, Another Time*, Coard feels "alienated in [his] own space," as well as abroad (193). Unwilling to cease his constant lying, Coard suffers "numerous existential crises" as a colonial exile descended from enslaved Africans, and thus finds himself incapable of sustaining non-oppressive long-term relationships with other people because he "consistently experience[s] anguish, *mauvaise foi*, inertia, inferiority complex[es] and egotism (193-4). Coard himself evinces what Lewis Gordon terms "the ["persisting"] problem of the color line" in *Existentialia Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought* (63). According to Gordon, the

color line serves as “a blueprint of the ongoing division of humankind,” as it metaphorically “exceeds its own concrete formulation,” spilling over to the “race line,” the “gender line,” the “class line,” the “sexual orientation line,” and the “religious line,” and therefore delimits “the line between “normal” and “abnormal” identities” (63).

Already inhabiting a series of liminal, that is, “abnormal,” identities, Coard falls into the trap of bad faith: he consistently refuses to engage his own “anguish” as “a confrontation with [him]self,” which would allow him to admit to himself “what [he] believe[s]” about himself and the people in his life (Gordon, *Bad Faith and . . .*, 13). Painfully conscious of the multiple ways he has deceived others as well as himself, Coard sidesteps “the question of whether to believe or not to believe what is brought before [him],” as well as what he has brought before others, under pretenses of authentic self-disclosure, thereby making “a *choice* over the attitude[s]” he assumes “toward [his] being in the world” as a socially acting/acted-upon late-twentieth century mulatto bourgeois Caribbean male” (13).

Lestrade and other Omerian protagonists illustrate the pitfalls of Caribbean masculinity constructs in colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial contexts. Stephenson, Lestrade, Coard, and most other Omerian characters are unmanned males incapable of achieving the hegemonic masculine ideal “represented by the English gentleman” (Dawnes 107). The chosen few who did so could gain access to greater wealth and power, which would afford socially dominant (usually, but not always, white) men opportunities to practice “sociopolitical leadership,” “economic dominance,” “[compulsory/promiscuous] heterosexuality,” headship over their “nuclear family,” and chivalrous, patriotic upholding of “[private] property, empire and family” against the

purportedly morally bankrupt lower-classes in dire need of policing and containment (107). No matter how closely they emulate these “pattern[s] of practice,” colonized men cannot achieve “true” European-style masculinity because their status as colonized, racially debased “Others” bars them from their “rightful” share of the spoils attending dominant versions of masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 832).

Nevertheless, these novels also venture possibilities of constructing and practicing non-oppressive masculinities through characters such as *A Room on the Hill*'s Mr. Montague, the old ex-minister Lestrade befriends, and the Catholic priest Father Thomas in *Nor Any Country*. Similar to the Brevilles, Thomas' early life in the island was marked by colonialism and the Church's virtually inescapable presence. However, while Paul and Peter blame others for the way their lives turned out and refuse to take responsibility for themselves, Thomas remains “a good and humble man,” and never forgets that he became a priest “by default” to thwart “complete frustration” in a society that afforded him few other choices, as Baugh concludes in “*Nor Any Country*: Garth St. Omer” (42). Despite ministering to a [“almost exclusively Roman Catholic”] island society wherein a priest's cassock is as much a status symbol as “the big American car[s]” owned by the affluent, Thomas actively circumvents some of the colonial Church's most egregious practices, particularly First, Second, and Third Class funerals and their respective number of bell tolls (41). Rather than collude with expatriate French clergymen who perpetuate Euro-Christian hegemony over the island, Thomas constructs his masculinity through oppositional stances to the worst colonial Christian practices and doctrines. By doing so, he opts out of that “incongruous [“simile”]” that “equates priest[s] and car[s]” as images of so-called success and fulfillment in colonial society

(42). This character demonstrates that while the French-controlled Catholic Church and other dominant institutions have certainly been complicit with British imperialism and its ruinous praxes, colonized men should not resign themselves to passively blaming others while doing nothing to change the way they think and act, thereby becoming “men who see that the roof is about to collapse on them, but lack the willpower or concern to raise a protecting arm” (“Brothers in . . .” 39). While this does not absolve Euro-Christian representatives and institutions from their rightful share of accountability, neither does it exempt Caribbean men from bearing responsibility for their constructions of masculinity and concomitant actions. As Maurice Capitanchik writes in “Private Lives,” Peter Breville seems to have realized this by the end of *Nor Any Country*. Though “aware that he can never give himself [to others], never really belong” anywhere he goes, the younger Breville “nevertheless accepts his responsibilities,” reconciles with Phyllis, takes in his nephew Michael, and sets out with them to begin a new life elsewhere (38).

Lee further argues that St. Omer’s novels focus on characters that grow “out of [their] society through . . . education” and “the resulting crises in personality this colonial education produces” (“Peter Plays . . .” 45). Hence, *A Room on the Hill* arguably echoes *Minty Alley* and Patterson’s *An Absence of Ruins* (1967), despite thirty-two years of variegated social, cultural, political, historical, and economic contexts from the publication of *Minty Alley* to that of *Room* and *Absence*. James, St. Omer, and Patterson concerned themselves as writers and theorists with reformulating West Indian discourses and practices of masculinity, nationhood, citizenship, and belonging mediated by English colonialism at times of crisis for the waning British Empire and its overseas dominions. Whereas James’s characters are barely cognizant of colonialism and the ways it

(de)forms their socially-learned notions of what it means to be a man, St. Omer's John Lestrade is conscious of what the joint regime of the British Crown Colony system and the French-controlled Catholic Church have done to him and the people he cares about, particularly his mother Lena, and his friends Anne-Marie D'aubain, Miriam Dezauszay, Harold Montague, and Derek Charles. Similar to James's Mr. Haynes and Mr. Benoit and Patterson's Alexander Blackman, Lestrade's incapacity to overcome his colonial conditioning and personal tragedies hinders his ability to take control of his life and (re)define himself as a Caribbean man from the mulatto bourgeoisie of 1950s St. Lucia. Nevertheless, Omerian novels generally underscore "a layer of metaphor that works as a counter-balance to the pessimistic reflections of the main characters," a trait indicative of "a Caribbean capacity to surpass the dead-ends" of St. Omer's characters, who find themselves constrained by "self-imposed and socially learnt limitations" (MacDonald 9).

Lestrade and other characters therefore exemplify "the concomitant nature of place and identity" as well as "[Gareth Griffiths'] tacit conviction that one's identity is bound with one's location" (Pate 1). This, in turn, "largely determines whom [one] will encounter, what experiences [one] may or may not have, what [one's] educational and professional opportunities will be, what sort of material resources [one] will have access to – in short, [one's] horizon of opportunities" (1). In turn, the colonial regime creates "a condition of being" for colonized middle-class male subjects in which they feel "out of place" (1-2). Lestrade himself realizes that much one evening, when he and Stephen discuss their plans for the future over a game of chess. Having watched a group of fellow islanders thoughtlessly go about their lives and business, Lestrade concludes that he himself is an "automaton" like them: "[t]here was a key in his back as there were keys in

the backs of all the inhabitants of the island,” and those keys were manipulated by “the island itself” (St. Omer 56). As MacDonald argues in ““No nation, only me, myself and I”: Portraits of the Educated Man in Garth St. Omer’s Quintet of Stories,” Omerian characters find themselves transformed into “puppets orchestrated by the indifferent hand of fate, called on to perform without ever internalizing the reasons for their actions,” or otherwise “move beyond self-indulgence and self-pity” (183). Such automatism also affects Lestrade’s circle of friends and their socially learned notions of what it means to be a man or a woman, as demonstrated by the remark Anne-Marie makes when she invites Lestrade to her house after his mother’s funeral. Having gone into the kitchen, she asks him to clear the table for lunch, yet not before casually stating that she needs a servant and “can’t survive without one” (St. Omer 37). Although it is unlikely that Anne-Marie seriously intended to offer the job to Lestrade, let alone that he was meant to interpret the remark that way, the fact a lighter-skinned Creole middle-class woman saw nothing wrong in saying such a thing to a darker-skinned mulatto bourgeois man she has likely known for years reveals the depths of colonial automatism that beset this island society. Despite having severed all ties with her father, Anne-Marie is still bound to her mulatto middle-class upbringing. The relative privilege and power she has enjoyed throughout her life may not wholly compensate for her gendered subjection, yet allows her to renegotiate the terms of her social belonging in ways seldom available to someone like Lestrade. Being a lighter-skinned Creole bourgeois woman, Anne-Marie can get away with making arguably thoughtless, potentially insulting remarks to a man who occupies a socioeconomic position analogous to her own, yet is socially configured as her racial “inferior” because of his darker skin. Furthermore, the situation would be quite

different if Lestrade had made such a remark to Anne-Marie. Earnestly or otherwise, it would be unthinkable to ask a young lady in Anne-Marie's position to perform servile (i.e. "slave"/"black") labor for a darker-skinned man, irrespective of his social class. If Anne-Marie accepted such an offer, it would create a scandal in their racist, classist, colonized society, one which could result in humiliation and ostracism for her, whereas Lestrade's acceptance of such conditions would perhaps be perceived as a "dishonorable," albeit not unheard of, fall from grace. Economic duress and other circumstances would have forced Lestrade to "descend" rather than "ascend" socially, placing him in a level comparable, yet by no means identical to, working-class Caribbean males, a far cry from his privileged origins as a mulatto middle-class man.

Throughout *A Room on the Hill*, Lestrade reevaluates "the acceptance, by young men and women, of their life on the island, their mediocre, as it seemed to him, empty life," making him unsure "whether the contempt he had felt for them was born of their acceptance or of his inability to be like them" (88). The young man is nowhere close to what he (thinks) he wants, yet he has gained some clarity as to what he does not want, namely a "life on this drifting ship of an island [that] could never be worthwhile" (88). Furthermore, Stephen's apparent suicide made Lestrade an "[u]neasy and anxious" man who cannot escape a body and mindset "deformed" by colonial education to serve the demands of mid-twentieth century British imperialism (Fanon 47). Having seen Stephen, his friend "who had wished, literally and metaphorically, to carve his life out of stone," literally and figuratively drown his own life and promise, Lestrade concludes that even if their plans had unfolded as intended, Stephen and him would have ended up "trac[ing] [their lives] in sand only": "a wave, a casual gust of wind would have effaced [them]

forever” because they would have been nothing but unsubstantiated mimicry sustained by the colonial regime, yet all the same thwarted by it (St. Omer 89).

Therefore, this chapter explores the narrative exposures and critiques that James, St Omer, and Patterson engage as their methodology for de-brainwashing their people from the effects of cultural, racial, economic, social, and historical violence endured under European colonial enterprises. Such enterprises stem from contradictory discourses and practices of English colonial domination from the nineteenth century onward, particularly its imperialist stage. As Seamus Deane explains in “Imperialism/Nationalism,” the former is a multifaceted social, cultural, political, and economic regime built upon “an expansionist economic system” that “claims to have its roots in a universal human nature,” and boasts of “possessing a wondrous cultural system that is either the inevitable consequence of the triumph of that economic system or one of the preconditions of its emergence” (354). Building upon colonialism’s discursive representation as “a species of adventure tale” which extols “personal heroism” in the context of “a specific national-religious formation,” imperialism refashioned the former’s inherent “economic rapacity” into “a consolidated crusade for civilization and development” accompanied by “bureaucracies, technologies, and controls,” also characterized by remarkable adaptability in its “internal structures, global . . . homogenizing ambitions and range” (354). Rendered widely successful by its accompanying projects of mass migration and transplantation of animal and plant specimens as part of an “unprecedented exodus” undertaken by Spain, Portugal, France, Holland, England, and their successors from the sixteenth century to date, imperialism was presented as dominance over “nature” and “peoples whose defeat, expropriation,

enslavement, or extermination” needed justification by means of “theoretical formulations” reliant on dubious “categories paraded as fundamental and universal,” including race and history (354-5). Similarly, nineteenth century imperialists invoked “a Hegelian philosophy of history” to argue that European nations had inherited “the task of completing human history” as part of their so-called historical destiny (355). Such theorizations were later reinforced by “neo-Darwinian concepts of evolution” that racialized history and made it indistinguishable from “racial evolution and historical destiny,” the latter being perceived as “ineluctable forces” marching together “in the name of Progress toward the triumph of “civilization,” with the invaluable aid of “technological advance,” “modernization,” and “development” (355).

These and other related historical events had grave repercussions in colonized Caribbean island societies and their peoples. Lestrade himself demonstrates this one Saturday night, when “he went to the clubs, each one in turn, until near dawn,” when he left “very drunk, tired and cursing himself as he walked past the figures of shawled women on their way to early Catholic Mass” (St. Omer 95). Bored, unsatisfied, ashamed of himself and his own drunkenness, Lestrade mocks “the shadowy figures and their faith” as his “whole sea of opportunity stretched before him and the wind of his urge filled him and pushed him blindly” like a “dispossessed and powerful” god “choked with the power and authority he could not make use of” (95). Though endowed with relative wealth, power, and privilege compared to his island’s working-classes, Lestrade realizes his social position affords him few opportunities of taking control of his own life, constructing his masculinity, and exercising raced, classed, sexed, and gendered power in any meaningful way. Rather than ponder his supposed inaction to save Stephen,

ruminate grief over his mother's death, or regurgitate resentments against his father, Lestrade desires relief from the burden of being responsible for himself as a mulatto middle-class Caribbean man of African descent. This makes him guilty of bad faith in the Sartrean sense of the term. By striving to "consume himself in one continual, inebriated effort" until he would collapse into a death-like state wherein everything he was, is, and could ever be would be completely effaced, Lestrade runs away from his own freedom and responsibility rather than assume all they entail (95).

More concretely, his actions highlight the way rum (and, to varying extent, other alcoholic beverages) serve as "a basis from and through which Caribbean peoples can obtain knowledge about themselves and the[ir] socio-cultural world," as Clevis Headley explains in "A Study in Africana Existential Ontology: Rum as a Metaphor of Existence" (112). According to Headley, rum serves as "a strategically shared space within Caribbean societies," as it takes on "a metaphorical basis for negotiating or transcending internal differences of political, social and cultural power" without abolishing such differences (119). By doing so, rum facilitates "human connection and understanding across differences that would otherwise prohibit the possibility of mutual understanding" (119). Thus understood, while rum drinking is "a collective ritual" that requires "communion with others," solipsistic "abuse of rum" is frowned upon (119-20). When regularly indulged, the latter tendency proves particularly pernicious, particularly to the extent the guilty party is inappropriately "ontologically synchronized," that is, if he or she is unable to "constructively participate in a form of life" by successfully resolving "problems that emerge within the context of that form of life" (120). However, although Lestrade and friends drink at social gatherings, their drinking is no less self-absorbed than

other facets of their lives, as the characters remain obsessed with themselves first and foremost. This mulatto middle-class group barely takes marginal interest in the world around it, one “in which psychic division is the normal state of the human personality,” and failure to understand and control such division ultimately “results in tragedy — usually suicide, death or madness for the individual concerned,” as John Thieme claims in “Double Identity in the Novels of Garth St. Omer” (81).

Omerian characters are thus more interested in temporarily forgetting themselves through short-lived pleasures. They are largely unable and unwilling to come to terms with themselves and one another as socially acting/acted upon mulatto bourgeois men and women unmanned by mid-twentieth century English colonialism, as well as the self-centered masculinist behaviors they learned as part of their socialization into the social world of 1950s St. Lucia, as exemplified by Lestrade’s drunken escapade, among other similar instances. Being ontologically desynchronized, Lestrade and friends cannot “resolve internal contradictions” within their chosen “forms of life,” let alone ideate appropriate “interpretive and narrative schemes to deal with problematic situations” in ways other than taking refuge in self-destructive, ephemeral pleasure-seeking (Headley 120). Lestrade himself is unmanned by “epistemological cris[e]s” elicited by Lena’s death, Stephen’s suicide, lingering resentment against his father, and other such “traumatic experience[s]” (120). His former “coping strategies” eroded, the traumatized Lestrade reduces alcohol to an end in and off itself. He is guilty of bad faith because he constantly runs away from the pain that besets him instead of confronting it, and thus continually abdicates responsibility for himself and others as an individual who constitutes a collective and is in turn constituted by it (122). Lestrade therefore

disqualifies himself as a man in the hegemonic sense of the word, as dominant versions of Eurocentric masculinity undergirded by dialectics of Caribbean middle-class respectability emphasize practicing self-control, confronting hardship with “manly” fortitude, and exercising political authority, among other behaviors and traits, without which Lestrade and others like him can only assume “inferior” (complicit/marginal) versions of colonial masculinity.

Such gendered marginalization compels Lestrade to engage the world around him as a male human being from the Caribbean, yet at the same time fixes/fixates him into systems of knowledge-making that do not allow him to be anything other than an unmanned excrescence left over from the Western world’s colonization of its “others” (Fanon 82). By sharing in that purported “impurity” of colonized peoples which “outlaws any ontological explanation” yet demands it nonetheless, Lestrade is bound to a Western-dominated “[o]ntology” that leaves his “existence by the wayside” (82). Informed by such ontology, the colonial regime not only compels Lestrade and others like him to be “black,” but to “be black in relation to the white man” rather than in relation to himself and other Caribbean men (82-3). Enmeshed in a “superstructure . . . predicated on the colonized’s lack of freedom,” Lestrade and other Omerian characters cannot elude the need to imitate English culture, language, and standards, even as the latter devalue them as men and women (Pate 14).

Lestrade reflects thusly in another nightclub, its orchestra “blar[ing] out its music inharmoniously, in clumsy imitation of the American recording its members had learnt it from” (St. Omer 96). The prospective gentleman regards himself and his fellow colonized as “[a] race of imitators,” which “always and everywhere

[practices/disseminates] imitation, now and forever, amen,” thus establishing themselves as “[t]he best bloody imitators in the whole world” and “[t]he most inept, too” (96). In Lestrade’s eyes, him and his fellow dancers are little more than “[b]ig, fat, ugly cows” too busy “[c]hewing the cud of other cultures, other habits, other religions . . . [o]ther everything” to accept that their lives are inauthentic shams constructed upon bad faith, delusional hopes, petty ambitions, cynical self-absorption, and opportunistic complicity with the local colonial government and the metropolitan English establishment (96).

Perhaps Lestrade found parallels between his current entrapment and his childhood memories of watching rats “drown in their cages” (39). Amused by the rodents’ “frantic struggle to escape,” young Lestrade laughed as they “clung to the [cage’s] steel wires,” fighting, biting one another “for possession” of objects which, like the Crown Colony system and the French-controlled Catholic Church, “confine[d] them to death” rather than lead them to “liberty and life” (39). The lad and his friends lauded “those rats which resisted the longest and whose spasms in the water continued long after those of the others had already ceased,” only regretting “the too-quick end” to their so-called entertainment (39). Little did these children know they themselves would be caged and cast into the ocean to drown. Like the rats they wantonly slaughtered, Lestrade and the others would find themselves dragged to the bottom of their personal Middle Passages by England’s imperial aegis. They would end up unmanned and degraded by colluding with the island’s colonial regime, as well as their seemingly innate incapacity to redefine themselves as men in terms other than self-centered Eurocentric colonial categorizations.

The people from whom Lestrade seeks guidance fare little better. The former priest he frequently plays chess and drinks with resigned from ministry after seeing his

own reflection as an old man with a “haggard and discomposed” face (93). Upon realizing he had wasted “[a]n entire lifetime” striving to convert “a semi-pagan people” to the mere “externals . . . of a religion which he offered without explanation or teaching,” the old man withdrew from “[t]he bickering and quarrelling among the sects,” disgusted by their treatment of people as “less souls to be saved than cows to be branded, or slaves to be marked” (94). Already disillusioned by local tendencies to reduce religion to a “huge auction” where “buying [the most] on the open market” of disputed church memberships separates dominant (i.e. Eurocentric) Christian institutions (the French-controlled Catholic Church, Anglicanism, etc.) from so-called “inferior” (i.e. Afrocentric, East Indian, Asian, etc.) denominations, the old parson sees nothing redeemable in the island’s autochthonous religious life, as shown by his disdain for “[t]he New Religion,” namely the Roman Catholic-derived St. Lucian folk tradition (94). According to Dannabang Kuwabong, this enmity towards the latter tradition, “with all its medals, rosaries, statues, scapulars, images, photos, rituals, etc.,” reveals the elderly man’s begrudging acknowledgement of “the failure of his religion, especially as the people he . . . convert[s] turn around and colonize the religion for their own purposes,” similar to what Afro-Caribbean peoples have done with *Santería* in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic, the Spiritual Baptist faith in Trinidad, St. Vincent, etc., and Zion Revivalism in Jamaica, to name but a few (1). Rather than conform to Euro-Christian orthodoxy and mores, Caribbean people appropriate mainstream religions to “work out their own meanings and interpretations” in colonial societies inimical to their own needs, desires, and intentions (1). As a result, Euro-Christianities become yet “another form of superstition” people turn to “find lost objects, obtain favours and promotion in their

work,” as well as to “spite their enemies” (St. Omer 94). Having made peace with the inexorability of death and old age, the ex-minister is in little hurry to find a new lease on life. Unlike Lestrade, he is not fearful of death and unfulfilled promise, which, much like his “subdued” effeminacy, pose no threat to his personal construction of masculinity (109). Yet despite his personal failures, the former priest reconstructs his masculinity through his efforts to “guide [Lestrade] out of the tunnel he stood in,” hoping this would justify his otherwise fruitless decades-long waiting (94). Moreover, being an “amateur historian,” the old man taught Lestrade “more of the history of the West Indies and of his own island than John had learnt in all his years at school” (92). The former priest especially emphasized how “less than a hundred years ago [Lestrade’s] ancestors, the black ones, were slaves,” while his “[“white”] ancestors . . . were their masters” (923). By transforming the “Abolition of Slavery,” what up until then had been for Lestrade “a phrase only,” into a historical event with clear implications in the lives of Lestrade and the people he cares about, the ex-minister makes the young man feel that “he was a part” of Abolition, Emancipation, and their aftermath (92-3). Ironically, while the ex-priest manages to escape the island and resume teaching in Barbados, Lestrade remains behind (148). The aspiring gentleman realizes that he himself will most likely end up like Old Archie, an alcoholic ex-teacher and failed priest “suffocated by the poisonous air of the island he had not been able to get away from” (148-9). Lestrade dreads the day when he, like Archie, will be forced to address as superiors people he once looked down upon, while the latter regard him as a pathetic joke of a man “who could not drink with his contemporaries and who was too old to drink with those he did drink with and who laughed at him” (149).

Lestrade's friends are hardly better off themselves. Like Lestrade himself, Derek, Harold, Stephen, and other male characters comprise St. Omer's "black male protagonists who are constantly reacting to a sense of entrapment," from which they can only escape through colonial education (MacDonald, "'No nation . . .'", 164). Rather than liberate Caribbean men or prepare them for political leadership, education creates selfish "men who . . . fail to take responsibility for anything other than themselves," men who obsessively pursue "self-advancement" at the expense of "the community from which they spring" (164). Having returned to the island "preoccupied with personal advancement as a reward for the long years of study and sacrifice," this "black cadre of professionals" seeks to climb into "social circles from which they had formerly been denied access," namely that "bourgeois community with which their education now naturally aligns them" (165). Doing so, however, often compels these men to "separate themselves from their former lower-middle class communities," forsaking "those who . . . facilitated their social mobility," and whose sacrifices remain unacknowledged (165). Consequently, "the amelioration of the socio-economic conditions of these communities" is seldom a priority for mulatto bourgeois colonized men, who shirk "the responsibility of building a new postcolonial society" and replacing "a fragmented social order" for the sake of "personal advancement" (165).

Nevertheless, the colonial regime, its demands and constraints tend to sabotage such petty endeavors. Additionally, intergenerational clashes between variegated versions of hegemonic, subordinate, complicit, and marginalized masculinities can also compromise these newfound constructs. In *A Room on the Hill* and elsewhere in St. Omer's oeuvre, relationships between fathers and sons and their accompanying

constructions of masculinity entail a “process of a *fixation* of the colonial as a form of cross-classificatory, discriminatory knowledge within an interdictory discourse” constituted within Caribbean male mimicry of dominant culture and civilization (Bhabha 129). The resulting conflictive sociocultural, political, and economic relations between Omerian males disrupt hegemonic Western-derived narratives of masculine power, specifically the legitimation of fathers’ authority over their sons as the latter’s mentors in the intricacies of masculinity and other behaviors grounded on gender, sex, race, and class.

For instance, Stephen has his dream of studying abroad shattered when his father fails to repay the money his son loaned him (St. Omer 58). Feeling cheated and betrayed, Stephen speculates that his father “just didn’t care” about his son’s life and future because “[w]hat I [Stephen] was trying to do [study abroad, return home, marry Miriam] did not mean a thing to him” (59). His plans of escape thwarted, Stephen succumbs to despair, forfeiting all claims to “true” masculinity through his apparent suicide, the latter being construed as a desperate act of “unmanly” cowardice spurred by evasive bad faith.

Old Dezaузay, Miriam’s father, exemplifies a similar state of unmanning. Dismissed from his job in the Civil Service for theft, the disgraced man spends his days seated next to a window in his house, cared for by his loyal wife (69). Once a “very handsome [“young man”] with whiskers and carefully brushed mulatto hair,” Dezaузay is barely a shadow of his former self, his “white and still aristocratic” hair affording him little consolation as he presumably recalls life prior to his dismissal as “a time of make-believe only,” when he was an esteemed member of his community, as evinced by that “illuminated scroll” gifted to him for his twenty-five years of service as church organist

(63). Miriam's father is so unmanned, he can no longer take care of himself, obligating Mrs. Dezaucay to dress him up herself, as shown by his "too large trousers ... tied with string," and the fact that it fell upon her to move "the chair on which her husband sat" away from sunlight when their living room grew hot (66). Utterly incapable of performing his duties (particularly breadwinning) as a male head of household, Dezaucay is reduced to watching from his window as Old Alphonse, the drunken shoemaker, comes and goes with "his perpetual refrain" of "MARY MUST COME BACK," singing and dancing to the mocking laughter of local children (68). Though allegedly deserted by his wife, this local "madman" is arguably better off than Dezaucay himself, an utterly helpless male who needs his wife to do everything for him, his better days as much a memory as the late Stephen, whose former lover has long since stopped "trying to understand" and has merely "accepted" her supposed lot in life (68-9).

Derek Charles, another one of Lestrade's so-called successful friends, is overtaken by a "desire to be suddenly white" after a lifetime in a racist colonial society that allocates wealth, status, and power on skin color, gender, class, and other dubious considerations (Fanon 45). Derek "marr[ies] white culture, white beauty, white whiteness" to increase his prestige and respectability as a newly arrived mulatto middle-class male, and therefore believes he has proven himself "worthy of white love," of being "loved like a [surrogate] white man" (45). By thus grasping "white civilization and dignity," Derek walks that "noble road that leads to total realization," taking both "dignity" and "civilization unto himself, becoming part of them, yet without ever being able to make them his own (45). Similar to Lestrade and other men in their social circle, Derek "does not understand his own race, and the whites do not understand him," and is

thus “[u]nable to be assimilated” so as to “pass unnoticed” among the metropolitan and colonial ruling classes he has been groomed to serve (46).

Similarly, Harold Montague has achieved success as a newly returned mulatto bourgeois man. Six months after his return, Harold had already acquired many “small estates” (St. Omer 119). Such speedy ascension earns him the disdain and envy of his fellow lawyers, as Harold achieved “results that had been . . . as startling as they had been unexpected,” refused no client, and invariably collected all of his fees, tainting him with “more than a faint smell of dishonesty and the unattractive aura of opportunism and exploitation” (119). Having done well in his profession, Harold establishes connections with the island’s political elite and negotiates “with the [local] Government” so that Polish Jew medical student Johan, “the doctor [who] was not a doctor at all,” could practice medicine in the island (109-10). Representing “those who will inherit post-independence power without in any way dismantling colonial structures,” Harold enacts a version of postcolonial masculinity no less dependent on foreign paradigms than that of Lestrade, Stephen, and other characters (Poynting 17). Perhaps this is why Harold’s father made himself scarce all those years ago, whenever his son had his circle of friends over at the upper floor apartment of Mr. Montague’s “grocery and rum-shop combined,” leaving the latter little choice but to entertain his own friends at the shop downstairs because his son disapproved of his father’s circle entering their apartment (St. Omer 87). Being the polar opposite of the ambitious, greedy, selfish, and amoral Harold, Mr. Montague, this “very kind and friendly man” who “worked his way from scratch,” relinquished masculine authority by bowing to his son’s class-conscious prejudices, which separate the Montague household according to dialectics of respectability (aspiring

bourgeois/upstairs-apartment) and reputation (lower-class/downstairs-rum shop) (86).

Yet despite the rumored “complete break of the[ir] never strong relationship,” Mr. Montague refuses to disown Harold, a son who for all intents and purposes has turned his back on him, vainly hoping that the young man will stop being “cruel with everybody” when “he have what he want” and is no longer “angry with me [Mr. Montague],” as he confided to Anne-Marie (118-9).

Anne-Marie also confronts the underside of mulatto bourgeois masculinity. On the day she learned that her father, Old D’aubain, bribed the local Catholic-controlled school into allowing her to wear the uniform reserved for “legitimate” children despite her illegitimacy, young Anne-Marie feels “alien in that familiar [dining] room” in her house, marginalized by “history” made flesh “under the gaze of her ancestors, her father’s family” (122). Though D’aubain utters a half-hearted “I did it for your sake” to defend himself, his cool and collected “aristocratic” masculine façade crumbles when Anne-Marie reveals that “[e]verybody [at school] knew” the truth, except her (124). Unwilling to accept her father’s excuses, Anne-Marie has another “revelation”: “No,” she said, “you did it for yourself” (124). Irrespective of intentions, D’aubain’s actions ultimately taint Anne-Marie and himself with the same illegitimacy he sought to escape. He never stopped to think that “his successful attempt to prevent his daughter from being marked was in itself an indictment” because it fixed/fixated father and daughter as partial, incomplete presences caught in a liminal state of simultaneous belonging and nonbelonging within the colonial order (125). Being “almost legitimate, but not quite,” the D’aubains fall prey to “strategic limitation[s] or prohibition[s] *within* the authoritative discourse [of colonialism]” that allow them to partake and benefit from partial

Eurocentric systems of knowledge and categorization, including Euro-Christianity (Bhabha 123). However, their colonized state bars them from becoming “true” subjects because it subordinates them to the metropole in every aspect of social, cultural, political, and economic life, similar to what Bhabha argues: to be Christianized is not necessarily equivalent to being Christian in the hegemonic sense of the term, just as to be Anglicized is not the same as being English (124-5). D’aubain is thus forced to confront “[t]he irony of his existence on the island and of the existence of an entire class of people like him, dying out to be sure,” yet no less marked by “the illegitimacy of [their] French forebears” (St. Omer 125). Being “no reformer, social or otherwise,” D’aubain styles himself as apolitical in his private life and neutral on regards to the colonial regime (124). His world reduced to his household, daughter, and himself, the old man willfully blinded himself to the history of imperialist oppression that made his wealth, power, and privilege possible in the first place (124). Nevertheless, the patriarch is a victim of colonialism as much as a victimizer. He regards his “beautiful” daughter Anne-Marie as his only achievement in life, all the more remarkable because “[h]e himself was so ugly” due to his “premature birth” (125). This earned him the scorn and ridicule of his father, Cazaubon D’aubain, a “handsome man” who vented “his disappointment in his only child” through “the cynical veil of his laughter” (125-6). Ashamed as he was of his uncomely son, Cazaubon forced him to participate in his group’s social life out of “a perverse need to show his fortitude before this disaster in his personal life by exposing it in public and making fun of it there” (129). Scarred by his father’s actions years after the fact, D’aubain blames himself for “desecrat[ing]” the “beautiful woman” his mother once was, similar to how Cazaubon himself eliminated “all possibility of blame” towards his

beloved wife by turning his son's "claims upon his love" into outlets to vent his disavowed, yet no less vehement, hatred against him (126). Unresolved shame and self-loathing compelled D'aubain to seek an "anchor . . . to offset the anarchy of his features and of the life it had placed before him," something "solid enough to replace . . . his father's attitude" and the perverse sense of "control" it afforded D'aubain himself (126). However, D'aubain's carefully structured world crumbled the day his secret was laid bare for all to see, when his own daughter denounced and disowned him as an emasculated liar (126-7). For all his quibbling about plantocratic masculine propriety and aplomb, this "deformed" gentleman could not attain his father's love and acceptance any more than he could remove the "stain" of Anne-Marie's illegitimacy, as evinced by Mother Superior's poignant rebuke: the people of the island "had to be taught in a very practical way the disadvantages of "loose, animal union," something the old man arguably should have thought about before recklessly indulging himself in the privacy of his personal "plantation" (125).

Lestrade's father is yet another example of flawed colonial mimesis, reenacting what Willie terms a "slave mentality" in his dealings with Lena and John ("The Essence of . . ." 121). Reared in a colonial society that "valorises males over females and marginalises women," the elder Lestrade inherited masculinist mentalities from the days of slavery, when "black men could not pursue monogamous relationships because slave-owners required their property to procreate to replace" aging, dying slaves (121). Such constraints indirectly granted Caribbean men license to "have multiple sexual partners, to be sexually violent and to objectify women" (121). Consequently, Mr. Lestrade sees nothing wrong in maintaining a sexual liaison with Lena despite being a married man

with a “legitimate” family of his own, thereby flaunting Christian prohibitions against extramarital relationships. Whereas Lena and John are bound to the “household space” and “social institutions” like “marriage, the nuclear family, dominant religions (Catholic and Christian), formal economy, private and official educational institutions, heterosexual sexual practices, and traditional gender roles and mores,” Mr. Lestrade can alternate between the former and “street space,” officially unsanctioned “institutions, practices and situations . . . such as the informal economy, the sex industry, extramarital relations and . . . shrewd and slick opportunistic predator[y]” behavior (Moya 77). Still, Lena and John’s respectability is far from seamless. John himself came to exist because of his mother and father’s affair, a transgressive act that fixed/fixated the Lestrades as subject-objects of perpetual interdiction and fantasy, located within a “social body” built upon apparatuses that regulate “the materiality of power operating on the very bodies of individuals” throughout their daily lives (Foucault 1980: 55). Such power materialized as part of historical shifts occurring in the “globally expanding West” from the fifteenth century onwards. During that time, “the earlier mortal/immortal, natural/supernatural, human/the ancestors, the gods/God [religious] distinction[s]” by means of which “all human groups had millennially “grounded” their descriptive statement/prescriptive statements of what it is to be human” were secularized and “reground[ed]” upon “a newly projected human/subhuman distinction,” as Sylvia Wynter explains in “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument” (264). The resulting “transformation of the indigenous peoples of the Americas/the Caribbean” and “the enslaved peoples of Africa, transported across the Atlantic . . .” into “physical referents” of the Western world’s

[“irrational/subrational”] “Human Other” thus constituted socially dominant upper-class Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch, English, and, later on, American males, into “Man,” that so-called “normal human” group against which such Others inevitably come up short (265-6). Anthropology and other such “discourses of [secularized] knowledge” constructed all “peoples of the militarily expropriated New World territories” into “Indians,” “the very acme of the savage, irrational Other,” and all “enslaved peoples of Black Africa” into “Negroes,” “the most extreme form” of savagery, as well as “the ostensible missing link between rational humans and irrational animals” (266). Thereby proven to be “racially inferior . . . non-evolved backward Others,” these and other oppressed groups were deemed non-participant in that “generic “normal humanness” ostensibly expressed by and embodied in the peoples of the West” (266). This illusionary deficiency thereby justified their sociocultural/political subjugation and economic exploitation at the hands of European metropolitan powers and their colonial underlings, including representatives of Euro-Christianity, most of whom became willing accomplices to oppressive discourses and practices disseminated on grounds of race, class, sex and gender (266).

Thus, the colonial regime brought by mid-twentieth century British imperialism to the Caribbean functioned as “a process of filtering, concentrating, professionalising and circumscribing” an illegitimate and stagnated milieu, one which colonial representatives and subjects could reutilize “for diverse political and economic ends,” particularly “the extraction of profit from pleasure” and pleasure from profit, without imperiling the power and anonymity of colonizer and colonized (Foucault 195-6). Such mechanisms and effects of power constituted the Lestrades and their fellow colonized as innately

“subordinate,” “uncivilized” people “tethered to treacherous stereotypes of [black/African] primitivism and degeneracy” (Bhabha 60). The colonized’s every word and deed were thereby termed uncondusive to “a history of civil progress,” incapable of constituting “a space for the *Socius*,” because the Lestrades and others like them occupied the underside of the “[Western] dialectic of mind/body,” which all but ensured that their possibilities of being, becoming and performing gender, race, class, etc., would always be doomed to illegitimacy (60). Therefore, Mr. Lestrade’s role as originator and sustainer of his “other” family remains vulnerable to acts of violence (epistemic or otherwise) because that family exists in open defiance of the island’s Euro-Christian-derived ethicomoral codes through its unceasing trespassing against hegemonic “frame[s] of reference” and “field[s] of vision” (60).

The public humiliation John and Lena endure during Chou Macaque’s assault at the doorstep of the Lestrade family shop is an example of such violent ruptures. On that day Lestrade found his mother on the verge of tears as the rabble-rouser “invited [her] to come down on the pavement” and face “the ring of onlookers” who joined him in heaping abuse against her and her son (St. Omer 77). Lestrade himself remains mute and immobile, unmanned by his mother’s degradation under the “illegitimate” leadership of Chou Macaque, a character who also serves a similar role of disgruntled “madman” in Derek Walcott’s *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1967), where he is antagonized by Corporal Lestrade, himself a precursor to the protagonist of *A Room on the Hill*. Moreover, Chou Macaque is the polar opposite of the respectable and demure Lestrades:

Chou’s imprecations rolled out of his black lips into the hot air, dirty as the clothes he wore, uglier than his unshaved face with gaps where the

batons of policemen had knocked his teeth out, as deformed, in his mixture of patois and English, as his flat bare feet, cracked between the toes and at the heels, and black in the cracks with dirt. (77)

Despite surpassing Chou Macaque in terms of wealth, class, race, and gendered privilege, Lestrade finds himself “castrated” before a “subhuman” monkey-man who could easily kill Lena and himself with the crowd’s blessing, his removal from Western-derived “normal humanness” evinced in the nickname “Macaque,” which designates a species of simians, and also serves as a racist slur against people of African descent. Looking at Lena “as if he had just discovered who she was,” his world shattered “under the shock of his discovery,” Lestrade began to despise his mother “for accepting all so meekly . . . himself for being the cause of it,” and his father for not being there for them when they needed him most (78).

John thus regards his father as a foil to Mr. Montague and Old D’aubain, men who strove to guide and nurture their children despite their character flaws, moral lapses, and sociocultural, political, and economic handicaps. Similar to Stephen’s father, Mr. Lestrade styles himself as head and breadwinner of his “other family,” yet shows little loyalty to his son and lover. Rather than protect John and Lena from social ostracism and public abuse, Mr. Lestrade was conspicuously absent during the altercation with Chou Macaque. Instead of watching over John and teaching him to perform non-oppressive versions of masculinity with love, patience, and understanding, Mr. Lestrade discharged masculinist cruelty upon a child he bastardized in every sense of the word, as it occurred on the day he assaulted the then eleven-year-old with “heavy repeated stings of [his] thick black belt” after the boy publicly urinated “against the wooden fence of the yard” in the

house Mr. Lestrade built (79). Mr. Lestrade punished John for performing what he deemed a vulgar action more fitting of drunkards, villagers, and other reputation-bound lower-class undesirables, rather than prospective gentlemen-in-training from mulatto bourgeois families. Feeling he had been “unjustly punished by someone who, now, no longer had the right to punish,” John resents his father because Mr. Lestrade selectively and arbitrarily limited himself to roles of breadwinner and disciplinarian on behalf of people he regarded as an embarrassment at best and a burden at worst, yet otherwise showed little concern for, busy as he was looking after his “real” family and his own interests, particularly his façade of Caribbean middle-class masculine respectability (79).

Nevertheless, Mr. Lestrade justifies his actions as part of his “natural” duty as male household head to discipline a misbehaving brat who made a public mockery of his claims to middle-class masculinity and respectability. In his eyes, the elder Lestrade had every right to act as he did because the house belonged to him despite not residing in it, having built it for his lover and their illegitimate son, who depend economically upon him and are thus subject to his authority and sanction. Father and son clash anew during John’s fifteenth year, when “[a]fter [Mr. Lestrade’s] first lash had stung his back . . . he hit his father back with all the power” he could muster, struck him again “with his resentment and his exasperation, and hit him once more, in a sudden, uncontrolled rage, sobbing now,” feeling “relief” rather than “pain” after releasing such deep-seated anger (79). However, John’s satisfaction is short-lived. His mouth still bleeding, Mr. Lestrade retained a “look of undethronable authority” as he rose, calmly beholding John “with considering detachment as if he were some strange animal” (79). Meanwhile, the young man vainly “stood there waiting to establish as strongly as possible the point of his

defiance, hating more and more the smug and distasteful self-assurance of the powerful man in front of him” (79-80).

Even so, time eventually grants John some consolation. By the time *A Room on the Hill* takes place, Mr. Lestrade’s “smooth bullishness had given place to a sagging of the cheeks on either side of the face which looked flat,” his formerly “fleshed neck and its suggestion of great strength” eroded into “hollows” of “loose flesh” by aging (80). John then recalls the “second-hand car” his father recently bought and which “he drove with caution and with difficulty” because he had learned to drive fairly late in life (81). John derives some satisfaction whenever he imagines Mr. Lestrade “sitting awkwardly behind the steering wheel,” relieved that the man he has long despised at long last tastes a diluted version of the shame, emasculation, and inadequacy he visited upon his son through action and inaction (81). Mr. Lestrade’s claims to hegemonic masculinity become questionable because he cannot “master” the automobile, despite enjoying a level of status, wealth, and privilege that permits him to own such a vehicle. Like the cassocks of Catholic priests, automobiles are customarily regarded as symbols of the wealth, status, and “maleness” of their owners, men who therefore derive masculine privilege and power over “lesser” men who cannot afford such an investment. The elder Lestrade may outstrip his son when it comes to wealth, power, and social status, yet the former’s dismal driving skills demonstrate a purported lack of masculinity, as colonial society also gauges “true” masculinity according to men’s capacity to own, control, and master machines as fetishized objects of masculinist desire for enjoyment, wealth, and power. Time and aging turned Mr. Lestrade into an unmanned man unable to escape the consequences of his adultery, particularly the loathing of his outside son, whose face “might almost have

been a replica of his own” if not “for the colour of the skin and its youth” (82). For that matter, John refuses to make peace with a man he feels he can only hate. The younger Lestrade turns away from a visible reminder of what might become of him if he stays on the island, namely a thick set caricature of himself, forever unfulfilled, unmanned by history writ large and small

Lestrade’s failed attempts at “overthrowing” his father exemplify the dynamics of colonialism writ large. At its imperialist stage, colonialism is a seemingly “filial” relationship between the so-called Mother Country and its colonies, but in reality it is a political farce legitimized by “social and historical mutilation[s]” that disqualify the colonized from full citizenship (Memmi 96). Barred from assuming their own “dependent” citizenship as well as that of the colonizer, colonized subjects seldom experience “nationality and citizenship” except in private, fleeting moments; otherwise, “[n]ationally and civically [they are] only what the colonizer is not” (96). Since colonial education only presents “community and nation[hood]” in terms of the colonizing power, the colonized remain stuck in self-perpetuating intergenerational “social inadequacy” (97). Since there is nothing to suggest to the young colonized “the self-assurance or pride of his citizenship,” he will “expect nothing more from it and will not be prepared to assume its responsibilities” (97). Having renounced citizenship as a pointless endeavor, colonized fathers exclude it from their “paternal ambitions,” as well as the life lessons they impart to their children, as they have lost “all hope of seeing [their] son[s] achieve citizenship” and the so-called masculine rights and duties it entails (97). Likewise, although the younger generations conceive “[r]evolt against [their] father and family” as “a wholesome act” indispensable for attaining “self-achievement,” that “new and

unhappy battle” often ends up being a potentially abortive endeavor in colonial regimes (97). This occurs because “[t]he colony’s life is frozen” under “corseted and hardened” structures where “[n]o new role[s] are available for young men due to the impossibility of (re)invention (98). Since colonized society cannot be “master of its destiny,” let alone “its own legislator,” it is incapable of “controlling its organization” in order to “adapt its institutions to its [own] grievous needs” (98). Consequently, if such “discord becomes too sharp” and the ideal of social, cultural, political, and economic “harmony” proves unfeasible “under existing legal forms,” younger colonized generations might choose to revolt rather than become “calcified” by such a state of affairs (98).

Lestrade and friends follow similar dynamics. Their public and private lives are practically congealed by the Crown Colony regime and colonial Euro-Christianity (especially, but not exclusively, by the French-ruled Catholic Church). They have little room for authentic personal growth and self-realization because economic duress, rigid morals, and other restraints largely prohibit such initiatives. Nevertheless, rebellion thus understood seldom breaks such strangleholds because the former is also circumscribed to the “colonial superstructure,” which often becomes a “refuge” that “saves the colonized from the despair of total defeat” and perpetuates itself through “a constant inflow of new blood” (99). The “revolt of the adolescent colonized” enmeshes Lestrade and friends deeper into “the morass of colonized society,” as it only allows them to fall back on “traditional values,” irrespective of where such values might fall within raced, classed, sexed, and gendered spectrums of respectability and/or reputation (99). In other words, the problems of colonized subjects do not stem merely from lack of choices. They former suffer as well from an inability and unwillingness to make important decisions,

compounded by non-commitment to anything other than short-term personal needs, desires, and interests. The aforementioned circumstances are themselves born from internal and external forces that reduce most, if not all possibilities and outcomes, to mere distinctions without difference. Consequently, to embrace a particular choice seldom achieves anything other than exchanging one dead end for another.

This becomes evident in Dennys, a jobless painter who claims that “the island is not for me,” but rather for “lawyers, doctors and engineers and civil servants” because “I [Dennys] don’t plead for [the island], I can’t cure it, I don’t build roads for it, I won’t stand behind counters with deference to serve it” (St. Omer 115). Having become a painter rather than “what . . . society deems a more orthodox profession,” namely a doctor, lawyer, engineer, or civil servant, Dennys has all but made himself “a social misfit” and an “object of benign pity” in the eyes of his friends (MacDonald, “No nation . . .” 170). Nevertheless, while Dennys blames his unemployment on a colonial society comprised by “[a] bunch of Philistines” incapable of appreciating any line of work they find wanting of putative masculine prestige and worthy remuneration, he refuses to “compromise” by getting a job and painting in his spare time, despite the economic hardship and social derision that accompany his way of life (St. Omer 116-7). Tired of being lectured by so-called reasonable men, Dennys denounces Harold and his ilk as unmanned mimic men who gave in to colonial society’s demands to achieve their petty ambitions:

You others, you don’t understand. You go away and come back qualified, like millions of others all over the world. You come back here. And all you think of is money, money, money . . . and your place in the island’s

warm social sun, mass-produced in your education, mass produced in your intentions afterwards; empty, empty, empty. (117)

Dennys is aware that colonial society is a self-perpetuating sham which traps colonized subjects in “circular patterns of experience and fossilized situations,” preventing them from becoming “anything other than actors in the universal masquerade” of imperialist ambitions and capitalist despoilment (Thieme 96). However, like Lestrade and other characters, Dennys is unmanned by licentiousness, intemperance, and similar skewed ways of performing colonial masculinity. He claims to “drink [his] rum and . . . praise [his] God,” passing the time by sleeping with multiple women, then going to confession and making peace with God afterwards” (St. Omer 116). Dennys’ marginalized masculinity is not a viable substitute for the complicit masculinities of men like Harold and Derek because his adherence to reputation-oriented masculinist practices ultimately reinforce (and is itself reinforced by) the respectability-oriented masculinist tenets and practices of that “bunch of fakes” he resents not only on account of their alleged success, but also because they refuse to validate his masculinity and chosen line of work the same way they validate those of lawyers, doctors, engineers, and civil servants (117). Dennys then rebuts Albert’s accusations of “envy,” claiming that “[b]oth of us are trapped” because “[w]e are not doing what we should” (118). According to Dennys, “the island does not . . . permit” him to commit himself to painting as a “real” job capable of earning him a living, along with social recognition of his masculinity (118). This leaves the painter with nothing, save for his “stubbornness” and “refusal to conform even when he seemed headed for certain social disaster,” fuelled by “mad, unthinking independence,”

“pessimism,” and an arguably futile rejection of “respectable” middle-class values and standards (118).

Albert, on the other hand, entrapped himself when he “made [the] foolish choice” of studying law “for what [he] could get out of it,” pursuing a career which ultimately unmanned him when he proved unsuited for it (118). Nevertheless, Albert owned a car despite allegedly being “not . . . very successful in his profession,” a fact which he treated as license to act “condescending and superior” to the “drunk and completely unsuccessful” Dennys (117). Unlike Harold, Derek, and others who followed a similar course, Albert is one among countless “lesser” men stuck in a prestigious dead-end job which he probably hates, but cannot afford to quit out of fear of losing his livelihood and social standing. Such an upset would disqualify him as a man in the eyes of a society that values success and achievement in Western-derived capitalist terms, compelling prospective “hegemonic” men to achieve/perform masculinity at the expense of women and “failed” men who comprise the underside of so-called achievement and fulfillment in colonial society.

Additionally, the contradictory experiences of St. Omer’s characters and real-life Caribbean people stem from a history dictated by European imperialism and colonial economies. As Gordon Lewis posits in *The Growth of the Modern West Indies*, “[t]he real oppressions of West Indian life . . . have not been so much those of nature and geography as those of history and culture” (17). According to Lewis, “the Balkanization of the regional government and politics” through the restriction of “avenues of communication” between the metropole and each individual colony has proven the most deleterious among such oppressions, as it has enforced artificial “linguistic,” “monetary,”

and “commercial” barriers (18). In turn, such barriers are both cause and effect of “the mutual ignorance and sometimes mutual hostilities of the various island populations, even when they all are English-speaking” (18). Similarly, although the “federal experiment” allegedly sought to unify the Caribbean “politically and economically,” the project was beset by insurmountable obstacles from its institution to its collapse (343). “[F]ederation debate,” Lewis argues, “possessed no clear purpose, no central driving force to give it energy and direction,” and was itself characterized by a “complete absence of agreement as to the scope of the proposed federation,” as the various proposals had “[their] own special conception[s] of what territories” ought to be included or excluded (344). Since there was “little agreement about the final purposes . . . federation would . . . serve,” the sociopolitical entity that would emerge had different meanings and prerogatives for different persons and groups, with debates being marked by “vaguely romantic feeling[s] about West Indian ‘unity’,” as well as “typically middle class emphas[es] upon the nationalist content of federation” (344-5).

In turn, these conflicts parallel Lestrade’s tumultuous relationship with Rose, a young Grenadian woman who caught his fancy when he went to the latter island as part of a cricket team five years before the events of *A Room on the Hill*. Unlike previous encounters with women, that “precocious sexual aggressiveness that was a tradition in [Lestrade’s] own island and which he had learnt very easily . . . dropped away from him like a worn skin” when Rose and him began dating (St. Omer 47). Nevertheless, although Lestrade’s initial reluctance to sleep with Rose contradicted the dialectic of male reputation prevalent in his island’s “street culture,” his treatment of her is still informed by “notion[s] of “maleness” or “virility” predicated upon “chasing behaviour”

and exhibiting so-called “male potency” and possessiveness mingled with fear of commitment (Moya 79). Moreover, Lestrade regards his bond with Rose “as ephemeral and transitory as his existence was,” only capable of “afford[ing] [him] the temporary pleasure he looked for while he was marking time on the island” prior to his planned seven-year sojourn to Canada as a student along with Stephen (St. Omer 47). Perhaps this explains why Lestrade feels threatened when Rose begins writing to him. Caught unawares by an “explosion of feeling,” Lestrade esteems each letter as a “stone placed on the last and awaiting the next, erecting the structure of his and her happiness together,” frightening the young gentleman with that “aspect of promised solidity their letters had put up” (47). Since “[Lestrade’s] decision to get away from a life which . . . was oppressive as ever, could not include Rose now . . . [h]e had, simply, to put her out of his mind” so that she would not endanger the construction of his “liberating” Caribbean bourgeois masculinity (47). Just as struggles over federation involved mutual English/West Indian distrust and hostility fueled by arguably warped notions of West Indian unity and misplaced nationalist concerns, Lestrade’s ways of thinking and performing masculinity are distorted by his colonial bourgeois upbringing. Just as English and West Indian groups would not accept versions of federation that did not serve their own immediate, narrow interests and agendas, Lestrade can only approach male-female sexual relationships as temporary arrangements wherein men and women selfishly possess and exploit each other as sexualized symbols of wealth, status, power, and enjoyment, as exemplified by Lena and Mr. Lestrade’s liaison. Since the young gentleman never learned to construct masculinity as something other than an outlet for male-centered oppression and self-absorption, Lestrade feels threatened when Rose

expects him to give himself to her like she gives herself to him, thus upsetting his ingrained notions of what it means to be a “real” man.

These impasses come to a head during the novel’s climax, when Dennys and Anne-Marie are involved in a car crash, in which the former is severely wounded and the latter dies, being refused a Catholic burial on account of her illegitimacy and so-called immoral lifestyle. Unable to change the Vicar General’s mind, Lestrade, Derek, and Harold argue about what to do while a band of masqueraders celebrated “the anniversary of the discovery of the island by Columbus, the Genoese”: the revelry outside attracted local priests, who took pictures of the masqueraders and threw coins “down to the street” for them to fetch (134). When Derek suggests the group take the body to church and “say a prayer ourselves,” Lestrade states that doing so will not help Anne-Marie or themselves, only proving beneficial for the money-hungry foreigners who hold sway over their lives (136). As an increasingly angry and frustrated Lestrade argues, island-bound Catholic priests “have no right to come [to the island]” and lord over disenfranchised, uneducated colonized subjects they otherwise know or care little about (136). These cassock-wearing tyrants “don’t even take the trouble to learn to speak English properly,” yet their affiliation to the French-controlled Catholic Church grants them the privilege to impose steep Euro-Christian-derived ethicomoral rules in the name of lofty ideals few people, including their upholders themselves, can ever fulfill (136). These foreigners also penalize transgressing individuals and groups through ostracism and other stringent sanctions, thereby granting the general populace indirect, tacit license to police and harass their fellow colonized with relative impunity. This allows the colonizers to enforce Euro-Christian dominance with the complicity of the colonized themselves, as

exemplified by the Lestrades' altercation with Chou Macaque and his "flock." Fear of ecclesiastical sanction maintains colonized subjects in a state of mutual distrust, wherein Euro-Christian dominance coalesces with the colonized's opportunistic self-interest to create artificial divisions which ultimately benefit the Crown Colony system and its representatives to the detriment of the colonized. This social conditioning is so entrenched, Omerian characters have learned to gauge life and death through the tolling of church bells for First, Second, and Third Class funerals, as demonstrated when the injured, delirious Dennys mistakenly believes that "[n]obody's dead. Anne-Marie isn't dead" when he hears "the sound of drumming . . . amplified several times over, by the vaulty, hollow church" instead of bell tolls, unaware that the Church had declined to bury Anne-Marie (142).

The colonial Church (and, albeit to a lesser extent, other Euro-Christian denominations) thus comprises one of two central facets of that "twinning of power and legitimacy" characteristic of "classical imperial hegemony" which Edward Said explores in *Culture and Imperialism*, wherein the Church and other Christian sects occupy the "cultural sphere" of this continuum, while the Crown Colony system controls "the world of direct domination" (291). However, this style of hegemony was transformed by that "quantum leap in the reach of cultural authority" that unfolded from the mid-twentieth century onwards, thanks to an "unprecedented growth in the apparatus for the diffusion and control of information," among other factors (291). "Whereas a century ago European culture was associated with a white man's . . . directly domineering (and hence resistible) physical presence," the post-World War II years saw the crystallization of "an international media presence that insinuates itself, frequently at a level below conscious

awareness, over a fantastically wide range” of activities, directly (mis)shaping dominant, subordinate, complicit, and marginalized worldviews, including constructions and performances of masculinity (291). The technology/discourse of photography thus proves an ideal tool for cataloguing and “sanitizing” colonized subjects, as it “imprisons” them within the temporal and material limits of a photograph, “fixed”/“fixated” as “inferior” Caribbean subjects indulging their purported proclivities for reckless pleasure and thoughtless “laziness,” the existence of which justifies the joint Crown Colony/Euro-Christian regime that has so warped the lives of Lestrade, his ancestors, and contemporaries. Photography and other colonial discourses and practices constitute/institute “the colonized as a social reality which is at once an ‘other’ and yet entirely knowable and visible” through narratives which impose “a reformed and recognizable totality” upon “the productivity and circulation of subjects and signs” within colonial society (Bhabha 101).

Thus understood, the actions of priests and masqueraders in *A Room on the Hill* reveal the contradictory dynamics of colonial desire and power. By mediating “[a] repertoire of conflictual positions . . . [with]in colonial discourse,” colonized and colonizers partake in mutually alienating politics of identity-building from “within an apparatus of power which *contains* . . . an ‘other’ [“arrested and fetishistic”] knowledge” (110-1). In turn, such knowledge “circulates through colonial discourse as . . . stereotype,” “a form of multiple and contradictory belief” that allows “knowledge of difference” to emerge and circulate through colonial discourse as “[a] limited form of otherness,” even as it “simultaneously disavows or masks it” (110-1). Within such “margins of metropolitan desire,” the colonized “bod[ies]” of the masqueraders signify

both the disavowal of colonial reality as well as its problematic rearticulation as schismatic “mimicry” under the metropolitan gaze, thereby unveiling its “undifferentiated whole white body” as a sham originated from ambivalent fear and desire fixated with so-called Others (130-1). In turn, “white” fear and desire for the Other(ed) Caribbean body reflects colonizers’ incapacity to “exist in the “natural” [instinctual, sensuous, hedonistic] way of the Negro” (Fanon 135). Feeling themselves “frustrated by the Negro[es],” hegemonic and complicit men subject them to colonizing technologies and discourses as part of a disavowed “quest”/“demand” for the Negro” that fuels the colonial regime, which employs these technologies/discourses to make the abject object of its shameful desire “palatable in a certain way” (135). Since skin plays a central “public part in the racial drama that is enacted every day in colonial societies,” it therefore (mis)represents “that particular ‘fixated’ form of the colonial subject which *facilitates* colonial relations,” setting up “discursive form[s] of racial and cultural opposition in terms of which colonial power is exercised” (Bhabha 112).

Nevertheless, while the priests’ presence renders the masqueraders into “knowable” (hence consumable/enjoyable) spectacular objects, their indirect participation in the masquerade both affirms and disproves the clerics’ (and by extension, the Church’s) “difference” from the prevalently darker-skinned lower-class revelers (101). Furthermore, it is no coincidence that the masqueraders conducted their celebrations on the anniversary of Columbus’ arrival at the so-called New World, a date which situates the origins of the Caribbean at the advent of colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade, chattel slavery, the Plantation, abolition, emancipation, colonial education, Euro-Christianity, as well as African, East Indian, other non-Western versions/offshoots of

Christianity (Spiritual Baptists, Rastafari, Kumina, etc.) and other related institutions, discourses, and practices. Its festive tone notwithstanding, the masquerade “memorializes [its] catalyst [Columbus’ “discovery”] as a negative, threatening, violating and indelible event” that is “selectively repackaged and relived through [the] mass mediation” of the dancers and general public, both of which appropriate the resulting “cultural trauma” to “generate a sense of collectivity” (Morgan 84). While such appropriations can work to the detriment of the colonized by “ossify[ing] its adherents into notions of victimhood,” they can also “afford opportunit[ies] for mobilization and agency in terms of [seeking] redress” (84). Thus understood, the masquerade comprises an “understanding of human action and the social world as . . . moment[s] when *something is beyond control, but . . . not beyond accommodation,*” through dynamics that mirror those of carnival in Trinidad and elsewhere in the Anglophone Caribbean (Bhabha 17-8). Like carnival, the masquerade is a calculated irruption of “the realm of the other” into “the domain of the same, from which it withdraws in due course, leaving it [simultaneously] undermined, strengthened, [and] renewed” (Burton 156-7). Consonant with Robert Young’s arguments in *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, the masquerade constitutes the site through which the seemingly haphazard actions of seemingly isolated individuals “constitute” a collectivity capable of impugning the civilizing claims of the colonial enterprise (28). The collectivity thus brings to bear “conflictual divisions” that simultaneously confirm and subvert dominant, subaltern, complicit, and marginalized politics of identity-building and raced, classed, sexed, and gendered performance through no less conflictual stances/tactics of acquiescence, complicity, subversion, opposition, and resistance (28).

For instance, when Derek suggests taking Anne-Marie's body to church and burying her on their own, Lestrade reminds him to "[m]ake it quite clear to all [possible attendees] that [Anne-Marie's wake] is irregular," that it will be done in defiance of the Church and therefore "will not be a real funeral," so "those who wish not to be associated may stay away" (St. Omer 137-8). As this occurs, the people who knew Anne-Marie wrestle with their conscience, sense of decorum, and desires for self-preservation. On the one hand, they wish to pay their final respects to a "troubled" mulatto middle-class woman who remains part of the community despite the Church's posthumous "excommunication." On the other hand, doing so will likely earn them the ire of the French-dominated Catholic Church, which could imperil their social position and standing within the community along with their very livelihoods, as demonstrated by Paul Breville's downward spiral in *Nor Any Country*. Therefore, it is little surprise that many who did not dare go to the church and participate in "the unauthorized funeral" tried to "ease their consciences" and "give some meaning to their protestations of friendship" towards Anne-Marie by accompanying "the dead girl" to the cemetery once the procession reached the area (146).

Even so, Crown Colony and Church dominance are not absolute. During the funeral procession, Lestrade, his friends, and others temporarily suspend raced, classed, sexed, and gendered differences, as well as fear of punishment from "above." While such suspension does not permanently "transform" or "liberate" colonial society, it nevertheless unsettles, however briefly, those hegemonic forces which thwart that "authentic disalienation" maintaining Caribbean peoples bound to colonial constraints long after they have cast off the colonial yoke (Fanon 5). As Derek Walcott posits in

What the Twilight Says: Essays, such constraints have rendered St. Lucia into “a black French island somnolent in its Catholicism and black magic, blind faith and blinder overbreeding,” creating a society structured around “land baron[s], serf[s], and cleric[s], with a vapid, high-brown bourgeoisie” born into complicity, mired in seemingly inescapable liminality (11). Though long duped by the lie that “nothing could ever be built among these rotting shacks, barefooted back yards, and moulting shingles,” Lestrade, his group, the masqueraders, Old Alphonse, and “his” children deftly refashion Anne-Marie’s life, death, and post-mortem ostracism into a celebration of community, resilience, and endurance in the face of English colonial domination (4). Knowingly or otherwise, this motley group “record[s] the anguish of the race,” returning through song and dance to “a darkness whose terminus is amnesia” (5). However, this “journey back from man to ape” is no final destination, but a waystation for descendants of emancipated slaves seeking to unshackle themselves from colonial mimicry, deprivation, and unmanning (5). As Walcott states in “The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?,” the central force in the Caribbean is not history and its recovery, but “the loss of history” and “the amnesia of the races” that have made “imagination” the indispensable “necessity” for the “invention” of the region and its peoples (6). Such imagination resembles the “love that reassembles the fragments” of a broken vase, similar to the glue that “fits the pieces i[n] the sealing of its original shape” (*What the Twilight . . .* 69). This love is stronger than the one “which took [the vase’s] symmetry for granted when it was whole” (69). Its “gathering of broken pieces is the care and pain of the Antilles,” its people working with/through “[disparate, ill-fitting] pieces” cherished above “their original sculpture” (69). Though “taken for granted in their ancestral places,” “those icons and sacred

vessels” are now reassembled through the “restoration of . . . shattered histories” and “shards of vocabulary” as “synonym[s] for pieces broken off from the original continent[s]” (69). This imagination thereby repurposes language, history, knowledge, and the arts (Western or otherwise) to create meanings according to the needs, desires, and intentions of Caribbean subjects rather than those of colonizers and their accomplices. Although such actions “prepare the world that will come later,” Caribbean people “belong irreducibly to [their] time because “it is for [their] own time that [they] should live” (Fanon 6). The future is “an edifice supported by living men” who act, think, desire, and create within/for the here and now, yet nonetheless build futures precisely because the present is “something to be exceeded” (6).

Lestrade and friends thus denounce the forces that have misshapen their notions of what it means to be a colonized mulatto bourgeois man of Caribbean descent. Yet despite such “strong, pervasive pressure[s] . . . constricting and repressive influences,” Lestrade and his fellow colonized have taken the first steps towards overcoming unmanning (Ismond 62). They have created possibilities of (re)fashioning Caribbean masculinities influenced by dynamic, negotiable dialectics of reputation and respectability, thus avoiding the pitfall of meaninglessness, its “burden of defeat, futility,” and fatalism, as well as becoming congealed in identities and practices which have outlived their purpose (62). Though liberation is a possibility rather than a certainty, the procession at the end of *A Room on the Hill* illustrates Caribbean subjects’ capacity to create in the midst of Western-imposed artificial scarcity and legalized rapine. Their songs are neither dirge, exultation, or paean, but a newly reopened world, one whose inhabitants, to paraphrase Walcott and Naipaul, may not be a nation, yet at last

have become men who are somebody, who have allowed themselves to become somebody.

Chapter IV: (Un)becoming Men, (Un)fitting Leaders: Postcolonialism, Nationhood, Masculinities, and Unmanning in Orlando Patterson's *An Absence of Ruins*

Chacun de mes actes engage l'homme. Chacune de mes réticences,
chacune de mes lâchetés manifeste l'homme.

Every one of my acts commits me as a man. Every one of my silences,
every one of my cowardices reveals me as a man.

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952);
translated by Charles L. Markmann (1967).

Orlando Patterson is certainly one of the most prolific writers and thinkers of the modern Caribbean. He is not only a prominent figure in the field of Caribbean historiography and sociology, but also a fiction writer with three novels to his name. Born in 1940, Patterson was reared during times of political turmoil in the English-dominated Caribbean. Donette Francis states in “‘Transcendental Cosmopolitanism’: Orlando Patterson and the Novel *Jamaican 1960s*” that Patterson’s formative years during the emergence of “newly . . . independent Caribbean nation states” influenced his later “activist engagement with nationalist and regionalist struggles of the 1960s,” as well as his “involvement” in initial discussions “about what characterizes a West Indian aesthetic” and culture (2-3).

However, despite being “[a] child of the Independence generation” and thus “profoundly shaped by its ethos,” Patterson is critical of post-independence Jamaican governments and their leaders, as evinced by his reaction to “[t]he Walter Rodney October 1968 crisis” and the subsequent “Rodney Riots” (3). Rodney, an ardent opponent of neocolonialism and capitalism, was declared *persona non grata* and banned from returning to Jamaica by Hugh Shearer, then Prime Minister of Jamaica under the

conservative Jamaican Labour Party (JLP) (3). Inspired by such “draconian tactics,” the University of the West Indies at Mona terminated Rodney’s professorship (3). Following the government’s violent repression of protesting students and West Kingstonians, Patterson moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, and was offered a professorship in sociology at Harvard University (3). Though wary of Jamaica’s subsequent post-independence governments, Patterson actively participated in “the Jamaican nation-building project,” serving as “Special Advisor for Social Policy and Development” under Michael Manley’s social-democratic People’s National Party (PNP) from 1972 to 1979 (3).

During that time, Patterson spent part of the year in Jamaica, wherein he developed “social programs to ameliorate the conditions of the lower-income areas of Kingston, Spanish Town and Montego Bay,” spending the other part teaching at Cambridge (3). This arrangement had a profound effect on Patterson’s work, which can be divided into two periods. The first period unfolded during his “Caribbean-centered years,” a time in which Patterson’s “historical work” focused on “slavery and its afterlife” in Jamaica in “particular” (3). The second period, which took place throughout his relocation to the United States of America, saw Patterson undertake a more “comparative [and globalized] conceptual work” on slavery during different epochs in the history of Africa, Rome, Greece, China, and elsewhere (4). During this latter time, Patterson rejected the late-1960s imperative to write social histories “from below” (4). Instead, he proposed “a global definition about the operating logic of slavery as an institution” at different historical, social, cultural, political, and economic contexts by working through “dialectic[s] between the local and the global” (4). Patterson thus began

drawing on various historical epochs and societies, ranging from ancient Greece, Rome, pre-Islamic Middle Eastern nations, Islamic caliphates, ancient African empires, premodern Korea, China, etc., (3-4).

Patterson's sociological work assesses social institutions, discourses, and practices as historically interrelated global phenomena, which inform and unfold through "local" (historically and geographically situated) dynamics at distinct times and places. Since global dynamics are inextricably linked to local ones, what occurs elsewhere in the world at a given time and place may affect what goes on locally, even if no apparent connection or correlation between "here" and "there" or "then" and "now" seems to exist. Furthermore, Patterson questions the notion that the historical incident of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and enslavement of Africans in the Americas and the Caribbean were shaped by so-called universal characteristics of slavery in which the enslaved had no agency whatsoever in shaping their destinies. Rather, Patterson posits that subordinate subjects, enslaved or otherwise, are dynamic agents who evolve and operate within "hierarchies of difference and manipulation of power" (4). Despite being dominated by institutionalized hegemonic social groups, discourses, and practices, subject peoples in specific societies at specific times and places always resist and attempt to "remake their quotidian lives" in accordance to their own needs, desires, and intentions, counter to those of rulers, dominators, and their representatives (4).

As Patterson argues, although most acts of resistance often end in "failure within a greater systemic frame," these failures are productive (4). Despite being doomed to failure, as well as subject to reprisals and other such "violent disruption[s]," these engagements in resistance indicate that subject peoples manage, even if minimally, to

“negotiate the system *in and through* . . . generative possibilities” (4). Rather than resign themselves to their abject positions as “foreclosed ending[s]” they are utterly powerless to circumvent, subject peoples exercise their agency by creating ever newer “challenging opening[s]” both from the inside and outside of systemic oppression (4). Patterson claims that the perennial challenges mounted by the oppressed against the “systemic frame[s]” that maintain their domination make these frames uncertain, and thereby create states of nervousness among the framers of these hierarchies of domination and dominated (4). Jean-Paul Sartre made a similar argument earlier, in his Preface to Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*. According to Sartre, colonial efforts to “fabricate . . . native elite[s]” sympathetic to the metropole’s interests by branding them with “the principles of Western culture” and twisting their “inferior” languages with “pompous awkward words” eventually end in disaster for both parties (xliii). Disaster occurs not because colonized native subjects are inherently “uncivilized” or incapable of assimilating Western European culture, but because Western European colonizers themselves turned them into “Hellenized” Asians and “Greco-Roman blacks,” while tantalizing the colonized with illusions of political autonomy, inclusion, equality, and other deceptions (xliv). In the end, both colonizer and colonized become thralls to an imaginary utopia, mimic men thus compelled to strive for that high-placed “universal” masculinity said to be reflected by hegemonic Western males (xliv). However, colonial discourses and practices unmask the latter dominant social group as a small, male-dominated enclave whose “racist practices” are grounded on selective inclusions and exclusions in order to bar colonized non-European men from higher social strata and their attendant boons of wealth and privilege (xliv). Realizing that hegemonic Western

European values seldom coincided with “the realities of their life,” some colonized subjects contested the discourses used to justify the myth of the inherent inferiority of colonized non-European peoples, which became the ideological legitimation of European colonization (xliv). To Sartre, colonialism engenders mutual resentment and distrust between colonizer and colonized, which eventually culminates in violence. On the one hand, the colonized seek to expose and dismantle “the tactics of colonialism,” that “complex [inter]play of relations” which both unite and antagonize European colonists from European metropolises, linking colonized and colonists to one other in different levels of subjecthood to the centers of colonial power (xlvi). On the other hand, colonists claim citizenship from colonial metropolises and reject their place as subjects. The colonized claim subjecthood, but are denied equality because of their non-European, colonized status. The colonized thus retrieve their non-European identities and subjecthood as weapons against assimilation into a colonizing foreign nation. Thus, subjecthood, citizenship, identity, and culture are always shifting for colonists and colonized alike.

To enforce their worldview on the colonized, colonizers use the colonizing State’s legal and militarized extralegal machinery of coercion to “pacify” rebellious subject peoples who resist systematic exploitation and degradation (xlvi). Nevertheless, such historical forces do not always unfold in uniform or predictable ways. They are subject to sudden or gradual shifts instigated by both inside and outside forces, in accordance with the needs, desires, and intentions of dominant and dominated alike. In other words, dominant groups cannot exist or act outside of the forces of history, culture, politics, and economics that make their existence and transformation possible in certain ways rather

than others. Such groups also cannot exist without subjects who ceaselessly contest the so-called legitimacy of their domination by engaging various modes of resistance. By doing so, dominated groups develop and express their agency through complex stances of accommodation and opposition.

This interpretation of social subjects as “active” cultural, historical, raced, classed, sexed, and gendered agents rather than “passive” abstract, interchangeable, perpetually victimized entities, informs Patterson’s fiction and nonfiction. In “The Paradox of Freedom: An Interview with Orlando Patterson,” David Scott articulates this concisely. Patterson’s endeavors are informed by “a normatively *improving* horizon” that deploys knowledge of the past to mend the aftermath of slavery and colonialism in the late-twentieth century Caribbean, the United States, and elsewhere (97; original emphasis). Thus, during the “Caribbean-centered” period of his career, Patterson explored the local dynamics of the institution of slavery and the ways they unfolded in pre-Emancipation Jamaica in his groundbreaking study *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica* (1967), published at about the same time as *An Absence of Ruins*. Unlike Eric Williams’ *Capitalism & Slavery* (1944), Philip Curtin’s *Two Jamaicas: The Role of Ideas in a Tropical Colony, 1830–1865* (1955), Douglas Hall’s *Free Jamaica, 1838–1865: An Economic History* (1959), Elsa Goveia’s *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (1970), *A Study on the Historiography of the British West Indies to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (1980), and other studies on West Indian slavery and plantocratic colonial societies, *The Sociology of Slavery* places “central focus” upon the enslaved and their lives (“where they came from, what they did, how they survived”)

(151). Following the footsteps of C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938), Patterson does not present enslaved Africans in the Caribbean as abstract "*category[ies]*," mere objects at the mercy of colonial exploitation, or simple subordinates to "broader social and economic factors" and concomitant "*structural issues*" within "the [plantocratic] *system*" (151; original emphasis). Instead, *The Sociology of Slavery* examines enslaved Africans and their descendants as "*historical*" agents, simultaneously acting and acted upon within the sociocultural, political, and economic contexts of colonial Jamaica (151; original emphasis).

Similarly, as Arnold Sio opines, Patterson deems African victims of the transatlantic slave trade and their enslaved descendants in the Caribbean as central to the endurance of pre-Emancipation Jamaica and other West Indian "slave societ[ies]" (96). In his book review of *The Sociology of Slavery*, Sio further explains that for Patterson, "[the system of] slavery" and slaves themselves are "pivotal to the entire institutional structure and value complex" of such societies and the people that inhabit them, as it sustains "the socio-economic order of the masters and the sugar plantation as the major unit of production" (96). "[M]aterialistic both in origin and structure," Jamaica and other Caribbean island colonies were "deliberately created as sources of [European] wealth through the production of sugar," giving rise to "monocrop econom[ies]" wherein sugar was mass-produced on "large estates owned by a small number of largely absentee planters" (96). Yet as detrimental as such absenteeism was for enslaved Africans and their descendants, it was no less harmful for the island's "white community" and mulatto middle-classes, which consistently suffered from lack of "local leadership" (96). Local

whites and mulatto middle-classes also endured a “lack of educational facilities,” which, coupled with “the low value assigned to education” and constant “gross mismanagement” of colonial “economic affairs,” further exacerbated the social, cultural, political, and economic stagnation of colonial Jamaica (96). Moreover, the virtual nonexistence of specific and consistent “religious and moral sanctions” proved deleterious for the black, mulatto, and white communities, being further encouraged by “the disorganized nature of marriage and the family among the free and slave[s]” (96). Regularly besieged by “a severe lack of foresight into critical social, economic and political matters” due to “their immediate and exclusively material interest in [“the socioeconomic order of”] society,” colonial Jamaicans suffered from social inequality, routinely enforced “class distinctions,” and economic dependence orchestrated by the Mother Country and its colonial representatives, factors which contradicted that “spirit of independence and equality” said to prevail among local whites (97). In turn, these local ruling classes comprised the following groups: “[“mainly English”] absentee elite[s],” “resident elite[s]” made up of the original Scottish and Irish indentured servants and their descendants,” emerging “middle class[es]” of educated professionals, and “middle-sized farmers,” merchants, plantation overseers, bookkeepers, and low-ranking military personnel (97).

Though enslaved Africans and Afro-Creoles also practiced social stratification, Patterson disputes traditional hierarchies that place “domestic slaves at the top . . . skilled slaves or tradesmen in the middle, and . . . field slaves at the bottom” (97). Instead, he posits that slaves were divided into “three groups with a horizontal division within each” (97). For instance, “[i]nclusion in the group of domestic slaves” was linked with skin color as well as age, whereas enslaved tradesmen gauged “occupation and skill,” among

other factors (97). Regarded as elite groups among the enslaved, tradesmen and slave gang drivers enjoyed a “higher status” acknowledged by slave owners and fellow slaves alike, yet enslaved “headm[e]n or chief governor[s]” enjoyed primacy among such groups, as well as “the entire slave population” (97). Nevertheless, it was planters rather than the enslaved who determined such “criteria of status,” structured to serve their own needs, desires, and intentions (97).

Patterson claims that although all slaves learned to assess themselves and one another on grounds of “colour and status,” skin color only had “psychological significance” among “coloured slaves,” as “Negro or black slaves . . . did not internalize the colour ideals of the coloured group” and therefore “felt no racial inferiority” whenever “the white and coloured groups” practiced discrimination against them (97). Since “slaves were not uniformly related to the [Plantation] system,” “pattern[s] of relations” of enslaved individuals and groups were always mediated by “the three vertical groups and the status of the slaves within these groups” (98). Patterson similarly emphasizes the simultaneity of “racial” and “property . . . component[s]” prevalent in the “legal status” of the enslaved, who suffered discrimination and other injustices on grounds of race, class, sex, gender, as well as due to “their status as slaves” (98). Because of this, Patterson refrains from using planter-created “slave code[s]” to make unsubstantiated inferences as to “the actual treatment of slaves” (98). Nevertheless, this does not mean that such codes were not routinely enforced, let alone that they had little or no impact on the constructs of masculinity available to enslaved or freed colonial Africans and mulattos.

Moreover, the assumption that enslaved Africans in the Caribbean “felt no racial inferiority” seems to imply that all members of this sector considered it “natural,” and therefore, acceptable, that persons from the mulatto Afro-Creole and “white” upper Euro-Creole classes should have greater opportunities for social ascendancy and related privileges denied to them on account of skin color, race, gender, sex, class, and other no less dubious considerations. Enslaved or otherwise, darker-skinned persons of Caribbean descent were relatively aware of their disadvantaged position. Likewise, some middle-class whites were cognizant of their own subordinate position in relation to upper-class whites. They realized, however surreptitiously, that their link to power and status hinged on sustaining a discourse erected on racist, classist, and sexist hierarchies inimical to enslaved and free Africans, bi-racial people, the poor, and women.

Even so, the enslaved were not entirely powerless within Jamaica’s slave “system of total power” (98). Their subordinate status was partially compensated by numerical dominance: “the fact that slaves were in the majority [of the colonial Jamaican populace] and by the irresponsibility and incompetence that resulted from absenteeism” (98). These and other factors made “slave life” into “a continuous and complex group reality” that not only affected “pattern[s] of relations between masters and slaves,” but also impinged upon their conflicting views on resistance, opposition, acquiescence, and internalization of the Plantation system, as well as the competing notions of colonial and postcolonial masculinity which emerged in its wake (98).

Though purportedly superseded by abolition and the collapse of the old plantocracies, slavery still informed Caribbean historical, sociocultural, political, and economic realities. It impacted the construction of Caribbean masculinities during post-

slavery indentureship of East Indians, Chinese, and emancipated Africans to work as field laborers. The realities of post-Emancipation Jamaica further mediated the problematic relations between newly arrived Asian indentured laborers and freshly emancipated Africans. This conflict originated in the different, seemingly more benign treatment given to the Asian newcomers, such as freedom to practice their religions, retain their languages, and subsequent compensation with land, benefits which formerly enslaved Africans never received before or after Emancipation. Indeed, the slave masters were paid compensations for the loss of property, yet no such compensation was ever paid to former slaves for centuries of forced labor, violence, subjection, and oppression. Thus, the descendants of the formerly enslaved, together with their mulatto lower-middle class relatives, took umbrage at this. Particularly, the burgeoning mulatto bourgeoisies fought relentlessly for acceptance as honorary whites, to be accorded the same powers and privileges all whites allegedly received. Additionally, the upheavals brought by the First and Second World Wars, the rise of West Indian nationalism, the rise and fall of the West Indian Federation, struggles for independence, and the advent of neocolonialism occasioned other crises for Caribbean masculinities. Alex Blackman's existential conflicts, failed familial and amorous relationships, and failure to live up to middle-class ideals of masculinity in a Jamaican post-independence environment are symptomatic of his unmaning. The latter is best defined as Blackman's purported inability to assume his perceived role as a mulatto bourgeois male in postcolonial/neocolonial Jamaica.

Patterson's early fiction and nonfiction engages these topics in variegated contexts spread throughout different times and places. His career as a writer began with the publication of his first novel, *The Children of Sisyphus* (1965). The novel is set in

what James Ferguson describes as “the dangerous ghettos of inner-city West Kingston,” the Dungle or “rubbish dump” whose inhabitants eat “rotting garbage” to survive and seek refuge in “tumble-down hovels,” virtually isolated from the more privileged social sectors (4). In “Vision in Orlando Patterson’s *The Children of Sisyphus*,” Julia Udofia argues that the Dungle comprises “a calcified mass of previous accretions of human waste . . . to be ignored or oppressed when necessary” (157). The Dungle thereby constitutes “a microcosm of the Jamaican slum and of the urban dispossessed,” people who, like slaves, are “brutalized by their degrading milieu,” rendered incapable of “form[ing] lasting . . . interpersonal relationships based on mutual respect and love,” let alone trust (157). The Dungle’s inhabitants are therefore degraded into “sub-human beings” who “live in the perpetual shadow of fear and defeat,” engaged in “the continuous meaningless task of survival” within a world and epoch that affords them few other options (157). The unmanned characters of *The Children of Sisyphus* become part of unfathomable masses condemned in the aftermath of the transatlantic slave trade, plantation slavery, and post-emancipation colonialism to a slow, painful death. These nameless, faceless people are Patterson’s way of illustrating how humans in the Dungle are “trapped in a “nightmare world of deprivation and cruelty,” and how they engage in “frequently futile battle(s) against an implacable universe” all but determined to thwart every effort they make to improve their lot in life (157).

Moreover, the inhabitants of the Dungle are conditioned to falsely believe they can escape such misery through the same education that enchains them. For instance, Mary’s plans for her “promising daughter” to receive an English-style formal education and marry a white man are foiled when the authorities take the girl away from the slums

and give her up for adoption. Dinah's "dream of escape" by "attaching herself to a man" also ends dismally, though the "less sharply delineated group of male rastas," led by Brother Solomon, a former Anglican minister, fares little better (Ferguson 5). In *The Children of Sisyphus*, Rastafarians comprise a "messianic/millenarian [community] based on selective religious beliefs . . . of Afro-Christian origin," inspired by what Udofia defines as "Marcus Garvey's supposed prophesy of redemption coming through a crowned king in Africa, i.e, Haile Selassie I or Rastafari," a prophesy overshoot by "Garvey's [alleged] belief in the repatriation of all blacks in the Diaspora to Africa" (157). In Patterson's first novel, Rastafarians are portrayed as "a small weird separatist group" of self-proclaimed African-Caribbean messianic deliverers (158). Nevertheless, their "implicit and naïve [fatalistic] belief in [the] repatriation [of African-descended people to Africa]" renders them complacent, incapable of "mobiliz[ing] themselves either to change their personal circumstances or to pose an organized threat" to "Babylon," the "[pro-colonial] bourgeoisie" and neo-imperialist forces they claim to resist (158). This group mistakenly believes that "Selassie had sent a ship from Ethiopia to pick them up and return them to their promised land," prompting Brother Solomon to commit suicide rather than face the wrath of his flock when they realize they have been duped into deifying "a distant African ruler," who apparently turned out to be as disloyal and faithless as Babylon and its representatives (Ferguson 5).

Patterson's third novel, *Die the Long Day* (1972), is "a historical postcolonial novel and a work of postcolonial modernism" which served as a preamble to *Slavery and Social Death*, as this novel's "modernist form" allowed Patterson to foreground the "humanity, agency, and conflicted experience[s] of slaves" (Greenland and Steinmetz

794). Set in a late-eighteenth century Jamaican plantation, *Die the Long Day* centralizes the “subjectivities” of subaltern (slaves) and “[i]ntermediate subjects” (“mixed race people and freedmen”), relegating slave owners to a secondary plane usually reserved for enslaved Africans, mulattos, and other marginalized figures (Steinmetz 811). Moreover, Jan Carew opines in “Fiction: Irony, Elitism, Babbitt updated, Africa, Civil Rights” that this novel illustrates the “unstable situation” of West Indian institutions created and sustained by “the subtleties of the master-slave relationship” for the benefit of “a small [European/Euro-Creole/lighter-skinned] elite” to the detriment of enslaved, indentured, and “free” Caribbean persons of African, Asian, and European descent (2-3). The novel illustrates multiple ways the Plantation system degrades/devaluates all so-called masculine qualities, endeavors, and prerogatives, barring enslaved African/Afro-Creole men from exercising Eurocentric hegemonic masculine privileges such as male breadwinner, headship of the nuclear family, and absolute control over the bodies and labor of enslaved women. Slave owners also tended to sell sons, brothers, fathers, and other enslaved male family members, yet usually allowed mothers, daughters, sisters, and other female relatives to remain within the same plantation. Consequently, enslaved women’s relationships with enslaved men were fragile because the latter had less opportunity to thrive within the dehumanizing contexts of the plantocracy. “Men died . . . were beaten, brutalized, died young, or . . . had other relationships and . . . attachments” that temporarily or permanently removed them from the slave household, thus precluding most possibilities of sustaining “lifelong [male-female] relationships” in the context of Caribbean slavery, let alone forming European-inspired, male-led nuclear families (Scott 181-2). Enslaved women of African descent thus tended to prefer daughters over sons

and other male family members, making mother-daughter relationships into “the most powerful . . . deepest . . . most lasting set of ties among blacks” (181). This compelled enslaved Africans and their progeny to ideate alternative ways of nurturing children and fostering kinship, particularly the matrifocal family model prevalent in Jamaica and elsewhere in the Caribbean.

Through such constraints, black men were consigned to “greater “invisibility” within plantocratic regimes, being largely excluded from historical records as part of “the female-centred nature of . . . slave system[s]” mainly concerned with slave women’s “maternity, fertility . . . management of white households, and the sociosexual expression of [white] patriarchal power and ideology,” which therefore saw no need to concern themselves with what in their eyes amounted to an expendable work force and easily replaceable breeding stock (Beckles 232). Predicated upon “the military defeat and subsequent violent subordination of black males by white men,” the Plantation system, slavery, and the transatlantic slave trade initially depended upon influxes of “defeated [African] male warriors” kidnapped from their native lands to work on sugar estates throughout the insular and continental Caribbean (228). Enslaved African men’s “Caribbean experience[s]” were informed by “institutional environments that reflected the conquistadorial ideologies and interests of white patriarchy” (228). In turn, patriarchy thus understood structured “[Eurocentric hegemonic] masculinity by reference to the dominant imperatives of [the] imperial project[s]” of an elite minority of European and Euro-Creole men who strove for “monopolistic control, ownership and possession of all properties and power” throughout the English-dominated Caribbean (228). Thus, impoverished African, Asian, and Euro-Creole male descendants had their masculinities

“relegated to otherness” (229). This formed the foundation on which the monopoly of “social translation of [dominant] white masculine ideologies” was erected, in which true masculinity is saturated with illusions of “power, profits, glory and pleasure,” all derived by a select minority of men at the expense of women, children, and the majority of disadvantaged men (228-9). Knowing they were outnumbered by African, Creole, and other men of non-European descent, “colonial white men” sought to justify their hold on power by appropriating the spurious argument “of mind power over body,” in which they presented mind and reason as universally white, male, and European, providentially ordained to dominate the “black male” body by right of “conquest and control,” denying a “mind” to the former in Eurocentric works of fiction and non-fiction (229). These false yet destructive “dichotomized masculine Caribbean contest[at]ions” set the racialized foundation for the unmaning of Afro-Caribbean men in Patterson’s novels, as well as in earlier and later fiction (229).

Like *Sisyphus* and *An Absence of Ruins*, *Die the Long Day* demonstrates Patterson’s familiarity with French Existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus in its “map[ping] a kind of moral phenomenology of human existence,” which situates “[“individual and social”] *life* . . . at its limits,” when “the temptation to *act* against the routinized silence of the world” takes hold of individuals and groups who thus affirm “value in the face of absurdity” (Scott 96; original emphasis). The slave Quasheba reaches such a limit when she tries to prevent her daughter Polly from being forced to sleep with a syphilis-ridden white man by killing the latter, resulting in her being hunted down and murdered by Maroons. By committing to her chosen course of action, Quasheba undertakes an “act of defiance” whereby she “go[es] against *everything* [she

has] been taught” to uphold as a slave (183). Quasheba’s act of defiance causes her to abandon “the particularity that ties her . . . to the imposed—slave—status” (97). This “profound moment of *self-awareness*” prompts her to say “no” through “a [seemingly] nihilistic act of pure negation” that “also says *yes*” through “vindicating act[s] of *affirmation*,” revealing “something worthwhile in her . . . that will no longer stand being ignored [and] violated” when she chooses to die rather than allow her daughter to be raped (97). Quasheba’s rebellion is contrasted to the apparent submissiveness of her lover Cicero. Whereas Quasheba “think[s] of [her]self in more universal, *human* terms” and “discovers . . . her humanity in saying *no*,” Cicero never reaches “a *human* limit” that would allow him to transcend “particularistic terms” and perform “[an] act of defiance” that would bring him to “the recognition of [his] humanity” and thus attain so-called true/universal masculinity (182; original emphasis). Similarly, the slave Africanus is “a man of deep knowledge” who, like Cicero and other enslaved men of African descent, is so deeply enmeshed in “the [plantocratic] system” that he never rebels against it, opting instead to “accommodate it as best he can, in the most humane, dignified way” (183). Such accommodations certainly help enslaved men survive within the plantocracy, but they simultaneously unman them. Africanus, Cicero, and other male slaves and freedmen in *Die the Long Day* never attain “that profound existential dignity that comes in the act of rebellion,” since doing so would require them to “transcend [themselves]” along with “the ordinary ways [they have] fashioned over a lifetime to survive with some dignity” within a racist, masculinist, capitalist society which regards them as little more than expendable free labor and outlets to articulate and enact contradictory needs, desires and intentions of European and Euro-Creole men, colonizers or otherwise (183).

Similarly, Patterson's "second period" placed greater emphasis upon so-called global dynamics of slavery. As Fiona Greenland and George Steinmetz attest in "Orlando Patterson, His Work, and His Legacy: A Special Issue in Celebration of the Republication of *Slavery and Social Death*," Patterson's work during this period "encompass[es] historical sociology, postcolonial fiction, studies of slavery, freedom . . . ethnicity, and debates around the epistemology and ethics of social science" (786). Patterson's work also benefits from "ongoing developments in postcolonial studies, critical race studies, anthropological and historical study of slavery, globalization studies, and feminist theory" (786-7). In "Sociology and Sisyphus: Postcolonialism, Anti-Positivism, and Modernist Narrative in Patterson's oeuvre," Steinmetz regards Patterson as "the first fully historical postcolonial sociologist" (800). Patterson, Steinmetz argues, explores "the dialectical, reciprocal interplay between fictional and historical-sociological writing . . ." through "an original framework for the analysis of slavery centered on the category of social death," as well as "an original historical genealogy of the concept and practice [of] freedom itself, also grounded in experiences of slavery" (800).

Patterson's next work, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (1982), is commonly regarded as his *magnum opus*. Its impact and influence across sociology and several other fields of knowledge is evinced by the publication of its second edition in 2018, featuring a new Preface by Patterson himself. Through a wide-ranging, multidisciplinary scope, *Slavery and Social Death* analyses "the institution of slavery" across various times, places, and geopolitical contexts, including ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, Visigothic Spain, Merovingian France, Europe at the time of the Vikings, the Antebellum South of the United States of America, the Tuareg people from Northern

and West Africa, the Ashanti people from Medieval Ghana, and late-seventeenth century Caribbean plantocracies, among others (vii). Nevertheless, unlike earlier sociological texts, *Slavery and Social Death* does not assess the institution and practice of slavery as “peculiar,” let alone alien, to human societies and experiences (vii). Slavery, Patterson posits, “has existed from before the dawn of human history right down to the twentieth century” and beyond (vii). Widespread across different epochs, cultures, and geopolitical contexts, this “ubiquitous” institution has actively shaped nearly all known past and present human societies, increasing in significance during crucial times for the “historical development” of “modern Western peoples” from the late-fifteenth century to date (vii). In keeping with its contribution to “the development of advanced economies” in Western and non-Western societies, the transformations slavery has undergone are “intimately bound up” with imperialism, colonialism, and their continuations long after Emancipation, abolition, and independence (viii). Even so, the centrality of slavery is not limited to economic implications. According to Patterson, slavery and its attendant discourses and practices are inextricably linked to “the emergence of several of the most profoundly cherished ideals and beliefs in the Western tradition,” particularly “[t]he idea of freedom and the concept of property” (viii). Freedom, private property, hegemonic masculinity, and other ideals commonly heralded as the greatest achievements of Western political theory and practice did not spontaneously emerge and spread across the world, any more than they were an intrinsic boon of Europe’s “providential” role as purveyor and upholder of civilization: they emerged and shifted under centuries-long historical contexts marked by their very “antithesis,” that is, discourses and practices of slavery (viii).

Regarding slavery itself, Patterson defines it as “the permanent, violent domination of natively alienated and generally dishonored persons” (13). Like other human relationships, slavery is predicated upon disproportionate distribution and exercise of power. When one or more persons/groups “ha[ve] more power” than others, such asymmetries all too often take the form of “[r]elations of inequality [and] domination” (1). Nevertheless, “power” and “[p]ower relationships” are “complex human facult[ies]” which differ from one another” both in “kind” and in “degree” (1). They unfold within “continuum[s]” ranging from “those of marginal asymmetry to those in which one person is capable of exercising, with impunity, total power over another” (1). Thus, slavery has three key facets: the “social” facet predicates “the use or threat of violence” a person might recur to in order to place or maintain another under their control (1). The second “psychological” facet, that of “influence,” demarcates a person’s “capacity to persuade” others to change the ways they perceive their own interests and circumstances, preferably in favor of the former’s own needs, desires, and intentions (1-2). The third “cultural” facet entails “authority,” namely “the control of those private and public symbols and ritual processes that induce (and seduce) people to obey,” prompting them to “feel satisfied and dutiful when they do so,” and conversely, to feel dissatisfied, uneasy, even guilty, when they do not (2). Patterson then explains how these facets inform slavery as a “[“distinctive”] relation of domination” sustained by three “sets of constituent features,” the first being the coalescence of “direct violence,” “organized force,” and “authority” in the creation and sustenance of slavery in the context of class-based societies (2-3). While “authority” and “organized force” could make the use of “direct violence” practically unnecessary in “developed class societies” where “nonslaves” constituted the “dominated

class,” most “slaveholding societies” could ill dispense with violently “introduc[ing] new persons to the status of slaves,” thus replacing former slaves who stopped being so upon death or manumission (3). This, Patterson postulates, made the continuous repetition of “the original, violent act of transforming free man into slave” at the “prehistory of all stratified societies” all but unavoidable in such societies (3).

These historical facts impact “the ideological constructions, and historical effects, of historicized black masculinities” (Beckles 225). In turn, the “social representations” and “relationships to the meanings of everyday life” attached to pre- and post-Emancipation Caribbean masculinities are at least partially responsible for enacting and justifying “endemic imbalances between males and females in public institutions and social processes” along with other “discernible cultural results over time” (225). Their “historical origins” long forgotten, these amalgamations of masculine ideology and practice recur in “areas of political power and domestic authority” unsettled by “the problematized popular behaviours of young black males” (225). In turn, such behaviors are frequently assessed as labyrinthine laboratories which enable those who are qualified to detect purported “origins of dysfunctional deviance in [Caribbean] cultural life,” yet in reality amount to little more than reductionist misreadings of Caribbean history, largely blind to their own Eurocentric biases and assumptions (225). Such discourses of “dysfunctional deviance” fall back upon “ideologies of community and development” that present “the postcolonial [Caribbean] black male” as “psychically defeated and socially at risk” (225-6). Postmodernity has thereby imprisoned “historically shaped and validated masculinities” within “a derelict cul-de-sac,” wherein “the very notion of “nation” is itself threatened by “socially dysfunctional masculine attitudes and cultural

tendencies” (226). Such attitudes therefore enable “particular antisocial types of masculinities” that allegedly threaten the postcolonial nation and the so-called bounties of nationhood, political autonomy, and “true” masculinity (226).

Starting with the publication of *Ethnic Chauvinism: The Reactionary Impulse* (1977), Patterson’s subsequent academic publications explore these and other related topics. In the aforementioned work, Patterson examines the origins and transformations of the concepts of ethnicity and “[e]thnic allegiance,” as well as their survival and adaptation from the late-twentieth century onwards (9). In the Preface to *Ethnic Chauvinism*, Patterson states that such subjects have remained “little understood” despite the fairly recent “massive outpouring of works” dedicated to them over the last few years (9). He posits that since most of these works focus on “specific ethnic groups,” they expend most of their scope in gathering so-called knowledge “about the Jews, the Blacks, the Irish, the Poles,” etc., yet provide scant insights “about the nature and extent of the ethnic revival,” as well as that “thing-in-itself we call ethnicity” (9). According to Patterson, it is difficult to accrue reliable working knowledge about ethnicity for three reasons. Firstly, most “detailed case stud[ies]” refuse to “treat the subject historically” (9). Rather than approach ethnicity as a point of departure, they reduce it to piecemeal assessments subordinate to other topics (9). Secondly, ethnicity challenges “the disciplinary limits of sociology” (9). Being a dynamic, evolving social process, ethnicity’s “historical character” cannot be analyzed through the “static, comparative” analyses favored by conventional sociology (10). Lastly, Patterson posits that ethnicity is an “epiphenomenon” rather than a concrete phenomenon (10). Since most scholars and critics mistakenly regard it as a self-sufficient phenomenon validated by so-called real

life, ethnicity entails “a form of commitment” to the “ideology,” or rather, the “secular faith” behind the concept (10). Thus understood, ethnicity is both an instrument and effect of power which comes into being as a consequence of the Western world’s creation and application of “knowledge” about people of non-European (African, indigenous, etc.) or “lesser” European (Irish, Polish, etc.) descent. In turn, such knowledge is used to catalog groups and individuals into readymade tiers, rendering them “knowable,” and therefore exploitable, in accordance with Eurocentric political regimes, disciplines, and standards.

In a previous article titled “Ethnicity and the Pluralist Fallacy,” Patterson elaborates on the real-life implications of such a doctrine. As Patterson states, ethnicity and “the spurious social philosophy of pluralism that rationalizes it” have become a threat to two other vaunted ideals of Western culture: “individuality” and “personal autonomy” (10). Having originated as a “necessary evil” during the 1960s and the Civil Rights movements then sparked at the United States and elsewhere, the “revival of ethnicity” accrued several “political and social gains” for people of African descent and other non-European “ethnic groups” at the time (10). However, the concept of ethnicity has recently become a threat to “the entire system” and to “the very groups whose condition required its revival” (10). This, Patterson states, occurs because so-called ethnicity and its bastardized offshoot, “ethnic pluralism,” extol the “diversity of ethnic groups” as an end to be pursued for its own sake, fashioning “tolerance” as “tolerance not of other individuals but of the groups to which they belong” (10). The resulting “pluralist fallacy” and its overemphasis of “group diversity” and “group tolerance” runs counter to any real, authentic “respect for individuality” because it neglects “a basic paradox in human

interaction”: “the greater the diversity and cohesiveness of groups in a society, the smaller the diversity and personal autonomy of individuals in that society” (11). Such “informal” and “communal” groups are “strong” to the extent its individual members “share a common set of values, live by a common set of norms, and aspire to a common set of ideals” (11). Therefore, members feel interconnected because they “think” and feel alike (11). This, Patterson posits, occurs because individual divergence and dissent from so-called common knowledge, sense, and values threatens the survival of such groups. Consequently, some members may take it upon themselves to police their own, exploiting their personal power, privilege, and standing within the group as license to sanction real or apparent dissidence.

In Patterson’s second novel, *An Absence of Ruins* (1967), Lloyd and other members of the mulatto bourgeois “socialist” enclave to which Alexander Blackman once belonged summon the latter, now a young sociologist, and demand he explain why he has stepped away from political activism. At the meeting, Blackman watches Lloyd, “a stocky, dark lecturer with malicious, intelligent black eyes,” tear into pieces “a copy of the latest issue of the [Jamaican] government’s five-year plan” to improve the post-independence economy (60). Decrying the government’s scandalous lack of “imagination,” Lloyd complains that this new plan means “[a] few more jobs for the boys,” “[a] few more housing estates for the civil servants,” “[a] few more palliatives for the slum districts,” and little else (61). When Blackman asks, “what else did you [Lloyd] expect?,” Edward, the group’s host and Blackman’s old friend from secondary school, grins sheepishly, threatens to expel Blackman from his home if he mocks the association (61). Raising his hand and “bowing his head in a gesture of moderation,” Lloyd urges the

group to “be calm and rational” and “organise,” claiming there is no place for “in-group fighting” at a time like this (61). Lloyd states that the group wants to know why Blackman has “opted out of the movement,” and also wants to “know where [Blackman] stand[s]” on regard to Jamaica’s social, cultural, political, and economic debacle five years after independence (62).

Blackman responds that he assumes no position. Lloyd then lectures the renegade gentleman about so-called “fundamentals,” “the people,” and “the workers,” where he claims “everything must start” (63). Lloyd harangues Blackman about Jamaica’s “situation,” despite the fact that Alex himself already knows about it on account of his upbringing, graduate studies in sociology, and the fieldwork he has done on behalf of the group (63). Jamaica, Lloyd argues, is neither a “rich” or “poor” country, yet has “adequate resources” to sustain its population (63). Even so, the newly independent nation still struggles with “vicious abstract poverty,” “[t]wenty per cent unemployment,” overcrowded “[s]lums” rife with “[d]egradation,” and “[d]emoralisation” caused by pervasive disenfranchisement and exorbitant crime rates (63). Having regaled Blackman with such knowledge, Lloyd gives him an ultimatum: “. . . you [Blackman] must either be a bourgeois or a capitalist committed to the *status quo*; or you must be against it . . .” (63). History, Lloyd claims, is relentless in its demand for action and commitment, whether in favor of “the people,” or in favor of their oppressors, a fact someone in Alex’s “position” always ought to remember:

I’m telling you [Blackman], man, you’re committed, whether you like it or not. [. . .]. You’re a black man; a Negro. And you live in a white world.
[. . .]. Uncle Sam’s breathing down our backside every moment.

Literally. [. . .]. The colonial past is still here in this country [Jamaica]. [. . .]. We are black men in a white civilisation and whether you like it or not you're committed to the freedom of your race . . . (64-5)

Lloyd then claims that since Jamaica is “[their] land,” the group has a duty to “save [it] from the neo-imperialists,” to save “[their] people” from “poverty” by mobilizing them into “action” against past and present colonial masters (65). Lloyd demands that the young sociologist explain “how in the name of God [Blackman could] remain uncommitted in a situation like this” (63). Alex retorts with a dismissive rhetorical question: ““What is there to be committed to?”” (63). Joyce, a fellow member, adds that it would be “more moral to be against [“the people”]” than to remain “indifferent” to their plight (64). If nothing else, assuming the former stance would allow the group to execute Alex along with other bourgeois capitalists “with an absolutely clear conscience,” a remark greeted by a “roar of laughter” from the audience (64).

Bored with Lloyd and the members’ trite speeches, Blackman begins his rebuttal. Alex claims he never left the group. He was allegedly “purged” because Lloyd and the others could not abide his dissent from their ideology and practice (62). Lloyd replies that “[n]obody purged you [Blackman]; we just didn’t see eye to eye on certain issues and gave you an ultimatum” (62). Nevertheless, the “embarrassed” Lloyd unwittingly proves there is at least some truth to Alex’s accusations, as evinced by the defensive stance he assumed when Alex reminded him and their audience of the “little disagreement” that led to such an impasse (62). Undeniably, Blackman sees through the group’s self-serving agenda. He argues that Lloyd and company have said nothing about “how [“the people”] felt about the matter,” only for Lloyd to cavalierly dismiss such

concerns as groundless, defeatist doubts of a potential traitor to the group's cause (64). Having warned Lloyd and company that such dismissal reeks of classist arrogance and willful ignorance, Blackman then argues that he has no right "to be responsible for other people" (64). Since it is "difficult enough being responsible for [him]self," he feels that making claims of "responsibility [for] a whole mass of people" whom he does not know or care about would be an act of "gross pretentiousness" on his part (64). Putting on an air of "heart-grinding concern," Lloyd asks "[his] brother" Alex what he really wants: "[n]othing that I know of," Blackman replies (64). Unimpressed by Lloyd's "great speech," Blackman makes his case:

I've told you [Lloyd] before, if I don't know what I want I at least know what I don't want. I don't want to be categorised. I don't want to be labelled and compartmentalised into little pigeonholes of abstractions, no matter how large, no matter how important they may seem. I don't want to spend my life *being* a Negro or being a Jamaican or being a socialist or a capitalist or what you like. [. . .]. I'm bored, absolutely bored with being things, with being abstractions. If you must know, I simply want to be me, to be what I am. And that alone takes a lifetime of knowing. And until I know that any attempt at being Jamaican or socialist or reactionary or Negro or what you like is just jumping the gun. As far as I'm concerned all I'd be then would be simply a model of paper labels which tears easily and is all hollow inside. (65; original emphasis)

These and similar incidents coincide with Patterson's criticism of ethnicity, group diversity, and "tolerance" in *Ethnic Chauvinism*. Being a cohesive, diverse group in post-

independence Jamaica, this socialist-leaning mulatto middle-class enclave allows its individual members little room for personal autonomy and dissent. This is demonstrated by Lloyd and company's inability and unwillingness to grant any validity to Blackman's objections, as well as their ostracism of the young gentleman as an unmanned, cowardly accomplice of Western dominance. Yet, for all their claims of fighting on behalf of the lower-classes, the group remains oblivious to the fact that their imagined political activism is actually of little use when it comes to easing the plight of poorer Jamaicans. Blinded by their own rhetoric and privileged positions as European-educated men, all derived from their "mullatness," Lloyd and company seldom define "the people" in anything other than abstract terms gleaned from socialist theory. Rather than critically reassess their epistemologies and explore in depth the variegated stances of opposition and resistance "the people" might adopt in the face of neocolonial domination, the pack takes it for granted that there exists a social group called "the people," which only they can truly know and define. Moreover, the group all but assumes that "the people" are a passive, i.e. "feminized" entity, hopelessly ignorant and impotent after centuries of subjugation and exploitation, and hence incapable of mobilizing politically without local mulatto bourgeois guidance and leadership. Patterson defines and portrays this category of post-independence "loudmouths" as the "rhetorical Left" (Scott 215). This group included European-educated groups and individuals who claimed to champion the people's causes through socialism, communism, and similar movements, but were not "serious analysts" of the historical "situation[s]" real-life people must contend with in postcolonial and neocolonial contexts (215). Similarly, Lloyd and his team disregard the opinions and experiences of "the people" whose cause they claim to champion. They

distance themselves from the people and reify them through abstract, restrictive, arbitrary, self-contradictory ideologies and practices derived from Westernized colonial and neocolonial racist, classist, and sexist epistemologies. Thus, Blackman's group is little different from former colonizers and their accomplices. Like the former, this "socialist" enclave also regards "native" masculinities as "inferior" and "deficient" by default, thereby constituting neo-colonized males into perennially infantile subhumans who cannot achieve "true" masculinity without mulatto middle-class male philanthropic, paternalistic, self-serving guidance.

As Blackman posits, he and his so-called friends are both victims and victimizers of the restricted "choice[s] which this blasted place [post-independence Jamaica]" offers, namely "self-imposed ignorance" and an abortive "confrontation with barrenness" (Patterson 57). Since most of them will never leave Jamaica, enclave members remain trapped in that "cult of insensitivity" that characterizes local middle-classes and the "smug," "ignorant," "insensitive and crude" upholders of its ideologies (57). Through their privileged social location, Blackman and his companions become complicit with Jamaica's neocolonial government and its detrimental policies. Like previous and subsequent Caribbean men and their progeny, this enclave sanctioned at a cultural level "[n]otions of political authority, economic power and domestic dominance as publicly presented by white elite masculinity" (Beckles 229). Nevertheless, the realities of life in English-dominated Caribbean plantation societies barred these subjugated men, slaves or otherwise, from experiencing "states of consciousness and experience" associated with practicing Eurocentric dominant masculinities (229). In Garth St. Omer's *A Room on the*

Hill, John Lestrade describes such people as colonized clowns chewing the cud of foreign-imposed ideologies, discourses, and practices (96).

During a noteworthy scene, Blackman regards Rastafarians as a group of “[“aloof”] older men with beards,” “tall [“half-naked”] black men,” easily recognizable through their distinctive “long, woolly braids of unkempt hair” and tattered clothes, the virtual opposite of that zeal for personal, even “racial,” hygiene practiced by many mulatto middle-class aspirant people (Patterson 97). Although these men are as much “[a] part of the horde[s]” of “screaming higglers,” “fat peasant women,” “[mulatto bourgeois] ladies of good breeding,” “reluctant housemaids,” and other social groups mingling in the marketplace, they keep themselves “away from it all,” remaining largely uninvolved in post-independence Jamaican society (96-7). Blackman also notes how the Rastafarians ceaselessly and reverently spoke of “another land called Ethiopia, that same place which the heathens called Africa,” as a promised land “where all was bliss and peace and love” and “the nastiness, the greed, the suffering, the cheap, maddening indignity of the marketplace” was abolished (97). Blackman marvels at the way these “wise men,” despite their disheveled appearance, “spoke with such reverence and good faith that their prophecies took on meaning beyond the mere utterance of their words,” taking on “meaning[s] of decency . . . pride regained, [and] deep conviction,” all of them reflected in the way the Rastafarians held themselves upright with a dignity that silently mocked” that “squalor,” “subservience,” and “displaced aggression” prevalent throughout the marketplace (97). Nevertheless, such an image becomes questionable when Blackman approaches one of the “cultists” and “ask[s] him with [so-called] humility what

was to be, what was to come” for unbelievers like himself (97). Drawing himself up “with great wrath,” the younger man does not mince his words:

‘Thou shall burn, Babylon; oh you son of Sodom; you who was mothered in whoredom and villainy; if you are against us then you shall surely suffer the dreadful fate of the oppressors. Your tongue shall be plucked out! You shall be made to thirst until the verge of death with a glass of cold lemonade dangling less than an inch from your lips. Then you shall be roasted slowly from the big toes upwards. There will be no mercy; no mercy whatever for the oppressors of the children of the black God, the children of slavery, the true Israelites!’ (97)

A nonplussed Blackman then “timidly” asks the young man if he is a “Jew” (97). The offended Rasta readies to unleash his “holy wrath” once more, but is interrupted by a “much older” Rastafarian, who commands his younger “brother” to “[h]old [his] tongue” in the name of “[p]eace an’ love” (97). Looking “straight at [Blackman],” as well as “into [him]” and “beyond [him]” with “large murky brown eyes,” the older man preaches that “[w]e are all Jews lost in the wilderness,” that according to what “the Word, which is the Truth,” said “unto I [him],” “we are all black men,” for “[i]n this world, in this life, every man is a Jew searching for his Zion,” and “every man is a black man lost in a white world of grief” (97-8). An unconvinced Blackman walks away, as lost and disoriented as when he first came in.

In *An Absence of Ruins*, Rastafarianism is presented as a Caribbean appropriation of variegated Christian and non-Christian beliefs and practices, modified according to the needs, desires, and intentions of its practitioners. More concretely, however, it entails an

ambiguous form of opposition as defined by Richard Burton in *Afro-Creole: Power, Opposition, and Play in the Caribbean*. Rastafarianism certainly enables its practitioners to oppose the neocolonial establishment and its accomplices, yet also “draw[s] the dominated,” willingly or otherwise, “further into the dominant group[s]’ worldview” (8). This occurs because dominant and dominated groups and institutions in the Caribbean engage one another in terms of power. According to Burton, power entails those “external sources” that have acted upon the Caribbean’s “evolution,” delineating the courses it has followed “from the beginning of European colonization” to the present day (9). This definition also embraces those “internal structures whereby . . . external power is transmitted and refracted” by Caribbean subjects as part of their “cultural responses to the experience of domination and disempowerment,” that is, to the extent such subjects act and are acted upon by the “external structures” and “internal operations” of power at different times, places, and contexts (9).

Blackman, the Rastafarians, and other characters mirror such dynamics of power in *An Absence of Ruins*. Patterson’s second novel portrays Rastafarians as a subversive group whose members assume marginalized masculinities predicated upon opposition and resistance to “Babylon,” that is, England, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, the United States, and other Western world powers that achieved hegemony through the seizure and colonization of others and the mass enslavement, kidnapping, and indentureship of colonized people. However, Rastafarian marginalized masculinity is called into question when the zealous “cultist” who threatened Blackman relapses into Western-derived binary ways of thinking and acting. Deeply indoctrinated by Rasta ideology, fueled by pent-up anger, resentment, and frustration, this young man falls into

fanaticism when he abandons friendly persuasion in favor of belligerent, Euro-Christian–inspired fire-and-brimstone rhetoric to cow Alex into submissive fear and trembling. If diasporic African-Caribbean people do not adhere to Rastafarianism (or rather, this young man’s version of it), then they will be fighting for colonial domination, and hence, will be in league with Babylon and its forces. As far as the “cultist” is concerned, Blackman’s mulatto bourgeois masculinity is predicated upon constant, incorrigible betrayal of “the children of the black God” to their Western oppressors. Having seen through Blackman’s façade of “humility” and “fear,” the Rastafarian intensifies his attack on the local middle-class, a privileged group he deems complicit with neocolonial domination and, therefore, responsible for his own poverty and severance from “Mother Africa.” For all his claims of opposing Babylon, the enraged young Rastafarian proves to be just as intolerant and authoritarian in his views as those he denounces as “agents” of Babylon. While the Rasta erects his position on a shaky Afrocentric cultural, spiritual, and patriarchal scaffold, his incendiary rhetoric unwittingly sabotages his group’s cause and masculinity stylings, prompting an older, more experienced, and levelheaded man to forestall any further embarrassment caused by the young man’s imprudence and overzealousness.

Taken together, the ways Rastafarians are portrayed in *The Children of Sisyphus* and *An Absence of Ruins* seem to suggest Patterson’s antagonism, even contempt, toward Rastafarianism, Garveyism, and similar political movements in the insular and diasporic Caribbean. However, as Jeremy Poynting warns in the “Introduction” to the 2012 Peepal Tree edition of *An Absence of Ruins*, readers and critics should not assume that such instances are clear, unambiguous disclosures of Patterson’s biography, personal opinions, or political stances. *Absence* prompts readers and critics to question “how attentively”

they approach and contest their own “assumptions” whenever they engage works of fiction and nonfiction from specific biographical contexts marked by colonialism and its aftermath, as well as sex, gender, class, race, and other no less crucial considerations (8). As Poynting posits, Patterson’s second novel is “a politically engaged” and “aesthetically daring” work that makes “fundamental criticism[s] of the whole direction of the West Indian novel” at the time and since (6). The novel critiqued “manifestos of [West Indian] peasant authenticity” and similar “calls for an explicitly Caribbean nativist aesthetic” found in George Lamming’s *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960) and other such works, dismissing them as “symptom[s] of the anxieties of middle-class cultural nationalism” undergirded by colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial masculinisms and practices inherited from slavery and Emancipation (5-6). As such, the novel “satiris[es] the [mulatto middle-]class position of the West Indian writer,” playfully “ironis[es]” the latter’s “inescapabl[e]” belonging to that class, and parodies “the very texture, aesthetics and angle of vision” of the West Indian novel itself (8).

Concomitantly, the novel also “critically engag[es]” contemporary Caribbean debates about “African origins and survivals” and “racial essentialism[s],” and questions what sort of relationship Caribbean people have on regards “to the region’s history” of colonial domination and anticolonial struggle (8). Patterson’s novels detail the agency and creativity of subordinated communities at various times in Jamaica’s history: from slavery to emancipation, colonization to independence, and currently, the struggle against neocolonialism. Thus, even as Patterson in both *Sisyphus* and *Absence* severely critiques and seems to denounce Rastafarianism and similar anticolonial movements in the Caribbean, he nonetheless also demonstrates how such movements could be read as being

crucial to resistance movements and ideologies against Eurocentric dominance and its emasculation of Caribbean masculinity in all areas of Caribbean men's lives. Hence, Patterson's position runs contrary to Udofia's assertion that Garvey's "return to Africa" was both a philosophy of physical relocation and an intellectual, spiritual retrieval of Caribbean peoples' conflicted identities as diasporic Africans (157). Combined with their appropriation of Biblical prophecies, Rastafarians sought to retrieve African histories and cultural spirituality, which were and are powerful catalysts for social change in Jamaica and other African diaspora communities. Rastafarian rhetoric and countercultural practices became so prominent in Jamaica that the mere presence of its practitioners caused great apprehension in the Jamaican political establishment. Therefore, the political class frequently met this perceived threat with violent repression. Yet like the political elites he so severely denounces, Patterson never regarded Rastafarian ideology and practices as the "essence" of "authentic" Caribbean identity and belonging, even if they provided illusion of empowerment through persuasive arguments. Patterson's cynical position vis-à-vis Rastafarianism and other re-imagined or recuperated African-derived Caribbean cultures is designed to caution against any unreflecting privileging of select Caribbean discourses and practices above others, which can generate cultural misrepresentation, underrepresentation, and/or overrepresentation. Patterson's fiction calls attention to the limited effectiveness of Caribbean cultural movements, including Rastafarianism, in combating colonial domination, without denying the validity of claims that Caribbean culture is a synthesis of African, European, and Asian cultural fragments and remnants.

Furthermore, unlike previous Caribbean novels, *An Absence of Ruins* does not lionize the Caribbean peasantry as the essence of what a truly autochthonous Caribbean people ought to be. While Patterson's second novel certainly criticizes island-bound Caribbean mulatto bourgeoisies at the time, it does not vilify them as inherently antithetical to any "authentic" West Indian essence. Even so, *Absence* castigated the Jamaican "middle-class-led post-independence governments from 1962 to 1967," deriding their "coloniality," "social conservatism," allegiance to post-Emancipation plantocratic regimes, and proclivity to neglect economic development for the benefit of groups other than local mulatto bourgeoisies (Poynting 6-7). The novel also ridiculed the leftist New World Group and other contemporary Jamaican bourgeois "radical intellectuals" as "armchair socialists who lacked contact with the working class," similar to the socialist-leaning mulatto bourgeois enclave that "purged" Alex Blackman from its ranks (7). Though these "colonially educated elite[s]" were "vocally committed to radical change," they remained blind to their "class position," removed from the lives and experiences of the Jamaican masses, believing themselves entitled to lead the latter by virtue of their privileged social status and education (7).

Patterson's unabashed rejection of the neocolonial positions of his contemporaries created an ideological wedge between him and the intellectual and literary heavyweights at the time. Analogous to the marginalization of Garth St. Omer's *A Room on the Hill* and *Shades of Grey* (1968), *Nor Any Country* (1969), and *J-, Black Bam and the Masqueraders* (1972), Patterson's *The Children of Sisyphus*, *An Absence of Ruins*, and *Die the Long Day* have been neglected in academic studies. These novels are often dismissed as too "negative," "nihilistic," and insufficiently "West Indian" by Caribbean

scholars (5). Patterson also drew inspiration from the French Existentialists to call attention to the continuing plight of colonized peoples despite independence. However, by inserting *Absence* into a “European aesthetic” influenced by writers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Frantz Fanon, Patterson unwittingly put his work in a limbo and further complicated readership and literary appraisals from both Europe and the Caribbean (6).

Jack Reynolds and Patrick Stokes attest to this in “Existentialist Methodology and Perspective: Writing the First Person.” Existentialism, they write, focuses primarily upon “[thinking subjects’] first-personal lived experience of the world,” and therefore entails a commitment to individual “lived experience as some sort of given that might be accessed either introspectively or retrospectively” from the thinking subject’s own first-person narrative perspective, rather than being “described from the outside or a third-person perspective” (317). Thus understood, Existentialism can elicit “transformative experiences” in individuals, prompting them to “revise [their] inter-connected web of beliefs” and hopefully modify the manifold ways such beliefs affect their own worldviews and behavior in connection with others (318). By “constantly refer[ring] the philosophizing subject back to their [sociocultural, political and economic] emplacement,” Existentialism situates the subject’s “first-personal givenness of experience” within “a sense of the subject as a concrete, historically, and morally situated being” whose “very existence presents itself as a *problem* and *task* for *the subject herself*,” being “(re)constructed by that philosophy” to the extent the subject philosophizes his own life and experiences from an ongoing and constant “web of beliefs,” within which revisions are enabled toward an ameliorative transformation (319).

Regardless, Patterson is no servile imitator of Sartre, Camus, and similar authors. To dismiss his fiction as mere Caribbean adaptations of French Existentialist works is just as erroneous as assuming that Patterson's characters are straightforward mouthpieces for his ideals and opinions. Through Alex Blackman and other characters, Patterson calls into question those essentialist ways of thinking and doing that compelled previous mulatto middle-class male Caribbean writers to romanticize the peasantry as representatives of "authentic" Caribbeanness, while excoriating their own class for its complicity with colonial and later neo/postcolonial regimes. Rather than unambiguously endorse or condemn specific behaviors and beliefs, *Absence* compels readers and critics to approach its plot and characters from their own specific stances as socially acting/acted upon men and women, situated in specific historical contexts informed by contradictory, yet intersecting, notions of race, class, sex, and gender. Patterson is critical of French Existentialism and other Eurocentric discourses for the same reason he is so ambivalent toward Jamaican post-independence mulatto bourgeois-led governments and ideologies. His fiction and nonfiction emphasize the historicity of human needs, desires, intentions, and agencies. Just as individuals and their actions should not be separated from their social, cultural, historical, political, and economic contexts, discourses and practices, Eurocentric or otherwise, are no less bound to temporality, contingency, and necessity. Thus, Patterson critiques the greatest flaws of French Existentialism and similar ideologies, calling attention to the ways such ideologies depart from implicitly assumed Eurocentric stances that seldom pay attention to non-European social groups and contexts, and likewise rarely move beyond European middle-class anxieties and concerns.

Taken together, Patterson's fiction problematizes conventional wisdom regarding Caribbean political underperformances signified through representations of failed masculinity, or suspect masculinities. Like St. Omer and James, but each in a different way and from a different trajectory, he upends and deflates the bloated egos of post-independence Caribbean middle-class men and political classes. Thirty-one years earlier, C.L.R. James made similar denouncements in *Minty Alley*. Equality with whites and political autonomy remained as elusive in 1920s Trinidad as in the years following Emancipation. Rather than liberate future West Indian gentlemen like Haynes, colonial education subjected them to Eurocentric political regimes and value systems that taught them contempt for their people, culture, and language, schooling them into liminal roles as mediators between the colonial government and the uneducated, largely impoverished masses. Their options circumscribed by contradictory, yet intersecting notions of reputation and respectability, Caribbean men were compelled to perform Eurocentric hegemonic masculinity by assuming "universal" male roles, such as head of the nuclear family and breadwinner. At the same time, many Caribbean men, including Benoit, styled their masculinities as competition with other men, engaging in promiscuous behavior, predatory, even criminal conduct, and shrewd subversion of customary divisions between the "private" realm of the household and the "public" realm of the streets. Irrespective of allegiances or preferences, Caribbean males were largely disqualified from reaping the rewards of such masculinities because of their colonized state, which urged them to accede to Eurocentric hegemonic ideals while simultaneously sabotaging such endeavors. Since Caribbean gentlemen were seldom entrusted with roles of political leadership, many mulatto middle-class males became little more than

relatively privileged subalterns, glorified lackeys ill-suited for their self-proclaimed roles as guides and leaders of the West Indian masses.

Such despair and disillusionment reached its peak in Garth St. Omer's fiction, particularly in *A Room on the Hill*, *Shades of Grey*, *Nor Any Country*, and *J-, Black Bam and the Masqueraders*. A century after Emancipation, descendants of former slaves were no closer to achieving its promises than their forebears. Dominated by the joint regime of the British Crown Colony system and the French-controlled Catholic Church, Omerian characters, including John Lestrade and friends, had to contend with few available venues for aspiring mulatto middle-class gentlemen in 1950s St. Lucia. Furthermore, stifling compliance with Euro-Christian mores and rules of conduct could prove as detrimental for Caribbean subjects as their defiance, as exemplified by the Breville brothers. Their lives circumscribed by a racist, sexist, classist colonial regime predicated on socially-enforced vicious cycles of sin, guilt, and punishment, prospective Caribbean gentlemen sojourned abroad to become lawyers, doctors, engineers, or civil servants, then returned to assume their "rightful" place as mulatto bourgeois men. Since their education allowed few other options, deviating from such narrow parameters could unman prospective gentlemen, as it happened to Dennys. Lastly, Lestrade's resentment against his absentee, abusive father, unresolved grief and guilt over the deaths of his mother Lena and friend Stephen exacerbate his unmanned state, as he becomes caught up in a downward spiral of depression fueled by alcohol abuse, promiscuity, and other potentially self-destructive behaviors deemed "unworthy" of so-called true men.

Although many Caribbean nations achieved independence during the 1960s and beyond, the event had little impact in peoples' lives by the time Orlando Patterson

published *The Children of Sisyphus*, *An Absence of Ruins*, and *Die the Long Day*. In theory, independence meant that Jamaica and other former British colonies in the Caribbean would become self-governing nation-States, politically autonomous vis-à-vis England and other European powers. In practice, however, the emerging nations were independent in name only. Since their largely plantocratic economies still depended on tourism, foreign investment, and increasing Euro-American monopolization, these so-called nations had little to no control over their respective means of production, let alone matters of policy. Consequently, the fact of independence seldom amounted to anything other than a distinction without difference in the lives of most Caribbean people.

Patterson's *An Absence of Ruins* echoes such circumstances, as it illustrates widespread disillusionment and turmoil in the years following the dissolution of the West Indian Federation and Jamaica's declaration of independence. Seemingly unable and unwilling to assume responsibility for himself as a postcolonial mulatto middle-class man, Alexander Blackman alienates his friends and family, particularly his mother Rebecca and former wife Pauline. Though the young sociologist is acutely aware that he and his "armchair socialist" friends are unqualified to fulfill their self-appointed mission of leading and representing "the people," Alex himself fares little better, as his deleterious choices result in his mother's death and his subsequent return to England in disgrace.

C.L.R. James's *Minty Alley*, Garth St. Omer's *A Room on the Hill*, and Orlando Patterson's *An Absence of Ruins* assess and critique Caribbean masculinities from unique vantage points of 1920s colonial Trinidad, 1950s colonial St. Lucia, and late-1960s post-independence Jamaica. Though set in different epochs and geopolitical contexts, these novels engage similar topics. They denounce the limited, reductive options available for

the construction of Caribbean masculinities. Colonized or otherwise, Caribbean men cannot accede to dominant Eurocentric masculinity ideals because they are unmanned by their colonized condition, an abject state predicated on social, cultural, political, and economic subjugation to current or former European powers. While Western-derived standards of dominant masculinity require men to assume political leadership roles in the public and private spheres, Caribbean men are educated and socialized into perennial dependence and subservience. Furthermore, these complicit, subordinate masculinities emulate masculinist behaviors that perpetuate the oppression of women and the majority of disempowered, disenfranchised men, such as monopolistic control of women's labor and sexuality. Such discourses and practices also heterosexualize as "normal" and "normative," and thereby sideline homosexuality, bisexuality, and other forms of gendered commitment as deviances to be policed, contained, corrected and, if necessary, eradicated through extralegal violence.

Nevertheless, like societies themselves, masculinity and femininity are not static entities, impervious to negotiation or change. Oppressor and oppressed alike continually engage themselves and one another through dynamic, ever-shifting discourses and practices of opposition and resistance. Just as oppressors keep refining their venues and effects of sovereign and disciplinary power, the oppressed persist in ideating new oppositional stances and stylings of resistance. While such acts cannot completely liberate subjects, let alone abolish colonialism, plantocracies, and their aftermath, they can afford their practitioners materials for constructing adaptive versions of what it means to be a man or woman in a specific geopolitical context at a specific time and place. Conflict and inequality might not disappear completely, yet subjects can engage

them in newer, potentially less oppressive ways. Slaves need not wear chains indefinitely, and masters need not perpetuate unmanning cycles of legal and extralegal violence.

Conclusion: The Rise and Fall of Caribbean Gentlemen

What are men? Children who doubt.

Derek Walcott, *Odyssey: A Stage Version* (1993).

In this study, I have presented evidence to show how C.L.R. James's *Minty Alley* (1936), Garth St. Omer's *A Room on the Hill* (1968), and Orlando Patterson's *An Absence of Ruins* (1967), draw links between the pervasive anxieties of Caribbean males regarding their masculinity in relation to issues of economic power, political autonomy, nationhood, etc. I build my arguments on several social, psychological, political, cultural, and religious paradigms. Antonio Gramsci's definition of "hegemony" provided me with a useful analytic tool to explore the notions of cultural, economic, political, sexual, and racial dominance that these writers critique. Hegemonic norms discredit dissent, seeing it as deviance, and noncompliance as "uncivilized," "savage," "unnatural," "abnormal," etc., hence a threat to society. In turn, such "threats" require the use of violence and other legal and extralegal sanctions to bring them to order.

However, as I contended, the Gramscian argument that hegemony predicates power on the manufacturing of consensus regarding cultural mores and practices fails to recognize that such consensus is always difficult to achieve, and still more difficult to attain in the complicated culturescapes of the Caribbean. This is borne out by the fact that as dominant groups, individuals, and institutions ideate newer means to control subordinated groups and individuals, dominated groups and individuals counter-engage in continuous acts of resistance against their domination by reconstituting the ruling classes' institutions, discourses, and practices to construct and protect their own modes of

existence. One of the areas of such conflicting ideologies is in masculine gender/sex identities and performances.

R.W. Connell's definitions of "gender," "masculinity," and "femininity" provided excellent trajectories for my discussion of Caribbean masculinities in *Minty Alley, Room, and Absence*. In *Masculinities*, Connell states that gender entails "social practice(s)" structured and performed in relation to sexed (male and female) bodies and their fields of activity. Therefore, masculinity and femininity constitute systematic relationships and processes through which men and women conduct their lives as gendered social subjects. Furthermore, according to Messerschmidt and Connell, hegemonic masculinity consists of those ways of embodying/performing masculinity which are honored above all others in a given society at a particular time and place. It comprises "pattern[s] of practice" that sustain men's general domination over women and seek to legitimize the former's claims of dominance over "other masculinities." Those constructs of gender performance deemed deserving of honor and imitation become hegemonic and normative across geographies, cultures, races, classes, and sexes.

Hegemonic masculinity performances thus encompass a wide gamut of discourses, practices, and stylings presented as common knowledge, self-evident, "universal," and "normative," irrespective of the various overlapping and contradictory notions of what it means to be a man which circulate in West Indian societies at any given time. As I showed, Arthur Brittan's arguments in *Masculinity and Power* (1989) position that these dominant discourses and practices of male gender construction often blur crucial distinctions between "masculinity," "masculinism," and other related terms. Like Brittan, my position contended that while "masculinity" comprises adaptable,

negotiable stylings and practices pertaining to men's actions and self-representation in relation to women and other men, "masculinism" privileges a select group of men above women, children, and the majority of dominated men, appealing to nature and biology to legitimize certain ways of being a man while marginalizing others.

My study of these texts exposes these slippery positions that conflate masculinity and masculinism. I showed how hegemonic masculinity divided Caribbean socialization practices and labor along rigid racist, classist, and sexist hierarchies of performance in James's, St. Omer's, and Patterson's novels. I reviewed how *Minty Alley*, *Room*, and *Absence* detail how hegemonic masculine ideology favors socially dominant men over other men, women, and children. Similar to what occurs in real life, several male individuals and groups in these novels use their privileged racial, economic, and political positions as license to fulfill personal goals to the detriment of national goals.

Thus, I showed how Eurocentric ideologies of dominance in all areas of life of Caribbean people facilitated the successful imposition of Eurocentric worldviews, aesthetic standards, and moral values. As my reading of the novels demonstrates, this and other racist discourses and practices in Caribbean societies discussed by Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, and other cultural theorists created an illusion that everything European is "universal," "timeless," "natural," "normal," "normative," "necessary," "inevitable," and therefore desirable, but only attainable by European whites, whereas others can only imitate.

In this study, I have presented evidence that as creative writers and cultural theorists, James, St. Omer, and Patterson deviated from their predecessors, such as Claude McKay in *Home to Harlem* (1928), *Banjo* (1929), and *Banana Bottom* (1933),

Merle Hodge's *Crick Crack, Monkey* (1970) and *For the Life of Laetitia* (1993), Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1979), *The Wine of Astonishment* (1983), etc., in the latter's romanticized representations of Caribbean peasants as custodians and disseminators of real Caribbean culture. The predecessors and successors of James, St. Omer, and Patterson lionized the peasantry as upholders of what they conceived of as truly and essentially "West Indian," i.e., not corrupted by racist European cultural indoctrination during and after plantation slavery and political colonization. These writers therefore regarded the peasantry as a bastion of resistance against European colonial cultural ideologies, including masculinity performances in both the public and private arenas, where reputation and respectability were used as yardstick. Such glorifications of peasant simplicity, honesty, humility, and fearlessness were held as the best reflection of Caribbean culture, thereby disparaging and sidelining any reference to European-educated, mulatto middle-class imitations of European cultural and gender practices.

However, as I have shown throughout the dissertation, James in *Minty Alley*, St. Omer in *A Room on the Hill*, and Patterson in *An Absence of Ruins* reject this lofty representation of the peasant, especially in relation to how their male characters reflect Caribbean masculinity. Additionally, I showcase how James, St. Omer, and Patterson do not reduce the West Indian peasantry and proletariat to caricatured, amorphous, abstractly defined groups deemed to embody/practice true "West Indianness" due to their retention of West African, East Asian, and other non-European cultural practices from the times of slavery to date. Conversely, these writers also broke away from the accompanying

tendency of disparaging local mulatto middle-classes as inimical to “real” West Indianness, yet at the same time denounced their complicity with the colonial *statu quo*.

As I demonstrated, Caribbean mulatto bourgeoisies were created to mediate between colonial governments, metropolitan representatives, and the unlettered, impoverished masses of predominantly West African, South East Asian, and Euro-Creole descent. Because of this, the relative wealth and privilege of its members stemmed from their positions as Euro-educated professionals (doctors, lawyers, civil servants, etc.), all essential for enabling environments and factors that legitimized and perpetuated colonial domination. These illusory measures of social respectability were hence predicated upon mulatto middle-class allegiance to colonial governments, as well as their endorsement of European interests and values at the expense of Caribbean ones. Caribbean writers and theorists thus exposed and challenged the educational system that promoted dominant racist, classist, and sexist discourses and practices that presented Europeanness as superior and normative, in opposition to other non-European Caribbean traditions.

Accordingly, I posited that *Minty Alley*, *A Room on the Hill*, and *An Absence of Ruins* critique Caribbean mulatto bourgeois masculinity constructs in geopolitical contexts marked by colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial domination. I maintained that while there are several texts and studies dealing with working-class Caribbean masculinities, the topic of Caribbean middle-class masculinities has remained largely unexplored for most telling reasons. First, writers and cultural theorists have chiefly focused on retentions of West African and East Indian cultural practices pertaining to dominant, complicit, and marginalized masculinity performances. Second, while promoting the peasantry as the ideal carriers of “authentic” Caribbean culture, these

writers conversely vilified Caribbean mulatto middle-classes as shameless accomplices of European colonial domination and traitors to their own people.

Nevertheless, I demonstrated as well that while members of Caribbean mulatto bourgeoisies, particularly males, certainly benefited from their investment in the colonial regime, some of them appropriated its lessons for their own agendas. At the dawn of the twentieth century, several West Indian writers and cultural theorists argued that Caribbean men could become English-style gentlemen through education. During this time, several West Indian writers and theorists reformulated Caribbean masculinity as the exercise of political autonomy, self-determination, freedom, nationhood, and other cherished ideals. They also posited that education and other ancillary privileges qualified mulatto middle-class males to lead their burgeoning Caribbean island societies and their peoples, who, they argued, required their guidance to surmount the region's legacy of slavery, colonialism, and violence. In turn, West Indian peoples would demonstrate their attainment of civilization in the Eurocentric sense of the word by submitting to these leaders. Once its colonies reached mature "adulthood" from their former puerility, the "benevolent" "Fatherland" would allow them to self-govern under their supervision to further guide them toward greater maturity in their cultural, economic, and political conducts.

Nevertheless, I further argued that by conflating masculinity with political power, West Indian writers and cultural theorists marginalized and subordinated femininity and non-hegemonic masculinities. Consequently, the labor and sexuality of women and men who fell short of dominant masculinity standards were thus excluded from nation-building projects, as well as exploited without thought of consequence. I next posited

that such conceptualizations were not unanimously agreed upon. Trade unions, Christian denominations, and other interest groups vied for masculinity and power, yet seldom concurred on what such terms meant for them, let alone their goals. Just as different groups and persons provided disparate definitions of autonomy, self-determination, federation, self-governance, etc., so there were several different notions of what constituted true masculinity and how best to achieve it. Like the socialist-leaning mulatto bourgeois enclave that allegedly purged Alex Blackman from its ranks in *An Absence of Ruins*, such groups and individuals often claimed to pursue the same goals as all other West Indians, yet in practice such consensus proved to be tentative and ineffectual at best, and illusory and self-serving at worst.

Since Caribbean men were socialized into revering and pursuing Eurocentric notions of masculinity, nationhood, autonomy, and self-governance based on racist, classist, and sexist gendered identities and knowledge-making, their colonized states made it difficult, if not impossible, for them to succeed. Eurocentric hegemonic masculinity emphasized self-government and political leadership as key attributes of “true” manhood, yet colonial, postindependence, and neocolonial regimes short-circuited the aspirations of James’s, St. Omer’s, and Patterson’s protagonists to rise to the standards set by the colonizers. The first obstacle was the steep bar set for educational achievement, not often required for natives of Europe. Caribbean men aspiring to become worthy of English-style masculinity had to (and still have to) meet very steep requirements of Eurocentric educational levels. However, the scarcity of educational resources placed African-Caribbean men at a great disadvantage against white metropolitan, Euro-Creole, and lighter-skinned mulatto middle-class males. In addition,

even after achieving near-impossible educational qualifications, these African-Caribbean men had to vie for relatively scarce, well-remunerated, socially prestigious jobs, particularly in medicine, law, teaching, and other disciplines, within a racist and racialized job market. For aspiring Caribbean gentlemen, the pursuit of higher education often entailed erasure of their islands' history, estrangement from their families and communities of origin, training for self-centeredness, and accumulation of wealth at the expense of their communities.

As I have stated throughout this dissertation, James, St. Omer, Patterson, Frantz Fanon, Walter Rodney, and other West Indian writers and theorists saw through this paternalistic discourse and undisguised neo-colonialism. They denounced the colonial regime for its deliberate frustration of the move toward “maturation” through policies that create, promote, and perpetuate states of economic dependency and subordination. Shortly after, the collapse of the West Indian Federation (1962) spelt the gradual collapse of colonial control over Anglophone Caribbean islands.

As I argue throughout the study, James, St. Omer, and Patterson uncannily constructed and promoted traditional heterosexual male behaviors and occupations as superordinate masculine characteristics, whereas behaviors or occupations that do not fit these parameters are “feminized” and labeled suspect or subordinate masculinities. Paradoxically, while the authors evaluate and critique essentialist constructions of Caribbean masculinity performances, their fiction subscribes to heterosexist paradigms of Caribbean masculinity, and therefore falls into the trap and fallacy of presenting James's, St. Omer's, and Patterson's vision of masculinity performance within heterosexist norms. Their narratives marginalize and punish alternative masculinities, including homosexual,

bisexual, and transgender males, by acts of erasure. Nevertheless, I also posited that despite their heterosexist bias, James, St. Omer, and Patterson deploy legal, religious, and cultural tropes to denounce how so-called true Caribbean hegemonic masculinity endorses and enforces homophobia, and in the process unmans and erases the presence and agency of non-heterosexual males from their narratives.

Keeping such historical contexts in mind, I established through the dissertation that James, St. Omer, and Patterson were informed and guided by their mulatto middle-class upbringing at specific times, places, and circumstances. These authors formulated their critiques of the destructive tendencies of Caribbean males by revealing how such tendencies were both cause and effect of thoughtless imitations of toxic, hegemonic, exploitative Eurocentric masculinities. To underpin their arguments, James, St. Omer, Patterson, Fanon, Rodney, and other Caribbean cultural theorists trace the origins of such destructive masculinities to the political, cultural, social, racial, and economic histories of European plantation slave economies and colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial domination by Europe and North America.

Having applied such parameters to the social, cultural, political, and economic contexts of 1920s Trinidad, 1950s St. Lucia, and late-1960s post-independence Jamaica, I argued that Caribbean males, especially from the mulatto middle-classes, risk being unmanned. As asserted above, Caribbean mulatto middle-class men are also social subjects who act and are acted upon through variegated, often contradictory prisms of race, class, sex, and gender. Reared in colonized spaces of racism, classism, and sexism, Caribbean men have to construct and negotiate their gendered identities under specific social, cultural, political, and economic constraints, as well as Eurocentric paradigms

which often prove detrimental to the achievement of “true” masculinity. Such paradigms privilege “masculinity” over “femininity,” “whiteness” over “mullatness” and “blackness,” “reason” over “folly,” scientific “objectivity” over non-scientific “subjectivity,” “Englishness” over African-Creole, Asian-Creole, European-Creole, and non-Anglo Saxon European descent, Euro-Christianity over non-European versions of Christianity and non-Christian religions, etc. *Minty Alley*, *A Room on the Hill*, and *An Absence of Ruins* therefore feature Caribbean middle and working-class male protagonists who aspire to Eurocentric hegemonic masculinity, but ultimately come up short for various reasons.

Set in 1920s Trinidad at a time of crisis for the British Crown Colony system, James’s *Minty Alley* critiques colonial masculinities through the characters of Haynes and Benoit. Haynes’s desire for mulatto middle-class male respectability is based on the flawed assumption that his privileged bourgeois economic status, enhanced by bi-racial heritage and English-style education, should entitle him to a certain degree of power and control over the lives, work, bodies, and sexuality of women, particularly Maisie. While his repressive mulatto bourgeois upbringing under his strict mother certainly played a part in the subsequent debacle, Haynes himself remains oblivious to the source of his power and privilege, and thus consistently fails to reassess what he thinks he knows about the world around him, his neighbors, his society, and himself. While Haynes’s socialization into hegemonic-aspirant colonial masculinity makes him more assertive in his self-serving dealings (sexual or otherwise) with social subordinates and superiors, this assertiveness does not grant the young man “real” masculine power. Undermined by glaring incompetence and guilelessness, Haynes’s leadership does little to improve the

lives of his co-tenants. When the community disperses, the young man has little choice but to return to his mother's house and resume his life as an inchoate gentleman, utterly unsuited to assume his "destined" role as a mulatto bourgeois leader and guide of the Trinidadian people.

Like Haynes, Benoit predicates "true" masculinity upon women's subordination to men, monopolizing their sexuality, benefitting from their unpaid labor, and pursuing wealth, pleasure, and enjoyment at their expense. Nevertheless, while Benoit's reputation-based masculinity grants him freedom and pleasures inaccessible to the passive Haynes, the badjohn's utter disloyalty to anyone other than himself coalesces with his *douglah* heritage, as well as his emulation of promiscuity, sexual aggressiveness, and other practices that erode his masculinity and ultimately destroy his life. Similar to Haynes, Benoit becomes unmanned when he proves incapable of controlling the women in his life and the community at the barrackyard no longer ratifies his masculinity constructs.

Set in 1950s St. Lucia, a former British Crown Colony culturally dominated by the French-controlled Catholic Church, St. Omer's *A Room on the Hill* chronicles John Lestrade's life as a mulatto bourgeois male. Whereas James presented English-style hegemonic masculinity and its bounties of political leadership and autonomy as the arrival into manhood, freedom, wealth, and power for Caribbean males and nations, St. Omer critiqued such aspirations as groundless wishful thinking. Similar to their upper and lower-class counterparts, Lestrade and other Caribbean mulatto middle-class males were socialized into oppressive versions of masculinity predicated upon contradictory, albeit overlapping reputation and respectability continuums. Like other St. Lucian

mulatto middle-class males, Lestrade and company aspire to climb their island's social ladder by meeting the requirements of mulatto middle-class respectability. Consonant with reputation-based masculinity practices, these so-called gentlemen also have multiple sexual partners other than their wives, sire illegitimate children through clandestine unions, then disavow their lovers and offspring to avoid reprisals from the Church and colonial society at large. Unable to come to terms with his illegitimacy, his father's abuses, his conflicted feelings toward his mother, and his guilt over Stephen's death, John Lestrade abandons his quest for mulatto bourgeois masculinity and respectability. Rather than become a "real" man by taking control of his own life and destiny, Lestrade allows himself to "drift" aimlessly, and is thus disqualified as a man by relinquishing all agency and responsibility over himself.

Lastly, Patterson's *An Absence of Ruins* takes place in late-1960s post-independence Jamaica. Unlike Haynes and Lestrade, Alex Blackman has returned home "qualified" years after migrating to England to study sociology, and thus seems ready to assume his "rightful" role as a postcolonial Jamaican mulatto bourgeois leader. Regardless, Blackman's subsequent decisions all but nullify this achievement. Alex's selfishness and callousness estrange him from his former wife Pauline, whom he has come to despise due to the "emasculating" guilt she makes him feel. Furthermore, Alex takes his mother Rebecca for granted, downplays all the sacrifices she has made for his sake, and unwittingly causes her death after his faked suicide goes awry. Blackman thus proves unworthy of respectability-based mulatto middle-class masculinity because his selfishness, indifference, and callousness are unbecoming of what Jamaican society expects of good children and prospective hegemonic males.

My dissertation contests customarily held notions regarding the canon of the West Indian novel. By examining the lesser-known corpus of fiction of two canonical West Indian authors better known for their cultural theory and criticism (James, Patterson) in connection with the work of a virtually unknown West Indian novelist (St. Omer), this study explores largely neglected topics within the field of Caribbean masculinity studies. Finally, its focus on a customarily maligned and neglected social group (Caribbean mulatto middle-classes) seeks to correct deeply ingrained tendencies to reduce West Indian histories of opposition and resistance to Western rule to the experiences of Afro-Creole, Asian-Creole, and Euro-Creole working-class individuals and groups, further enriching our received knowledge of Caribbean masculinities.

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