

Black Gay Male Identity in the African Diaspora

Johnny Marcell Wilkins

A thesis submitted to the School of English at the University of Dublin,
Trinity College, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy.

September 2018

Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work.

I agree to deposit this thesis in the University's open-access institutional repository or allow the library to do so on my behalf, subject to Irish Copyright Legislation and Trinity College Library conditions of use and acknowledgement.

Johnny Marcell Wilkins

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I thank God for giving me the strength to complete this doctoral thesis.

I am indebted to Dr. Melanie Otto, my supervisor. Without her rigorous criticism of my work at every stage, this research would not have been. At different stages, Melanie's mentorship took different forms—including intellectual guidance, wise counsel, patience, and enthusiasm—and I am enormously grateful to her for all of them.

I also acknowledge the faculty in the School of English for their support of my research. In particular, when this work was in its early stages, Dr. David O'Shaughnessy and Dr. Phillip Coleman were attentive readers to whom I am grateful for their insightful comments and suggestions. Dr. Sara Smyth and Dr. Caitríona Leahy encouraged my research throughout my time at Trinity. I also wish to acknowledge Dr. Paul Delaney and Helen Thornbury for their support and guidance.

Without the camaraderie of Dr. Nadia Bobbio, Michael O'Keefe, Raymond Culbraith, and Kevin Cummins this certainly would have been a very different, and much less fun, journey. Importantly, without the support of my family this work would not have been possible. My mother, Marjean Wilkins, whose courage and sense of adventure sparked my interest in travel and literature. I am also deeply grateful for my brother Troy Wilkins who has been ceaselessly encouraging and supportive of my work.

Table of Contents

Declaration	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
Introduction	5
Chapter 1 Close Readings of Black Gay Male Characterizations	8
Chapter 2 Battyman Labrish: One of the Many True Properties of the Cotta.....	53
Chapter 3 The Touching of Totees	103
Chapter 4 Call Me Kuchu: Gay Black Men in <i>Walking with Shadows</i> and <i>The Hairdresser of Harare</i>	150
Conclusion.....	185
Bibliography	191

Introduction

Beginning in the mid-1980s, a group of writers and filmmakers produced films, poetry, and prose that openly described the complex overlapping of black and queer identities. These artists—including Essex Hemphill, Joseph F. Beam, Marlon Riggs, Isaac Julien, and Assotto Saint—created works that provided positive affirmations of black gay men. They imagined and represented whole lives for black gay men in their birth communities that would have previously been impossible.

In works such as *In the Life* (1986), *Tongues Untied* (1989), *Looking for Langston* (1989), *Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men* (1991), *Ceremonies: Prose and Poetry* (1992), and *Black is...Black Ain't* (1992), they imagined what it is like for black men to express love, sexually and emotionally, for one another. What is most remarkable about this new expression of imagination is that these works were explicit in their descriptions of black gay male sexuality and that these new descriptions called for a new definition of black identity that includes same-sex loving men.

Interestingly, Assotto Saint's poems, fiction, and essays compiled in *Spells of a Voodoo Doll* (1996) conjure descriptions of a black gay male identity in the African diaspora. The Haitian-born American artist's work, and name, calls for a rethinking of what it means to be a black gay man in America, the Caribbean, and Africa. However, there is precious little writing on black gay male identity in the Caribbean or Africa. In *Twentieth-Century Caribbean Literature: Critical Moments in Anglophone Literary History* (2006), Alison Donnell sees a "new and urgent demand that critics should address in their theorizations of difference ... that is just beginning to be documented and analyzed" (181). Donnell makes an important point that there are new writings from

the Caribbean and Africa that relate to the construction of black gay male identity and that have been undocumented or overlooked.

This study seeks to fill this gap. By interrogating new or overlooked characterizations of positive black gay male identity, it seeks to address theorizations of black identity as it relates to black gay male identity. Chapter one, “Close Readings of Black Gay Male Characterizations,” searches for a modality to read five novels—two from Africa and three from the Caribbean—that validate or invalidate positive characterizations of black gay male identity. This chapter contextualizes the existing scholarship, describes why these five novels were chosen, proposes a rubric for reading the texts, and, finally, engages with Rosamond S. King’s *Island Bodies* (2014).

Chapter two, “Battyman Labrish,” interrogates Caribbean author Michelle Cliff’s novel *No Telephone to Heaven* (1996). It examines continuities and discontinuities in Cliff’s novel as they relate to concepts such as Black Nationalism, diaspora, Harriet Jacobs’s slave narrative, and black gay male identity. Chapter three, “Touching Totees,” examines the works of two more Caribbean writers: Lawrence Scott’s *Aelred’s Sin* (1998) and H. Nigel Thomas’s *Spirits in the Dark* (1993). Continuities to the slave narrative are further explored, including the question of how rape is used to police black sexuality. The concept of spirituality as a tool of colonization is examined as it relates to black identity and sexuality. Most importantly, this chapter explores how black gay male identity positively defines itself as politically aware so that it can testify to communal injustice.

Moving from the Caribbean to Africa, chapter four examines two more overlooked novels: from Zimbabwe, Tendai Huchu’s *The Hairdresser of Harare* (2010) and, from Nigeria, Jude Dibia’s *Walking with Shadows* (2005). A survey of African Literature that negatively characterizes black gay male identity is also examined.

Moving on, this chapter interrogates the continuities and discontinuities that these novels share with the slave narrative. On this point, this chapter is heavily indebted to Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s intervention of the "Talking Book" (see *Signifying* 139–84). Chapter five, the Conclusion, reveals how black gay male identity both affects and is affected by Black Nationalism and self-expression.

Chapter 1

Close Readings of Black Gay Male

Characterizations

The purpose of this study is to examine positive textual representations of black gay male identity in the African diaspora. The aim is to explore the continuities and discontinuities in the construction of black gay male identity. Primarily, because of her relatively recent intervention, Rosamond S. King's *Island Bodies: Transgressive Sexualities in the Caribbean Imagination* (2014) is examined. Moving on from King, context is given to the constructed nature of blackness and sexual identity in black theoretical scholarship from the U.S., the Caribbean, and Africa. From this contextual perspective, we see how scholars initially negatively define black gay male identity. Next, a definition of African diaspora is derived from Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993).

Ultimately, because the conclusions reached in the study are derived from five novels, it is important to delineate the rubric for choosing these novels. For example why not choose the queer narratives of, say, Claude McKay or James Baldwin? What differentiates these five novels chosen from all others? Finally, we must consider what possible methods would be best to interrogate the texts. Methodological challenges faced are what lenses are appropriate to view complex constructions of race, sexuality, gender, and nationality. Interestingly, scholars and black gay men voice the challenges

faced by identity constructions that are discontinuous with the constructed nature of the identities listed above.

For example, in an interview with Ian McGillis for the 28 October 2015 edition of the *Montreal Gazette*, H. Nigel Thomas states,

Homophobia seems to be an essential part of black theology. Many blacks are seeking to prove that they are morally superior to whites, and the proof of moral degeneracy is that homosexuality exists among whites—and if it exists among blacks, it’s because those blacks have been corrupted by whites. So the solution is to expunge them. I lived in dread in St. Vincent, and for a time was quite prepared to go the route others like me did, which was to don the heterosexual mask. It was part of my motivation for leaving, even though I was engaged to be married [to a woman] in St. Vincent. I found that I could live my life here [in Montreal]. (qtd. in McGillis)

Thomas is highlighting the fact that, on the island of St. Vincent, black gay male identity is perceived negatively. As a result of this negativity, black gay men are coerced into “masking” their identity to such an extent that they appear to be heterosexual men in their community. Since homosexuals are viewed as moral degenerates, black gay men live lives of “dread,” fearing death or, for those lucky enough to emigrate, sexile.¹ Thomas moved to Montreal so that he could live his life truthfully as a black gay man.

Thomas’s narrative is troubling because it indicts the destructive nature of homophobia on black gay male identity in St. Vincent. Even more troubling is the amount of scholarship that makes visible the existence of the same destructive homophobia in the many nations that constitute the Caribbean (see King 66–69). Frantz

¹ Sexile is an urban slang word meaning to banish a roommate from a shared living space so another roommate can engage in sex with a significant other. This study appropriates and elevates this term to mean that gay black men are banished from their birth communities because of homophobia.

Fanon, Kobena Mercer, Thomas Glave, Rinaldo Walcott, and Wesley E. A. Crichlow have theorized upon the relationship of black gay male identity and the Caribbean.

Frantz Fanon was the first black intellectual to characterize black gay male identity, in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). His description excludes black gay male identity from Martinique and the Antilles (see *Masks* 180). In “Decolonization and Disappointment” (1996), Mercer reads the place of homosexuality in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Mercer suggests that Fanon’s “curious treatment” of homosexuality in the text marks “sexual politics as the interior limit of decolonization,” and a revised psychoanalysis for thinking about homophobia and racism is needed (“Disappointment” 114). The fact that, because of homophobia, Fanon’s psychoanalytic gaze in *Black Skin White Masks* fails to dispel internalized colonial norms in the black psyche is the point at which this study and Mercer’s intersect. The point of divergence is that this study does not seek to revise the discourse of psychoanalysis for thinking about racism and homophobia.

Further, Thomas Glave, explaining why he created the anthology *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles* (2008), echoes some of the challenges that Nigel Thomas mentions above:

[That the anthology] Could exist in spite of thundering condemnation from Christian fundamentalist ministers and, from those in churches, mosques, and other places, sidelong disapproving— and sometimes baleful—glances. Could exist despite proscriptions, banishments, ostracisms, and, in more than a few cases, extreme violence. (1)

Glave’s words affirm Thomas’s assertion that homophobia and black theology are connected, and they show that Thomas’s description of St. Vincent’s “solution to expunge” black gay men is not based solely on sexile. Glave’s anthology and his words

connect the homophobic “solution to expunge” to the entire Caribbean and to extreme violence in relation to black gay male identity (see *Gathering 2*). However, Glave’s *Gathering* is not a pessimistic project. He brings together authors to counteract “the erasing and silencing of ourselves” and speaking back to “home” (2). By speaking back to the Caribbean from abroad, Glave and Thomas are indicating that there is a gay black diaspora. In other words, Thomas and Glave are bearing witness to the fact that homophobia creates a forced migration of gays from the Caribbean. Glave’s intervention by gathering queer texts to allow them to speak against homophobia is similar to this project. However, this study seeks to empower the characterizations of black gay men who speak positively about themselves from their home countries, from their birth communities.

Interestingly, Rinaldo Walcott, one of the contributors to Glave’s *Gathering*, uses his position in the diaspora in another way. In “Queer Returns: Human Rights, the Anglo-Caribbean and Diaspora Politics” (2009), Walcott explains,

I move from North America to the Anglo-Caribbean and back to North America as an indication of the ways in which both the experience of diaspora and an ethics of diaspora might provide a space from which to speak and make a politics present and/or appear. (3)

Walcott’s intervention seems to trump that of Glave and this study. In other words, Walcott illuminates from the outside (North America) the homophobia that creates the black gay diaspora, but also focuses on how black gays experience racism and “white homonormative” racism in North America (3). Walcott defines white homonormative racism as “North American queer racism that seeks to imagine both the invisibility of black gays and lesbians and our incapability of speaking and acting in our own interests...that we need queer development from white queers” (3). In relation to the

latter, Walcott's argument is at best petulant, if not woefully misinformed. In the Caribbean, black gays have been murdered, beaten, marginalized, and socially ostracized. Considering this fact, it is childishly bad-tempered to suggest that these human beings must wait for a unique black solution to stop the atrocities committed against them daily when relief can be gained from the committed efforts of their black and white gay and lesbian brothers and sisters from North America. Walcott misreads the historic Stonewall riots as an event that "posits gay liberation as infancy and rights talk as adulthood and maturity" ("Returns" 10). Stonewall did mark the genesis of open rebellion against homophobia in North America. However, it was the rights talk of a black drag queen—"I got my civil rights"—that was the catalyst that sparked black gay and transgendered men and women (e.g. Marsha P. Johnson, Jackie Hormona, and Zazu Nova) to riot against the police who were brutalizing them (see Carter, *Stonewall*). In this regard, black gay activism is at the center of the gay civil rights movement. The point here is that rights talk is not a phase of liberation. It drives gay rights liberation.

Moreover, Walcott, in an attempt to exemplify how "sexual politics is the Achilles heel of black liberation" references *Black Skins White Masks* ("Returns" 4). Walcott says, "Fanon's claim of no homosexuality in the Antilles opens up possibilities for thought on the subject" (4). The argument is academic, and thereby theoretically bound by a theoretical discourse that has little relation to lived experiences of the black gay men that Fanon is erasing. In summation, Walcott's arguments are disturbing because they denigrate the North American gay rights movement without considering black gay involvement; at the same time, he finds virtue in black male heterosexist and homophobic theory.

Interestingly, Wesley E. A. Crichlow, in "History, (Re) Memory, Testimony, and Biomythography" (2008), also references Fanon. However, Crichlow cites *Black Skin*,

White Masks to say: “There comes a time when silence becomes dishonesty” (*Gathering* 101). By so doing, Crichlow destabilizes Fanon’s erasure of black gay men.² Because Fanon’s erasure silences black gay male identity, Crichlow calls for a “dialogue on same-sex practices between black heterosexual communities and black male same-sex communities” (101). Crichlow uses his lived experience as a “buller man” to testify against the taboo in Trinidad and in the Caribbean. A buller man, by Crichlow’s definition, is a gay black man who is able to successfully parody/pass as a heterosexual man (101). Successful parodying/passing includes wearing male gendered clothing, particularly by avoiding certain colors: “yellow, red, and pink were not masculine colors as they were too loud and associated with being flamboyant” (115). In addition to adopting certain modes of dress, buller men must perform hypermasculinity “through sports [football and cricket], aggressiveness, loudness, having many intimate women friends [i.e., sexual partners], and practicing occupations or trades construed as “manly” in the family and the community at large” (105). Crichlow concludes by saying, “For me this debate is ongoing, hence ‘without conclusion’ correctly captures the stage of our struggle for same-sex recognition and equal protection in law. I also want to say that I have focused on my struggles as a Trinidadian, these struggles are common in other Caribbean islands” (125). Although Crichlow’s history contains a considerable amount of pain and humiliation, his testimony alters the definition of a buller man. Because Crichlow enters the arena of black gay male politics in the Caribbean by publicly affirming his life, his buller man is a black gay masculine man who is politically aware. In this sense, Crichlow’s buller man is analogous to the butch queen.³

² (see *Black Skin, White Masks* 180)

³ “Butch Queen” is a term used by American black gay men to describe a gay man who is masculine in dress and mannerisms. The butch queen is able to pass as heterosexual (see Marlon M. Bailey’s *Butch Queens Up in Pumps: Gender, Performance, and Ballroom Culture in Detroit*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013).

Moreover, Crichlow references Robert Marriott's "Batty boys in Babylon: Can Gay West Indians Survive the "Boom Bye Bye Posses?" (1993). He references Marriott to drive home the fact that effeminate men—"batty bwoys"—who do not perform their gender correctly are hunted and stoned with intent to kill (see *Gathering* 111, and Marriott 30).

Although Crichlow references Marriott's batty bwoys, he says that he "[has] not been able to discover its etymology...but an adequate history of the genesis of the term might help enable its use in contemporary Caribbean theories in the area of study on sex and sexuality" (*Gathering* 129n28). This study facilitates a dialogue concerning the term. For example, Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987) defines the related term "battyman" as "a male homosexual; pejorative" (229). The Jamaican patois term "batty" means buttocks in Standard English; hence the term "batty man" gets its meaning from the fact that homosexual males engage in anal sex. Interestingly, Crichlow links batty boy with the effeminate black gay men who cannot perform their gender role successfully. This study introduces an analogous term: the "femme queen," an effeminate batty man who is as politically active as her⁴ butch queen brother (see Daniel Reynolds "What Would Marsha P. Johnson Do").

Yet, the open, self-affirming political activism that Crichlow advocates, to destabilize the dishonesty of silence, is met with resistance from black communal pressure to silence open expressions of black gay male identity. In *Island Bodies: Transgressive Sexualities in the Caribbean Imagination* (2014), Rosamond S. King is concerned with the exploitation of the Caribbean body by colonizers:

For the purposes of this thesis, a butch queen is a gay man who is able to pass as heterosexual and is politically aware (i.e., attuned to black and gay rights activism).

⁴ In the black gay male community gender pronouns are fluid. He/She are interchangeable.

The Caribbean body has consistently been exploited for its labor, in previous centuries through slavery and indentureship, and more recently through cheap labor for multinational corporations. The Caribbean body has also consistently been used for sexual labor, through sexual access to slaves and indentured persons, and now through sexual tourism. But Caribbean people have persistently used their own bodies for pleasure as well as work.

(1)

Imbedded in King's statement is the argument that although the Caribbean body has been exploited by the Global North for institutional and sexual labor,⁵ the Caribbean body has a history of self-determination in relation to sexual pleasure and work. Interestingly, King implicates slavery as one of the institutions that exploited the Caribbean body. This study does not argue against that assumption. Yet it does argue that black gay male identity can be identified from the discourse of anti-slavery rhetoric. The crucial difference between the stances that King takes on the subject of black gay male identity is that "Cariglobal" communities have worked against the open assertion of black gay male identity.⁶ Moreover, that this hostility toward open acknowledgement negatively effects black gay male identity and is criticized by Michelle Cliff's neo-slave narrative *No Telephone to Heaven*.

⁵ King defines the "Global South" as formerly colonized non-European societies (King 1). The "Global North" constitutes Europe, the United States, and Canada (114). The formerly colonized United States and Canada are in King's view complicit in forcing a lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) rights campaign on the Caribbean (113–14).

⁶ King conceptualizes Cariglobal as "the areas, experiences, and individuals with both the Caribbean and the Caribbean diaspora...Cariglobal also encompasses situations that complicate traditional definitions of diaspora, such as regional migration...The Cariglobal is different from either globalization or transnationalism...Cariglobal phenomena are not always transnational in the way the term is typically used. The same is true of globalization, which continues to facilitate the Cariglobal but which in not itself sufficient to explain the latter" (King 3–4).

In relation to black gay male identity and Cariglobal self-determination, King relies on Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes *Queer Ricans: Cultures and Sexualities in the Diaspora* (2009) to focus on the term *el secreto abierto* (the open secret):

Homosexuality, lesbianism, and bisexuality are tolerated as long as they are not disclosed or are negotiated strictly as an “open secret” or *secreto a voces/ secreto abierto*. (La Fountain-Stokes xvii)

Although La Fountain-Stokes delineates homosexuality, lesbianism, and bisexuality, King collapses these terms in her definition of *el secreto abierto*: “a situation in which many people ‘know’ someone is a homosexual though the fact is not openly acknowledged” (King 64). This collapse is important to note because it marks the deployment of the term directly at gay men. In King’s estimation: “Exploring *el secreto abierto*’s mechanisms and structure provides insight into how sexual minorities— in particular, men who desire other men—love in Caribbean communities” (64).

In King’s opinion, if insight into the lives of black gay men in the Caribbean is to be gained, *el secreto abierto* must not be made a virtue. King makes this error by creating linkages from self-determination to “social imperatives meant to manage same-sex revelation; one insists on the right and necessity to tell [gays in the Global North], and one insists on the necessity and right not to tell [gays in the Global South]” (64). Further, King asks the question: “Why is it the Global North does LGBT equality through domestic politics, but the Global South has to do it through ‘human rights’ and ‘international law’ and foreign pressure? That is plain colonial thinking” (86). The conundrum is that, in effect, King is advocating that black gay men accept the brown boot of oppression from Cariglobal communities so Cariglobal communities can throw

off the white boot of colonial oppression from the Global North.⁷ Ultimately, what is at stake is national definitions of masculinity defined in opposition to perceived notions of black gay male identity. For example, black gay men are defined as *marícon*, *makòmé*, *loca*, *nicht*, *batty bwoy*, and *boeler/buller* in order that black male heteronormativity can constitute itself as manliness, *hombría*, *mannelijkheid*, masculinity, and *virilité*, and machismo (King 71). If King has determined the Cariglobal communities must marginalize black gay male identity in order to claim sexual self-determination against criticism from the Global North, it is imperative that she reconsider Michelle Cliff's neo-slave narrative *No Telephone to Heaven*. By doing so, she will see the pitfalls of defining oneself against the "other." The danger lies in the injustice of a dominant faction or hegemony determining identity by turning a blind eye to (or, at best, tolerating) other members of the culture. However, before conducting a close reading of Cliff against King's assumptions, it is important to recognize King's acknowledgement of the damage that is perpetrated on black gay men in Cariglobal communities:

In most of the Caribbean, sexual intercourse between men is officially and explicitly outlawed... In Cuba, gender-transgressive homosexual men were marginalized and persecuted...the arbitrary and capricious Ley de peligrosidad (Law of dangerousness) provides a sentence of up to four years of psychiatric therapy or prison for campiness and mariconeria...These laws serve as symbols of nationalism and thus a justification for vigilante actions, whether in the press from the pulpit of a church, temple, or mosque, or most often the street, where harassment and even murder have occurred...Some of these Caribbean laws share an emphasis on criminalizing public revelation as well as presumably private sex acts; Throughout the debate

⁷ This logic is reminiscent of the black nationalist movement that marginalized women and excluded gays (see Angela Davis, Eldridge Cleaver, Bayard Rustin).

[about the legislation of homosexuality in Trinidad and Tobago], it is male homosexuality that was explicitly scripted as the overt threat to institutionalized heterosexuality... In Jamaica, the determination of what acts may be deemed to outrage public decency remains fluid and subject to interpretation by the court. By and large, it has been interpreted to mean any sexual intimacy between men, excluding anal sex, which is prohibited under separate legislation... the Caribbean as newly independent states sought (and continue to seek) to consolidate national identities and as non-independent territories sought to clarify their identity in relationship to and separate from their colonizers... And even when Caribbean communities accept gender nonconforming and same-sex desiring men, the self-consciously representative texts of black masculinist leaders never can accept these citizens because these texts must define the ideal male citizen and must provide mechanisms for enforcing that ideal. (King 66–69)⁸

There is a discontinuity between the ideal of King's academic understanding of *el secreto abierto* and the lived experience of black gay men in the Caribbean. It bears repeating that these men face great challenges in their places of origin. Male same-sex relationships—including acts both public and private—are prohibited by law, and these laws are symbols of nationalism and national identity. In their literature, masculinist texts define themselves positively against the queer other. If literature, as a cultural representation of national identity in the Caribbean, negatively characterizes black gay male identity, are there literary constructions that provide a positive representation of black gay male identity? The answer to this question may be found in Michelle Cliff's characterization of Harry/Harriet in *No Telephone to Heaven*.

⁸ See, for instance, Anthony Hron., "Report on Persecution of Sexual Minorities in Jamaica"; and Tinsley, *Thieving Sugar* (179).

Harry/Harriet's function in *No Telephone to Heaven* is to deliver the protagonist, Clare Savage, to a deeper understanding of herself, of Jamaica, and of her role in that country.

Harry/Harriet is a preoperative transsexual woman who must pass through a black gay male identity in order to become her true self. She is first introduced as the medical officer for a group of revolutionaries that includes Clare. Through flashbacks, we learn that Clare's introduction to Harry/Harriet centers on the act of caretaking; Harry/Harriet holds and soothes Clare when the latter becomes sick after drinking too much at a party.⁹ More important, Harry/Harriet helps Clare—who feels caught between black and white racial identities—attain a greater knowledge of the plight of poor Jamaicans, of the realities of Clare's own racial and class background, and of the violent history and hierarchies of their island. Harry/Harriet constantly encourages Clare to return to Jamaica from the United States and Europe and is also the character that provides physical and political guided tours of Jamaica by taking Clare to her childhood home and eventually to the revolutionary guerillas.

The difference between this study's approach and King's assumption concerning Harry/Harriet's transition is that this study's approach focuses on Harry/Harriet's transition from being a black man to being a black woman. King affirms that "we do not know enough of what Harry/Harriet's transition entailed" (King 33). However, what is known about her transition is that she had to transition from a black gay male identity to

⁹ Although King acknowledges Harry/Harriet as Clare's caretaker, she elides his "battyman labrish" from this scene (derives from female gossip, battyman labrish reveals and recreates histories that have been elided by dominant culture). King, like the Jamaican community at large, discounts what this labrish reveals about black gay male identity. Harry/Harriet's black gay male gossip reveals that, "he is vastly outnumbered, will— unless they protect him, because he is one of them, though apart from them, reminding them of their wholeness— he will end up in some back-o'-wall alley in Raetown, fucked to death" (Cliff 21). Further: "Come if you want some pussy. Lord Harry, where you get pussy? You would be surprised" (21). Ignoring his labrish also limits the community's ability to detect sexual difference beyond the binary of heterosexuality and homosexuality. Harry/Harriet is hinting at his transgendered nature, but the community does not take him seriously (21).

that of a black woman. The evidence rests on a close reading of what Harry/Harriet says about herself and her place in the community. Upon Clare's return to Jamaica, Harry/Harriet explains: "Oh, man girlfriend, I nuh what dem expect of from me? Nuh jus' give dem what dem expect? Battyman trash. No harm. Our people kind of narrow, poor souls. Foolish sometimes. Cyaan understand the likes of me (*Telephone* 127)."

King acknowledges this scene, but quickly moves on from it. She characterizes it as an example of Harry/Harriet choosing to completely live as a woman (King 31). However, Harry/Harriet's words complicate the idea of *el secreto abierto* as a positive aspect of Cariglobal communities. Harry/Harriet's statement reveals that he can only be seen by the heteronormative community in Jamaica as a black gay man. As King correctly glosses, *batty* is Jamaican slang for buttocks; *battyman* and *batty bwoy* are slurs for homosexual men (201–23). This definition explains how the Jamaican community views Harry/Harriet. It views him as a black gay man. It cannot conceptualize Harry/Harriet as transgendered because the community conceptualizes sexuality through the binary lens of either heterosexual or homosexual. This fact troubles the aspect of *el secreto abierto* as a positive aspect of Cariglobal communities because *el secreto* limits the communal understanding of sexual difference by narrowing definitions of masculinity and femininity. Moreover, Harry/Harriet destabilizes *el secreto* as tool of self-determination against the Global North:

"Then girlfriend, this is the solution. Come home. I'll be here. Come back to us, once your studies are finished. Could help bring us into the present." He smiled at her, then dropped his voice in seriousness. "Jamaica's children have to work to make her change. It will be worthwhile...believe me."
(*Telephone* 127)

The core tenet of *el secreto* is that it is a communal value. Harry/Harriet is suggesting that it is not effective for sexual minorities on Jamaica, and that members of the Cariglobal community and its diaspora are necessary to effect change.

Buller man, butch queen, battyman, femme queen—Why create these linkages from black gay men in the United States to black gay men in the Caribbean? One reason is that Crichlow calls for this kind of interior dialogue between communities. However, Crichlow is not the only theorist to call for dialogue. In *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (1990) and in *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (1998), bell hooks urged for dialogue within American black communities to unearth black epistemological claims to truth and knowledge (see hooks 30–32). More specifically, hooks states, “Whenever I am speaking to a group of black people, I ask us to share knowledge of how we cope with the impact of racism and sexism in daily life. People who feel that they have been able to critically intervene in their lives in a meaningful way offer insight and concrete strategies for change” (*Yearning* 227–28). What this means for black gay male identity and its struggle against homophobia in the Caribbean and the United States is that speaking out is a virtue and silence is not. By sharing our struggles, our victories, and how we intervene to combat (the sexism of) homophobia strengthens ourselves and the black communities in which we live.

In his 1993 article “Black Gay Male Discourse: Reading Race and Sexuality between the Lines,” which was published in the *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Arthur Flannigan Saint-Aubin uses Beam’s *Brother to Brother: New Writing by Black Gay Men* (1991) and references *Tongues Untied* to make the point that “Black gay male subject-hood or subjectivity is necessarily a political and poetic enterprise... [It] is necessarily constant disclosure, exposure, composure through which self-knowing and knowing self are (in) formed” (“Black” 469). The explicit portrayals of black gay male

sexuality in *Brother* and *Tongues* thematize the issues of the interplay between racism and sexuality. Hemphill's introduction to *Brother to Brother* affirms that "In our fiction, prose, and poetry there is a need to reveal more of our beauty in all its diversity. We need more honest pictures of ourselves that are not the stereotypical six-foot, dark-skinned man with a big dick...Ours should be a vision willing to exceed all that attempts to confine and intimidate us" (xxvii). It is the racism of Western symbolic economy, both gay and straight, that Hemphill points to in his statement. The black man's relationship to the phallus in the Western symbolic economy has long been a problematic one. As Frantz Fanon has noted in *Black Skin, White Masks*, in Western discourse on black men's sexuality, "The negro is eclipsed. He is made into a member. He is the penis" (*Black* 137).

Literary, explicit, self-affirming characterizations that exceed the stereotyping of Western racist symbolic economy are also Douglas Steward's targets in his article "Saint's Progeny: Assotto Saint, Gay Black Poets, and Poetic Agency in the Field of the Queer Symbolic" (1999). Steward believes that gay black male representations of the phallus subvert recognizable images of the black phallus: "the point of intervention...shift[s] from the ready recognition of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the processes of *subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse" (qtd. in "Saint's" 510-11). Steward's ultimate formulation is to characterize Saint the man, his ethos, and his editorial work as a "phallic mother, doyenne of gay black [male] poetry" (508). A visual representation of Steward's black gay male and phallic mother is the cover of Saint's anthology *Milking Black Bull* (1995). According to Steward,

The cover illustration makes surprisingly literal the dual possibility of a phallic mother and a [black] gay fetish-phallus that enables gay voices. A

hunky black man in a birth posture reclines on an American flag while reaching up to clutch the penis and one horn of an astrological bull. The man's penis stretches out into a long umbilical cord, to which a child in the fetal position is still attached. "Milk" from the stellar bull transmutes through the man's body into that of the child, nourishing it with astral sustenance. ("Saint's" 510)

Haitian-American author Yves Lubin, who wrote under the name Assotto Saint, says of himself and his name that

Assotto is the Creole pronunciation of a fascinating-sounding drum in the voodoo religion. At one point I had taken to spelling Assotto with one "t" but superstitiously added back the other "t" when my CD4 t-cell count dropped down to nine. Saint is derived from Toussaint L'Ouverture, one of my heroes. By using the *nom de guerre* of Saint, I also wanted to add a sacrilegious twist to my life by grandly sanctifying the loud low-life bitch that I am. (*Spells* 9).

Steward's characterization of Saint as phallic mother is revolutionary in its composition. The symbolic economy elides the militant and relies on nurturing imagery to make its case. However, Lubin co-opts black revolution to make his name eponymous with black gay male revolution. The juxtaposition of "grandly sanctifying" and "low-life bitch" reveals another point of intervention. The hiatus, the change in pitch in the positive and negative tone of the two utterances indicates another form of agency and another symbolic economy. As Judith Butler affirms, "Agency is the hiatus in iterability" (*Bodies* 220). In black vernacular, in his utterances, Saint is showing his ass. By showing his ass, Saint is not making a fool of himself. He is unapologetically announcing – the lacuna in which he exists that determines his identity- in public (and

to his readership) who he is. As was the case with Steward's formulation of the phallus, the anal similarly becomes a synecdoche, a reduction of the black gay male to the anus. Saint inverts the fetish of the black gay man's anus in his poem "I Want to Celebrate." The anus becomes an instrument of power, a weapon against "vicious-officious cocks":

I want to celebrate vicious-officious cocks
That kind with a hook or mushroom head
Cast spells
Made me lose consciousness when most alive
Forced to acquiesce to grace under pressure
Holiness in being truly low
I want to celebrate cushiony groins
Hot balls that were a mouthful
Tough titties with clip marks
Hairy fists armed with magic twists
& this well-greased ass
That took pleasure in its added dimensions... (*Spells* 21)

The interventions of Saint-Aubin, Steward, and Saint are important because they reveal how the femme queen can explicitly deal with homophobia, making the works of these authors important additions to communal dialogues within black communities in the diaspora. But this study focuses on homophobia and racism that comes from within the black gay male diaspora. Thus, while it agrees with Saint-Aubin's and Steward's claim on how to disturb racism and homophobia, it diverges from their conceptualizations only when black gay male identity is pressured by outside racism. In other words, this study is interested with the internalized racism of black communities

as it copes with black gay male identity. Therefore, the work of Robert Mapplethorpe, which represents an external white male gaze, is not examined.

To choose black gay male identity as a lens might be seen as preferring one form of identity over another. For example, the choice might establish a hierarchy of male over female to produce yet another form of patriarchy, a gay patriarchy that mimics the heterosexual paradigm. Angela Davis warns,

When we said “black is beautiful” in the late sixties, that meant the black man is beautiful. There is this tendency now to want to constantly rehabilitate the black man as patriarch, and I have problems with positing that as the goal of the community. Yes, I struggle with and for my brother. I speak with and for my brother. But I think my brother has an equal responsibility to speak with and for me. (qtd. in Riggs, *Black 6*)

Keith Boykin dedicates a chapter of his book *One More River to Cross* (1996) to black gay male identity. In his chapter entitled “Black and Gay in America,” Boykin uses the example of two Kwanza celebrations on New Year’s Day, 1996 to draw conclusions about black gay male identity as it differs from black gay female identity: “These two New Year’s Day celebrations reflect two very different cultures, one female and the other male, one [female] communal and the other [male] more individual, one [male] exclusive and the other [female] inclusive” (86). This description is problematic in that it reproduces stereotypically essential male and female binaries of the communal female and the individualistic male to make a general claim concerning black gay identity. However, Boykin moves on to assert that

What they share in common [the two Kwanza celebrations] is that the participants are mostly black and homosexual, but through their differences they offer windows on some of the many places and spaces in which we

find black lesbian and gay men. The differences reflect the diversity of what it means to be black and gay in America. (86–87)

Boykin's intervention defines the terms of sharing within the community.

Communal differences are not silenced by sharing and dialogue. They are opportunities for members of communities to note and characterize what it means to be black and gay, not just in America but in the black gay male diaspora.

In terms of literary, cultural sharing, Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* (1988) is important to this study. Gates is helpful because he locates the beginning of the African-American literary tradition in the slave narrative. Gates's intervention is to move the slave narrative from a testimony of defilement to a prototype of how people of African descent create literature that reveals shared patterns of representations (140–41). Gates reveals: "Shared modes of figuration result only when writers read each other's texts and seize upon topoi and tropes to revise their own texts" (141). In other words, what Gates is describing is how writers of African descent created and revised figurative language. Gates draws attention to the "Talking Book," which has "assumed so central a place in the use of figurative language that we can call it a trope" (141).

An initial characteristic of the Talking Book is the double-voiced discourse of black texts. Using the slave narrative, Gates shows how slaves made white written text speak with a black voice. He shows this at work in the poetry of Phyllis Wheatley, Gronniosaw's deployment of literary tradition of the "Noble Savage," and Equiano's self-presentation of African freedom, through European enslavement, to Anglican freedom (see *Monkey* 166). Gates affirms that Equiano was aware of the narratives of

Gronniosaw and Cugoano, and that he quoted Milton and Pope; Equiano also gave a believable account of cultural life among Igbo people (166).¹⁰

Although Gates does not use his theory to attend to black gay male texts, this study is heavily indebted to *The Signifying Monkey* as it approaches gay black novels from Africa.

Moreover, this study is also concerned with how diaspora is created. Because black gay male identity is a tripartite identity construction by its very name, it is important to examine how these identities are constructed in different black communities. Paul Gilroy, in *The Black Atlantic Modernity and Double Consciousness*

¹⁰ Although Equiano says that he was born in Igboland, there is a controversy surrounding his “birth certificate.” In 2005, Vincent Carretta published *Equiano the African: Biography of a Self-made Man*. In the book, Carretta reveals two documents. The first is a record of baptism from 9 February 1759 found in St. Margaret’s Church, Westminster, stating that Equiano was “Black, born in Carolina, 12 years old.” (Interestingly, Catherine Bishir asserts “By 1712, the term “North Carolina” was in common use” [Architecture 20]. In 1663, King Charles II awarded eight noblemen, the Lord Proprietors, the Province of Carolina, both present-day North and South Carolina. In 1729, The Lord Proprietors sold their interests in the Carolina Colony back to the English Crown, and North and South Carolina became separate royal colonies. Any document coming from either colony would have certainly specified its distinct geographical provenance.) Carretta’s second document is a muster list for the *Racehorse*, a ship Equiano served on in 1773. The list shows his birthplace to be South Carolina. Paul E. Lovejoy’s “Issues of Motivation – Vassa/Equiano and Carretta’s Critique of the Evidence” (2007) asserts: “In his assessment, Vincent Carretta almost states that Vassa was born in South Carolina—almost, because once again, he does not actually say it” (121). Moreover, “Although Carretta rejects the idea that Vassa might have been born in Africa, he refuses to be pinned down on a Carolina birth” (122). Lovejoy alludes to “discrepancies” in Carretta’s documentation. Perhaps he means to reveal that baptism for slaves happened not at their birth but as adults. Ukawsaw Gronniosaw recounts, in his narrative, that he was baptized in his late teens in New Jersey when he accepted the Christian faith. Lovejoy does connect the precocious twelve-year-old Equiano to Methodism (126). On the subject of discrepancies, in his “Response to Paul Lovejoy’s ‘Autobiography and Memory: Gustavus Vassa, alias Olaudah Equiano, the African’” (2007), Carretta admits that “The mis-recording of ‘Vassa’ as ‘Feston’ and ‘Weston’ on the muster lists of the *Racehorse*. However, Vassa himself was responsible for claiming a South Carolina birth. This fact is difficult to explain” (116). Ultimately, Carretta finds that the information for the baptism certificate and the ship’s muster would have been provided by Equiano/Vassa. Carretta asks, “Why would Equiano falsify a Carolina origin” (116). The “truth” cannot be known because Equiano does not speak it. But there are plenty of possible explanations that relate to the condition of slavery between 1759–1773: the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act was not ratified in Britain until 1807; Equiano would have feared re-enslavement (documentation that connected him to a Christian baptism, back in St. Margaret’s Westminster, and freedom would have been a helpful tool to battle against re-enslavement); in his narrative, Equiano recounts that after being bought by a British naval officer, Captain Pascal, he was promised freedom, but was instead sold into slavery in the Caribbean; Equiano would not have wanted to reveal his fears of re-enslavement as they would have impugned the honor of Lord Mulgrave, the leader of the 1773 Arctic expedition. Yet, it is clear that he chose to provide surety of his status as a Christian. Interestingly, Carretta concludes by stating: “Equiano may have been born in Africa. Paul Lovejoy’s argument, however, does not lead me to that conclusion” (Carretta 119). The point of focusing on this debate is to reveal the academy’s preoccupation with verifiable proof in relation to the slave narrative. It reveals a discontinuity between what the slave wants to say about his life, and what the academy is prepared to hear.

(1993), affirms that cultures and identities are associated with idea of national belonging (3). However, Gilroy warns that cultural kinships can lead to “insiderism [that] typically constructs the nation as an ethnically homogenous object” (3). To work against insiderism and the homogenization of black communities, Gilroy proposes: “the black Atlantic can be used to show that there are other claims to [black vernacular culture] which can be based on the structure of the African diaspora into the Western hemisphere” (15). For the purposes of this study, the black diaspora is Africa, the Caribbean, and North America. These locales represent part of Gilroy’s slave triangle, and they also represent the sources of writing on black gay male identity.

The first connection to black culture that Gilroy makes is with W. E. B. Du Bois’s theory of double-consciousness. In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Du Bois created the concept of double-consciousness as a means to convey the special difficulties arising from the black internalization of a racist American identity:

One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (1)

Gilroy understands Du Bois to mean that this concept is valuable for black Americans, but also that it “illuminate[s] the experience of post-slave populations in general” (*Black* 126). The theory of double-consciousness is helpful to Gilroy’s project because it allows theorists to examine identities based on experience rather than on racial essentialism (see *Black* 126). This is an important strategy to black gay male identity and the black Atlantic:

Read as a beginning rather than an ending, it offers an image of hybridity and intermixture that is especially valuable because it gives no ground to the

suggestion that cultural fusion involves betrayal, loss, corruption, or dilution.

(144)

In this way, an identity that is doubled—or even tripled or quadrupled—such as the black gay male African, Caribbean, or American, does not represent a corruption of national or sexual identity. It strengthens conceptions of nation-building by fighting against homogeneity:

Cultural formation and transformation is constructed so that the integrity of both its tributaries remains uncompromised by their confluence. This is not the fusion of two purified essences but rather a meeting of two heterogeneous multiplicities that in yielding themselves up to each other create something durable and entirely appropriate to troubled anticolonial times. (144)

In other words, identity formations are not static. They transform best when heterogeneous cultural perspectives are considered. Gilroy is suggesting that a multiplicity of identities strengthens (black) cultural communities who still face racial marginalization.

Further, Gilroy uses the ship as a metaphor because

Ships immediately focus attention on the middle passage, on the various projects for redemptive return to an African homeland, on the circulation of ideas and activists as well as movement of key cultural and political artefacts: tracts, books, gramophone records, and choirs. (*Black 4*)

This study does not use the ship as a metaphor for the black diaspora. It uses the slave narrative as an organizational tool. The use of the slave narrative is preferable to that of the ship because slave narratives are written by people. People can explain in

detail, challenges that a ship cannot, and thereby strengthens black cultural communities. For example, the slave narrative can indicate the slave's ability to remain or flee, stay or go. The slave narrative also reveals alliances that are made or broken, and how alliances are negotiated. Ultimately, the slave narrative is important because it speaks as a human subject that is considered to be property. It is like the ship in that it is a mute working body. However, unlike the ship, it speaks back to power. The slave narrative speaks back to the power of the slavocracy, and it speaks back to hegemonic power within the black diaspora that would silence black gay male identity in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa.

In terms of a black gay male diaspora, this study would not be complete without some engagement with the scholarship on black gay male identity in Africa. Marc Epprecht's "Black Skin, 'Cowboy' Masculinity: A Genealogy of Homophobia in the African Nationalist Movement in Zimbabwe to 1983" (2005) is important because it highlights the fact that in Zimbabwe, as in the Caribbean, there was a de facto tolerance/acceptance of discreet same-sex physical and emotional intimacy (see "Cowboy" 253). For example, Epprecht finds that the ancestors of the Shona and Ndebele peoples of today regarded sex as a means to reproduction and spirituality (see "Cowboy" 257; Moodie and Ndatshe, Gevisser and Cameron). The hegemony of heteronormative culture was partly sustained by punishments for homosexual misbehavior. Mostly, however, it was preserved by turning a blind eye to sexual transgressions, or by explaining them in nonthreatening or even praiseworthy terms. For example, possession by a respected spirit of the opposite sex could explain a person's lack of interest in marriage. The ideal of heterosexual marriage resulting in numerous offspring for all adults was also belied by tacit acceptance of a diversity of sexual behaviors "behind closed doors or out in the veldt" ("Cowboy" 257).

Epprecht moves on to explain that during Zimbabwe's colonial period (from around 1888), Christian missionaries' intolerance to homosexuality had a "profound effect upon African consciousness" (257). Interestingly, to highlight his point, Epprecht chooses an example of Rhodesian jurisprudence:

It [Christianity] was beginning to have an impact among African migrant labourers even as early as 1907. The testimony of Bob Zandemela, a Chopi miner, makes the connection between his conversion to Christianity and to exclusive heterosexuality completely plain: "I was an "inkotshane" [mine wife] myself once; I gave it up when I heard it was an evil thing. I practiced this both at the Chimes and at this compound. When I learned in the Book [the Bible] it was wrong I stopped it. I submitted to being an "inkotshane" because I did not know better." (258)

This case is noteworthy because it shines light on the fact that black communities (in this case, the Shona people) had names for same sex relations. However, Diana Jeater, in *Marriage Perversion and Power: The Construction of Moral Discourse in Southern Rhodesia, 1890- 1920* (1995), finds that

The hegemony of modern values among Black Zimbabweans was imparted insidiously and enduringly by the penetration and co-optation of indigenous languages [by Christian missionaries]...The word *inkotshane* originally included the meaning of servant. It was neither pejorative nor necessarily entailed a sexual relationship (moreover, where it did the latter, it connoted thigh sex). Yet missionary translations stated its meaning, baldly, as 'sodomy'. (65)

The point is important because inkotshane in the Shona language originally indicated a black same-sex act that was not anal penetration. It disturbs the terms batty and buller in the sense that inkotshane represents a Zimbabwean alternative to same sex appellation that is not focused on the male buttocks. In other words, unadulterated Shona gives a wider perspective on black gay male sex acts and naming.

Ultimately, Epprecht's project, in delineating Zimbabwean sexual history, is to make a case against homophobia in Zimbabwe. Homophobia is a public health risk because it increases the spread of HIV/AIDS by driving homosexual behavior underground: "Homophobic rhetoric indisputably impeded efforts to develop the kind of honest sexuality and gender awareness necessary to address an HIV/AIDS pandemic" ("Cowboy" 262).

Unfortunately for this study, Epprecht does not address African literature. However, Chris Dunton does in "Wheyting be dat? The treatment of homosexuality in African literature" (1989). He concludes that "the homosexual was put to use in often crudely didactic ways by prominent African novelists" (Dunton 198). This conclusion and his research will become one of the tools used to explore the black gay male novels.

This thesis investigates five novels: Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987), H. Nigel Thomas's *Spirits in the Dark* (1993), Lawrence Scott's *Aelred's Sin* (1998), Tendai Huchu's *The Hairdresser of Harare* (2010), and Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows* (2005). These authors have been selected because they positively represent black gay male characters in their work as central protagonists. Four of the authors (Cliff, Thomas, Huchu, and Dibia) self-identify as black and habitually write about black communities; the one white author's (Scott's) oeuvre is concerned with the challenge of black gay male identity as a traumatized victim identity similar to that of black identity in the slave narrative. Four of the authors are men who habitually write

about black gay male identity; one author is a woman who writes about black female sexuality and role models. All authors live or lived outside of their birth communities: Thomas in Canada, Huchu in Scotland, Dibia in Scandinavia, and Cliff in New York; the fifth author, Scott, divides his time between the Caribbean and London. None can return to their birth place to live openly gay lives for legal or social reasons. All of the authors are self-declared homosexuals. All write prose. Two authors originate from countries (Dibia and Huchu) where homosexuality is a criminal offence, punishable by imprisonment; the other three originate in cultures where black gay male identity is socially unacceptable, and open expression of this identity is socially policed.¹¹ These authors were selected because they exemplify the challenges that black gay male identity faces in forming a positive identity.

For example, H. Nigel Thomas's *Spirits in the Dark* destabilize Fanon's erasure of black gay men in the Caribbean. Also, by highlighting the connection between race, religion, and diaspora, Thomas indicates yet another node of inquiry.

In Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven*, Clare Savage migrates between the United States, the United Kingdom, and Jamaica contemplating skin-color hierarchies, racism, colonialism and nonheteronormative gender constructions.

Kaisa Ilmonen, in *Queer Rebellion in the Novels of Michelle Cliff: Intersectionality and Sexual Modernity* (2017), makes the point that Cliff belonged to the 1980s generation of Caribbean migrant writers. She says,

¹¹ In *Island Bodies*, King informs "in [Caribbean] territories where citizens are also part of the European Union...[European] values and norms [concerning sexuality] are universal, even as the [European] country imposes related laws on resistant Caribbean territories" (86). Thus, King is highlighting the fact that legislation against gay identity is being overturned in Caribbean territories that are aligned with the European Union. This fact is true as of 2014, the publication date of *Island Bodies*. Moreover, as of 13 April 2018, a court judgment found that the sections of the "Sexual Offences Act", which prohibited buggery and serious indecency between men, and criminalized consensual same-sex activity between adults unconstitutional. The decision followed a similar ruling in Belize in 2016. Concerning Trinidad and Tobago, the case was brought in 2017 by black gay male activist Jason Jones. Jones, like Lawrence Scott, lives in Britain but was born in Trinidad and Tobago (see "Trinidad and Tobago Judge Rules Homophobic Laws Unconstitutional." *The Guardian*, 2018).

From the 1980s, a strong front of female migrant authors of Caribbean origin started reflecting on the multi-layered cultural identities in their works. Many of these authors challenged the notions of “roots”, “origins”, “ethnic backgrounds”, “traditions”, and the limits of language when exploring their identities in order to find ways to define their Caribbeaness. (2)

Insightfully, Ilmonen focuses on Cliff’s textual rebellion as a site of feminist identity construction. In doing so, she highlights how Cliff’s marginalized heroines, as nonwhite, often nonheterosexual, colonized women constitute their textual spaces in order to gain agency (2).

Ilmonen also expertly gives context to Cliff’s Caribbean:

The Caribbean is much more the geographical place. To speak of the Caribbean as a unified archipelago is deeply misleading. The islands are sites of numerous intersecting cultures, languages and ethnicities: these include native Caribbeans, Africans, French, Dutch, English, Jews, and people from the Indian subcontinent. “Caribbean culture” is a whirlwind of diversity; syncretic traditions and religions, creolized languages, and importantly, ethnically heterogeneous peoples. Geographically the Caribbean refers to over 7000 islands located in the Caribbean basin and the surrounding coasts. Culturally, however, it reaches much further. For example, Paul Gilroy has used the metaphor “the Black Atlantic” to emphasize the history of complicated colonial entanglements centered on the Caribbean in his study *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double consciousness* (1993/1996). The Canadian city of Toronto is sometimes called today’s largest Caribbean metropolis, and David Dabydeen has called

today's Britain the largest of the Caribbean islands as a result of extensive immigration since the 1950s (see Kutzinski 2001,10). The Caribbean emerges as an outcome of diasporic movements, cultural syncretisms, colonization, acculturations, and trade routes. For some, the Caribbean is a consumerist fantasy created by tourist guides, for others it bears the trauma of human trafficking, but for millions it is a dearly beloved home or place of origin. It is an area constituted out of multiple journeys: The Caribbean consists of "islands in between". At the same time, it is both transnational and local, what one might term *a translocal site*. (1)

If Ilmonen is correct, then how does one construct an identity in the Caribbean, on an "island in between"? She answers by quoting from Cliff's *Land of Look Behind*:

To write as a complete Caribbean woman, or man for that matter, demands us retracing the African past of ourselves, reclaiming as our own, and as our subject, a history sunk under the sea, or scattered as potash in the cane fields, or gone to bush, or trapped in a class system notable for its rigidity and absolute dependence on color stratification. Or a past bleached from our minds. It means finding the art forms of these our ancestors and speaking patois forbidden us. It means realizing our knowledge will always be wanting. It means also, I think, mixing in the forms taught us by the oppressor, undermining his language and co-opting his style, and turning it to our purpose. (qtd. in *Rebellion 2*)

Unsurprisingly, Cliff's project for identity-building is similar to that of Gates. Gates interrogates the slave narrative to determine the double-voiced metaphor that uses the white man's writing to speak with a black voice. The conjunction of Cliff and Gates is not surprising because literature builds culture and culture builds identity. Ilmonen

connects literary performance of written memory-telling as “creole”. She defines the meaning of creole:

Generally speaking, it has referred to at least three things: First, as a name for the offspring of European parentage born in the Caribbean area, second, a person with several ethnic heritages, and third, a language developed from a mixture of two or more languages. (*Rebellion* 37–38)

In other words, Ilmonen is referring to cultural movements or hybrid backgrounds. In terms of Creole literature, Creole “can mean either whiteness or blackness depending on the context. It has sometimes been a racial term, sometimes a cultural term. However, it is connected to Caribbeanness whether in the form of exile or locality” (*Rebellion* 38).

Yet, concerning the queerness, Ilmonen brackets-out the queer subject. She “does not try to explain what or who the homosexual subject is, but [she] pays attention to contradictions in the identity process” (*Rebellion* 40). This point of view is highly problematic in relation to black gay male identity. Specifically, in *No Telephone to Heaven*, what and who Harry/Harriet is as a homosexual/transgendered subject is crucial to understanding black gay male agency and its connection to a positive black female national identity in the Caribbean. In this regard, *No Telephone to Heaven* is relational to Harriet Jacobs’s slave narrative *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. The characterizations of Harriet/Harriet and Luke define them as black gay men. Moreover, the descriptions of their agency connect them historically to Nanny and Linda Brent, positive black female national identities.

Further, in relation to exile, locality, and Caribbeanness, Lawrence Scott’s *Aelred’s Sin* focuses on who and what the black gay male subject is, in the Caribbean and in relation to the slavocracy. A fictionalized version of Trinidad and Tobago is represented in the novels *Caribbean by Les Deux Isles*. Jean Marc de la Borde’s death

and journal disturbs facile constructions of race, gender, colonial and slave history. His journal is a coming out story in the style of a neo-slave narrative. In this sense, the novel revises what Gates calls the trope of the “Talking Book” (see *Signifying* 139–84). The coming-out novel, as does the slave narrative, reveals a written positive identity for its subject. It moves from degradation and shame to pride. Moreover, it revises the Talking Book in that Jean-Marc’s journal is a double-voiced black gay text made to speak by a heterosexual creole voice. Gates’s intervention is that the Talking Book is a white text made to speak with a black voice (*Signifying* 143). Scott’s inversion of the Talking Book positively empowers black gay male identity. Robert, Jean-Marc’s heterosexual younger brother, states:

I have the journals and now my own stories. I reconstruct, I tell his life. It begins to change something in me. It begins to change me writing this. Write to understand it: that was his method...I eat his words. He moves between here and there. (*Aelred* 112)

Robert’s awareness and acceptance of his brother’s gay identity adds to the traditional slave narrative by including self-criticism of the white racial hegemony and the hegemony of heterosexuality. Interestingly, the movement between here and there, in Jean-Marc’s neo-slave narrative, summons diaspora and merges it into queerness and homoeroticism. Queerness and homoeroticism are themes rejected by Fanon as inherently European. In *Aelred’s Sin*, Scott presents a Caribbean diaspora intertwined with the conflicting issues of race, class, and sexuality. Finally, Scott’s novel exposes the racial and sexual paradigm of Les Deux Isles as a previously colonized space, and the Ashton Park Monastery, the colonizing force that relegates the Caribbean as the other. Jean-Marc’s exile is predicated upon the prohibition of his access to home by the erasure of queerness within both the Caribbean subjectivity and the monastic life in

Ashton Park. Therefore, his transition from one space to another, here to there, is a movement outward, towards a space that accommodates his queer desires.

As is *Aelred's Sin*, and the other four novels considered, *The Hairdresser* of Harare (2010) is a political novel. It is a story in which we view Zimbabwean culture wrestling with corruption, class stratification, and homophobia, and the aftershocks of colonialism. Like *Aelred's Sin*, the storyteller is not a gay black man. The storyteller, Vimbai, reveals the difficulties of life in Zimbabwe: "I figured since the country's average life expectancy was thirty-seven, I would concentrate on the young and the beautiful" (*Hairdresser* 148); "It surprised me how with only ten per cent of the population employed, the streets were full of people bumping past each other first thing in the morning" (*Hairdresser* 50); and:

I walked back onto the street. The queue was twice as long now snaking its way on to Robert Mugabe Road. People were shoving and pushing each other. A group of policemen appeared at the front with batons and took control, making sure everyone kept their place in the queue. The truth is by giving up their time to baton a few people they'd earned themselves a place at the head of the queue. (*Hairdresser* 52)

Vimbai, as narrator informs on low life expectancy, high unemployment, and the rationing of food staples. More than just a witness to government and police corruption, she is the heteronormative voice that must interpret Dumi's black gay male identity from his journal. In the novel the journal operates as a Talking Book. The text that is silent: "The things that I read made me drop the diary [to the floor] as if it were scalding my hand and I covered my mouth as if in prayer" (*Hairdresser* 165). Vimbai's shock and inability to accept the gay black text as an accurate representation of black masculinity marks the journal as a revision of the Talking Book similar to that which is

available in *Aelred's Sin*. In that novel, the Creole brother must interpret the queer text to produce a positive black gay male identity. The Talking Book in Huchu's novel is double-voiced similarly in that it is black female identity that must interpret the queer text positively to establish black gay male identity as an integral part of Zimbabwean National identity.

National and black gay male identity are the subjects of second novel from the African Continent which this thesis examines. Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows* is said to be the first by a Nigerian writer to have a gay protagonist. Dibia is bold in addressing the existence of homosexuals in Nigeria and some of the abuses they endure. He says that most gay people in his country are forced to get married, against their better judgment, to someone of the opposite sex, just to conform to society.

With the passing of the Anti-Same-Sex marriage law in Nigeria in January 2014, Dibia made the decision to leave Nigeria before becoming a target for his writings and stand against the harsh law that criminalizes homosexuality.

About his authorship and life after the passing of the 2014 law criminalizing living as a gay in Nigeria, Jude Dibia says:

My name is Jude Dibia and, I am an African writer. This seems to be the easiest way to introduce myself to people who are not familiar with my name or my writing. I have been writing well over ten years with some modest accomplishments. My first novel *Walking with Shadows* was short listed for the Ken Saro-Wiwa Porse prize and is the first novel by a Nigerian with a homosexual protagonist. It was a book that shed some insight about living as a homosexual in a hostile environment where one not only has to be invisible, but also has to navigate the slippery slope of becoming

someone else and living a false life. *Walking with Shadows* is a book that allowed people to examine their prejudices and see our society as it is.

When my book came out in 2005, almost all stream press in the country would not review the book. But in a way it made a huge impact in the society, especially for LGBTI persons in Nigeria. My book was written in a time that Nigeria lawmakers were pushing for legislation to criminalize same-sex loving individuals. While pre-2014 there was no law protecting the rights of gay people in Nigeria, there was also no law criminalizing them – no law empowering people who hate gay people to attack them. Sadly, all that changed in 2014 after the President signed into law legislation that took the rights away from millions of innocent people. (International Cities of Refuge Network)

Walking with Shadows reveals the violence perpetrated on black gay men in Nigeria by revising the trope of the Talking Book. In the novel, the Bible becomes the double-voiced text that engenders the horrific whipping of the black gay male protagonist Adrian by his brother Chiedu. The Bible, the white religious text, is made to speak for Nigerian Law and against black gay male identity by the black heterosexual brother. This telling revises Cugano's version of the Talking book in his slave narrative. Cugano recounts the moment the Inca King Atahualpa is faced with the Bible, the white religious text of the Spanish Colonizer. Atahualpa recognizes the text as a tool of colonial oppression and rejects it. In *Walking with Shadows*, the black heterosexual brother has internalized Colonial sexual mores and uses them to police black gay male identity. Literally, the white text is used by a black man against his brother.

The novels listed above represent a final list of novels that positively characterize black gay male identity. In a study such as this, one would expect to encounter the

literary keystones of black gay male identity, *Home to Harlem* (1927) and *Giovanni's Room* (1956). The works of James Baldwin and Claude McKay were considered as sites of interrogation. However, the breadth and depth of their work and attendant scholarship would have overshadowed the relatively new work by the abovementioned authors. For example, questions concerning black gay male identity continuities and discontinuities in the works of Baldwin and McKay are problematized by the fact that the works of Baldwin and McKay are not explicitly gay. For example, Baldwin's most famous "gay" novel, *Giovanni's Room*, concerns two bisexual white men who have an affair in France. Unpacking that novel for clues to Baldwin's understanding of black gay male identity would draw focus from this study's main objective: exploring positive portrayals of black gay male identities in their birth communities.

Further, on the subject of not being explicitly gay, in the case of Baldwin, David C. Jones, in "'Something Unspeakable': James Baldwin and the 'Closeted-ness' of American Power", reads Baldwin with Eve Sedgwick to "locate interpretive possibilities" in *The Fire Next Time* (1963), *Giovanni's Room* (1956), *Another Country* (1984), "Nobody Knows My Name" (1959), "Stranger in the Village" (1955), "No Name in the Street" (1972), and *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction* (1985). Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), seems to be an apt tool because her "work concerning how the containment of discourses pertaining to sexuality hinges on the closeting of non-heteronormative sexual practices" (Jones 46). However, Jones recognizes the inherent risk involved in applying queer theory to black gay male identity: "Reconceptualizing Sedgwick's ideas in the context of a black, queer writer like Baldwin, however, problematizes her own insistence on the 'historical gay specificity' of the epistemology she traces" (46). In other words, Jones wants to avoid creating a racial counterpart to the (white) homosexual closet, and rightly so. It is

formulaic for Sedgwick to insist on the “historical gay specificity” of the epistemology she traces (*Epistemology* 72). Given the extent to which racial difference has been constitutive of both American history and that of the Global North, the inattention to race in her analysis is particularly problematic. By denying its relevance, Sedgwick appears to rehearse what Matt Brim, in *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination* (2014), has described as an occasional tendency in queer theory to “recenter whiteness” (Brim 20). In doing so, she perpetuates the very “compulsions” the closet inscribes and she herself cautions against (*Epistemology* 73). Overlooking the extent to which the experience of modernity is racialized, she effectively elides the historical identities of nonwhite populations.

The closeted way in which Baldwin wrote about black gay male identity means that his work as a “race man” overshadows his queer work. The reach of Baldwin studies outside the academy exemplifies this: Black Lives Matter demonstrations routinely feature quotations from Baldwin; one of the more prominent Twitter sites is called “Son of Baldwin”; and Raoul Peck’s 2016 documentary *I Am Not Your Negro*, based on an unpublished screenplay by Baldwin, has received considerable critical and popular interest, including a nomination for an Academy Award. However, the film has been criticized for not addressing Baldwin’s homosexuality.

D. Quentin Miller, in “Trends in James Baldwin Criticism 2010–2013,” shows how new legal and historical readings of Baldwin helped people to reread Baldwin in the contexts of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. This rereading does not include a discussion on Baldwin’s gay identity.

The conflict that Baldwin felt concerning his black gay identity and his black male identity is exemplified in his own account of the First Negro Writers and Artists Conference in 1956, described in the essay “Princes and Powers” and revisited in *No*

Name in the Street. In “Exile and the Private Life,” Kevin Gaines reads this moment as “a dangerous crossroads” and attributes Baldwin’s turmoil to “the estrangement he, as a queer black man, was made to feel by his own people. The calculated mix of disclosure and dissemblance with which Baldwin references his sexuality in this recollection suggests an internal cold war waged against Baldwin by a younger generation of black militants” (Gaines 174).

Hortense Spillers, in her characteristically insightful essay “A Transatlantic Circuit: Baldwin at Mid-Century” (2012), revisits Baldwin’s essays on the 1956 African Writers’ Conference and concludes, “Baldwin, our modern-day Jeremiah, captures the brutal simultaneities and contrarities that traverse the mid-century, when he pins his hopes on the prophetic potential of the American Negro” (937). However, Spiller does not mention the antipathy of the black nationalists toward Baldwin at the conference.

In “God’s Black Revolutionary Mouth: James Baldwin’s Black Radicalism,” Bill Lyne reads *The Fire Next Time* and *No Name in the Street*—one of Baldwin’s most celebrated works and one of his “most reviled and neglected”—to unearth important questions regarding Baldwin’s evolving political stance. Lyne highlights misreadings of that stance, and ensuing questions of canonicity (Lyne 14). In short, Baldwin’s unacknowledged turn from liberalism to radicalism explains his critical decline more than any perceived faltering of his powers.

In “Three Lean Cats in a Hall of Mirrors: James Baldwin, Norman Mailer, and Eldridge Cleaver on Race and Masculinity” (2010), Douglas Taylor revisits the contentious relationship between Baldwin and both Norman Mailer and Eldridge Cleaver in terms of the intersection of race and masculinity. In Taylor’s reading, the three authors initiate a tense conversation, but Baldwin’s voice emerges as the prescient, enduring one: “in his exploration of the roles that fantasy and projection play in white

men's imagining of the racial other, Baldwin moves in the direction of a psychoanalytic exploration of racial dynamics that still remains to be adequately developed within critical race theory" (Taylor 70-71).

In "Cleaver/Baldwin Revisited: Naturalism and the Gendering of Black Revolution" (2012), Nathaniel Mills takes the critical understanding of the vexed relationship between Baldwin and Cleaver even further by reading Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk* as an indirect response to Cleaver's homophobic screed. Mills writes, "Baldwin used Cleaver's attack as the occasion to work out a theory of black revolution and a self-theorization of black revolutionary art in *Beale Street* ... the ultimate political goal of Cleaver's brand of revolutionary nationalism—the total transformation of a racist, capitalist society—was one Baldwin also aspired to in the late 1960s" (72). This willingness to reread such notorious public controversies as a row between Baldwin and Cleaver is also a way of addressing the critical misunderstanding of Baldwin's later work, for Mills argues that *Beale Street* is "not evidence of Baldwin's meek submission to the late-1960s radical turn in the black movement but of his creative and idiosyncratic participation in that turn" (72).

Although it is about more than music, E. L. Kornegay's 2013 book *A Queering of Black Theology: James Baldwin's Blues Project and Gospel Prose*, is a significant contribution in that it links music to both religion and sexuality. Kornegay's definition of the blues treats it as an expansive metaphor rather than a musical form: "Blues poetics is a reintegration of the black body—a blues sexualized body whose intimate nature is birthed through the intercourse of the spirit with surviving the trauma produced in an oppressed world" (6). Kornegay's study tends to theorize Baldwin rather than engaging directly in music theory; for example: "I interpret the blues... as a hermeneutic of queer semiotics" (7).

Similarly, in “Baldwin and ‘the American Confusion,’” Colm Tóibín, ranges broadly across Baldwin’s reviews and essays to paint a portrait of an artist whose influences were varied, complex, and unpredictable. Tóibín riffs on an interview in which Baldwin cites Ray Charles, Miles Davis, and Henry James as his models for *Another Country*, then goes on to show other passages where Baldwin’s “style had not an ounce of James or jazz” (Tóibín 56). Tóibín’s analysis widens our appreciation for Baldwin’s range while also hinting at the author’s limitations.

The point of this list is not to denigrate Baldwin. As the list above suggests, he is a colossus of African-American literature. Rather, it is meant to show that Baldwin was conflicted about his black gay male identity. He struggled to address it in public, and that he wrote about it terms that make it difficult to easily understand, particularly because there are novels that explicitly speak directly to black gay male identity.

Unfortunately, the case is similar with Jamaican author Claude McKay. His novels do not explicitly characterize black gay male identity. In “Reading Will Make You Queer: Gender Inversion and Racial Leadership in Claude McKay’s *Home to Harlem*” (2013), Charles Nero explains that “gender inversion was the precursor to modern homosexuality; medical science of the time explained that same-sex desire was the result of an individual having the psyche or soul of the opposite gender” (85n6). Nero explores how McKay used gender inversion as a marker for becoming a man of culture and a race leader (6). In McKay’s *Home to Harlem*, the Haitian student Ray spends his time reading books, elicits erotic desire from the manly Jake, and is unable to perform sexually with women. The pursuit of culture among African-American male characters as a precursor to gender inversion, he argues, “is a defining moment in U.S. Afro-Modernism” (6).

Nero finds that McKay uses “doubling” to invert gender:

McKay's *Home to Harlem*. Specifically, I am referring to McKay's use of the doubles Jake and Ray. McKay flips the script, so to speak, on Du Bois's Teutonic Strong Man and African Submissive Man. The African American Jake embodies the ideals that Du Bois attributed to the Teuton: he is strong, rash, impulsive, a lover. Ray is his opposite, the Submissive without whom the Teuton is incomplete. It is only through their union that a new national identity can be formed. McKay made this longing for a union between the Submissive Man, now the gender-inverted Ray, and the Strong Man Jake, the literal centerpiece of the novel; their story is the middle of the three-part novel. Like Du Bois's earlier foray, McKay uses gender inversion to signal the homoerotic desire between the doubles. McKay makes it clear that the friendship that develops between Jake and Ray is an erotic longing for union between two types of black men: the man of culture and the robust, yet unlettered working-class, labor man. This union is possible only through turning Ray into an invert. (6)

Nero seems to be suggesting that there is an interracial doubling that puts a strong European masculinity over weak African masculinity. This definition of doubling is problematic because it repeats white supremacy over black.

Further, Nero asserts: "Du Bois proposed the African Submissive Man as necessary to temper the rashness of the Teuton and, in doing so, initiated the queer doubling convention."¹²

Nero moves on to deploy Eve Sedgwick's theory from *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), in which she writes that success in the

¹² Nero is not citing *Souls of Black Folk*. He is citing W.E.B. Du Bois, "Jefferson Davis as a Representative of Civilization," in *The Oxford W.E.B. Du Bois Reader*, ed. Eric J. Sundqvist (New York: Oxford UP, 1996), 242–45.

transaction of women between men “requires a willingness and ability to temporarily risk, or assume, a feminized status” (51). Concerning this, Nero states: “The temporary feminine status of the Submissive Man ends with the taking of a wife, that is, the transaction of a woman between the doubles” (Nero 78).¹³

In conclusion, Nero finds that

In Du Bois’s *Souls of Black Folk*, the coming of John, literacy left him in the predicament of being queer and unable to forge a union with white males. Literacy left him in the predicament of being queer and unable to forge a union with white males. This figuration inaugurated African American modernity. Ironically, Du Bois’s queer Man of Culture opened up the possibility for representing nonheterosexual desire in the twentieth century. (Nero 87)

The opening statement of Nero’s argument concerning sexual inversion is problematic. While it is correct that sexologists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did use the term inversion to refer to homosexuality. However, according to this theory, gay men and lesbians were sexual “inverts,” people who appeared physically male or female on the outside but felt internally that they were of the “opposite” anatomical sex (according to the binary view of gender). Therefore, same-gender desires and attraction were explained as “latent heterosexuality,” and bisexual desire was known as psychosexual hermaphroditism. In other words, gay men and lesbians were really heterosexuals who were born in the wrong body, and bisexuals were intersexual (formerly hermaphrodites). In this vein, the theory of sexual inversion resembles transgender theory, which did not yet exist as a separate concept in until recently. The point is that the incorporation of sexual inversion theory, in relation to

¹³ Nero is deploying Sedgwick in the same way that Jones did (“Something Unspeakable” 42).

McKay, is problematic. By using it to reveal black gay male identity, we risk eliding black transgendered bodies. The point of this study is not to replace or override forms of black sexuality, but by focusing on texts that are explicit in the ways that they positively characterize black gay male identity, the expectation is that we will avoid this pitfall; a non-heterosexual body is not necessarily a homosexual body.

Although Nero's article is problematic, it does highlight the amount of literary archeology that must be done on works that do not speak explicitly to black gay male identity. The literary output of McKay and Baldwin is impressive in its depth and breadth. However, to incorporate them into this study would draw the focus from the novels chosen.

It would seem to be a logical choice for black gay male identity to engage with queer theory. The use of queer theory is important when engaging texts about blackness and sexuality because queer theory is inherently concerned with denaturalizing normative categories (see Gee and Handford, *Handbook* 12). Queer theory offers a challenge to the hierarchical and fixed binary of heterosexual and homosexual identities whereby the former is normative and the latter is rendered "other" (Turner, *Genealogy* 14; Halberstam, *Female* 18). In seeking to deconstruct the normative sexual binaries, and in arguing for a diverse and complicated range of sexualized subjectivities, queer theory has obvious convergences with the work of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*.

The work of Judith Butler is important because she gives us a means of solving the problem that Fanon introduced: the negation of black gay male identity.¹⁴ Fanon essentialized black gay men, and Butler de-essentializes identities. In *Gender Trouble*, she breaks the essential link between body and identity. Butler replaces biologically rooted identity with one that is not inherited but is socially constructed. She describes

¹⁴ (see *Black Skin, White Masks* 180)

the social construction of identity as performativity. She theorizes that other forms of difference might be derived from sexual difference (*Bodies* 167). Language is an important aspect of understanding race, sexual difference, and gender because language defines the reality that we experience and because we cannot experience reality without using language. Importantly, we understand masculinity through the ways in which it is talked about. As a result, the ways that language functions are important to the study of masculinity because they influence how we perceive masculinity. What we imagine when we use the word masculinity is strongly influenced by the way we talk about it, including the actual content of what we say, what we do not say about it, and our choice of words (Reeser 29). Because our understanding is entirely mediated by language, masculinity itself is linguistically driven, meaning that to study masculinity we must examine how it is articulated (Reeser 29). One way that masculinity is articulated in language is through the assumption of opposition or difference (Reeser 29). This means that masculinity can exist only by its dependence on a supposed other. Butler reaches a similar conclusion when she describes how all significations derive from operational difference. This means that masculinity is defined by that which it is not. For example: “I am masculine because I am not feminine.” Also: “I am a man because I am not a woman.” Masculinity’s dependence on its supposed other is a defining characteristic. However, the dependence on a supposed other does not end with a dependence on women. Male homosexuality is another other that masculinity defines itself against: “I am masculine because I desire women, not men.”

Sexual and racial identities are discursive formations. To achieve this synthesis, Judith Butler uses Michel Foucault’s definition of discourse as “an entity of sequences, of signs, in that they are enouncements (énoncés)” (Foucault 32). An enouncement (l’énoncé, “the statement”) is not a unit of semiotic signs, but an abstract construct that

allows the signs to assign and communicate specific, repeatable relations to, between, and among objects, subjects, and statements (32). Hence, a discourse is composed of semiotic sequences (relations among signs) between and among objects, subjects, and statements. This definition allows us to view the sequences that produce black, gay, and male. In Butler's view, this definition of discourse can reveal the terms by which gender possibilities are created, reinforced, or foreclosed (*Gender* 31–32). Butler's use of Foucault's definition of discourse produces the discursive formation that would become known as queer theory. Importantly, by this definition, the synthesis of the terms gay and male is produced. However, Butler cautions that her theory of performativity is limited: "The sexualization of racial gender norms calls to be read through multiple lenses at once, and the analysis surely illuminates the limits of gender as an exclusive category of analysis" (*Gender* xvi).

In consideration of Judith Butler's imperative, critical discourse analysis (CDA) was considered as a methodology for this study. In this context, CDA simply means that the challenges to black gay male identity must be viewed from as many discursive modes as possible. However, the core discursive modes used here are the discourses of black literary theory, queer theory, and diaspora studies. CDA is primarily put in service in an attempt to understand and compare the novels, the literary voices written by and about black gay men (here, black men who self-identify as men who are sexually and emotionally attracted to each other) from Africa and the Caribbean. These novelistic voices may say quite different things, but they all speak from the point of view of men loving men. Secondly, the voices of these men, as Hemphill asserts in *Ceremonies* (1992), have been and still are under "the sacred constructions of [black identity political] silence" that are "exercises in denial" of black gay male identity (52). CDA is a means of tying language to politically, socially, or culturally contentious issues and

intervening in these issues (see Gee and Handford, *Discourse 5*). The intervention here is to break the literary silences in black texts in order to reveal black gay male constructions and to explicate how they endure and contribute to black racial identity.

When used with novels written by and about gay black men, CDA could be a useful tool because it does not rely solely on one linguistic strategy for analysis. It is multivalent in its approach (*Discourse 5*). Simply put, CDA can and does incorporate all linguistic analytic strategies—cultural, social, and political language strategies—to form and talk about discourse. A basic definition of discourse is the abstract idea that allows signs to assign and communicate specific, repeatable relations to, between, and among objects, subjects, and statements (Saussure 7). What this means is that since there are thousands of human languages, the relation between words and things cannot be based on natural resemblance. For example, there is no inherent affinity or motivation to call an avian creature bird, *oiseau*, or *éan*. The word is arbitrary. In this case, arbitrary does not mean that individual speakers can alter the meaning of the word, but that they cannot. The sign is a convention that must be learned and is not subject to individual will (Saussure 7). For this thesis, the principle of the arbitrary is helpful in that it establishes the arbitrary nature of terms like black, faggot, sissy, battyman, buller, *ngochani*, *kuchu*, and *ma commère*, and it points to the convention that must be learned to express the relationships between these objects and subjects. The principle of the arbitrary is basic, and as such it is not adequate for the scope of this thesis. It is not enough to determine the conventions that produce black gay male identity.

Ultimately, CDA was not chosen as a methodology for this study. Because it permits as many discursive modes as possible, it may be construed as a one-size-fits-all approach that cannot cater to the specifics of black gay male identity. Close critical reading, however, is a method that is responsive to Butler's imperative—"The sexualization of racial gender norms calls to be read through multiple lenses at once" (*Gender xvi*)—but still robust enough to constrain discursive modes to the texts themselves.

This study uses critical close reading as its method for analyzing texts. Close reading is the practice of examining texts to determine what they explicitly state. This method ultimately leads to deep comprehension and allows text-dependent answers to be given to questions (see Fisher and Wiggins). Close readings minimize personal assumptions by calling for evidence from the text (see Strauss, “Principal” 14). These facts are important because literary theories can either be supported or disproved by texts. A text can support a theory’s assumptions concerning meaning and influences if the evidence is available from the text (see Brummet, *Techniques* 33). On the subject of disproving a theory in relation to a text Brummet says,

If a particular theory does not help you read a text closely, that does not mean the theory is useless. Similarly, if you find that a hammer won’t help you turn a screw, that doesn’t mean the hammer is no good—it was just meant for a different job. Only if the hammer never seems applicable, if it is completely disproved in some way (it is designed to drive nails, but it never succeeds at that), would you discard the hammer. (*Techniques* 34)

In other words, when considering literary theory in relation to a text, one can determine whether the theory in question is applicable to the individual text. However, only with a preponderance of text-based scholarship can a theory be disproved.

Chapter 2

Battyman Labrish:

One of the Many True Properties of the

Cotta

*Do-fe-do mek guinea nigger come a Jamaica.*¹⁵

—Proverb

Well, for people who have for four or five hundred years experienced racism and marginalization and dehumanization to turn around and do it to one of their own, surely there's something wrong there.

—Evelyn O'Callaghan¹⁶

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate positive characterizations of black gay male identity in *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987). The thesis of this chapter is that Michelle Cliff's novel characterizes by analogy the cotta, Harry/Harriet, and his battyman labrish, to create black female national identity. Cliff thereby integrates black gay male identity positively into the formation of Jamaican national identity.

Cliff's integration of black gay male identity into black national identity subverts negative dominant definitions of black national heteronormativity as described in Frantz

¹⁵ Translation: [Blacks] fighting among themselves brought West African slaves to Jamaica (Cliff, *Abeng 18*).

¹⁶ This comment is quoted from Sheryl Gifford's "A Conversation with Evelyn O'Callaghan." February 2012. Retrieved from smallaxe.net/sxsalon/interviews/other-ways-being

Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks* (1967). Fanon hypothesizes that black gay male identity is a result of the psychological trauma that colonial and racial oppression impose on black men (180). Importantly, black sexuality is the subject of two chapters of *Black Skins, White Masks*. Fanon states, "I believe in the possibility of love; that is why I endeavor to trace its imperfections, its perversions" (42). This tracing of "imperfections" and "perversions" ultimately leads to a clarification of what black heteronormativity is in relation to Black Nationalism¹⁷. Strategically, it is masculinity that is important to Fanon: "The person I love will strengthen me by endorsing my assumption of my manhood" (41). In the scheme of black heteronormativity, black women are perverse when they "love a white man" (42). The positive definition and the protection of black heteronormativity against his negative descriptions of miscegenation and homosexuality is a subject that is linked to black identity and black cultural nationalism (180).

The transatlantic slave trade and the race-based politics that it engendered have had a profound and negative impact on Black Nationalism's cultural and political expression. For example, in a 1924 position statement entitled "What We Believe," Marcus Garvey, then president of the United Negro Improvement Association, a political organization that was influential in the Pan-African movement, states categorically that "[the UNIA] is against miscegenation and race suicide...It is against rich blacks marrying poor whites. It is against rich or poor whites taking advantage of Negro women" (qtd. in A. Garvey 81). In this case, Black Nationalism is concerned with miscegenation and race suicide. These two terms point directly to the tension between black heteronormativity and black gay male identity. Miscegenation, in this case, highlights the anxiety that black men will marry white women and that black

¹⁷ For the purposes of this thesis, Black Nationalism is activism around social and political empowerment of black communities and people to resist racism and colonialism.

women's bodies will be used by white men for sex and sexual reproduction. The concern with black men and women not having sex and reproducing together links itself to physicality. Garvey's ring-fencing of black men and women's bodies is a form of resistance to the racial mores that arose from the Atlantic slave trade for which the black body was co-opted for European commerce. According to Black Nationalism, black men and women who are miscegenists have desecrated and betrayed the black body. Consequently, miscegenation becomes a black heterosexual taboo that is linked to the betrayal of racial strength, purity, resistance, and liberation. This fact implicates sexuality in Marcus Garvey's classic diasporic call for racial solidarity and liberation: "Africa for Africans, at home and abroad" (qtd. in A. Garvey 81). The black body is meant only for black heterosexual bodies.

But what of Garvey's statement concerning race suicide? He mentions it alongside miscegenation as transgression against black heteronormativity. Forty-four years after the UNIA statement, Eldridge Cleaver wrote a polemical condemnation of James Baldwin in which he constructed "black homosexuality" as the ultimate form, the "extreme embodiment," of a "racial death-wish." Like Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*,¹⁸ Cleaver negatively interprets black gay male desire as a literal desire for whiteness:

The white man has deprived him of his masculinity, castrated him in the center of his burning skull, and when he submits to the change and takes the white man for his lover as well as Big Daddy, he focuses on "whiteness" all the love in his pent up soul turns the razor edge of hatred against "blackness"—upon himself, what he is, and all those who look like him, remind him of himself. He may even hate the darkness of night. (103)

¹⁸ Fanon's thesis is that the internalized "Negrophobic man is a repressed homosexual" (156).

For Garvey, Fanon, and Cleaver, black gay male identity is not a part of the essential black body. It is a negative quantity. It represents damage to the black psyche. In their view, it is part of the matrix of psychological castration, engendered by white racism, that deprives black men of their masculinity. Moreover, in the conceptualization of Black Nationalists, black gay male identity is a reproductive challenge to black heterosexuality similar to that of miscegenation. Again, in their estimation, black gay male identity works against the politics of liberation because it co-opts the black body for white use, which means that the black male body is forced to enact violently genocidal impulses. For example, in the influential *Afrocentricity* (1992), Molefi Asante blames the disintegration of the black nuclear family on “the outburst of homosexuality among black men, fed by the prison system” (57). He warns, “We can no longer allow our social lives to be controlled by European decadence” (57). He offers a solution: “guard your minds and you shall save your bodies” (58). In an equally influential book, *The Isis (Yssis) Papers* (1991), Frances Cress Welsing attributes the entire disintegration of the black community to “Black male passivity, feminization, Bisexuality and Homosexuality” (81). This is achieved, according to Cress Welsing, through repeated literal, ritual, and symbolic castration. A passage from the 1981 manifesto of the First National Plenary Conference on Self-Determination succinctly articulates and limits the boundaries of self, black gay male identity, and nation:

Revolutionary nationalist and genuine communists cannot uphold homosexuality in the leadership of the Black Liberation Front nor uphold it as a correct practice. Homosexuality is a genocidal practice...[It] does not produce children...[It] does not birth new warriors for liberation...Homosexuality cannot be upheld as correct or revolutionary

practice... The practice of homosexuality is an accelerating threat to our survival as a people and as a nation. (Welsing, 81)

Thus, “self-determination” in the Black Nationalist discourse negates the possibility of black gay leadership in communal and revolutionary black politics. Importantly, it is the Black Nationalist’s discourse that equates black gay male identity as a form of race suicide. It negatively invokes the idea of protection against dissolution, which is ultimately a dissolution of self and nation. Moreover, self-determination is defined in opposition to the black gay body manifesting an articulation of the Black nation. The above manifesto narrowly fixes black “self-motivated consciousness” within heteronormativity (93).

Frantz Fanon is among the most influential scholars to write on the subject of black self-determination. His work *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) became a prototypical manual for African colonies to rid themselves of colonial power. His hypothesis in *Black Skin, White Masks* established Black Nationalist heteronormativity. His statement, “I believe that the fact of the juxtaposition of the white and black races has created a massive psychoexistential complex” (12), influenced American black activist Eldridge Cleaver’s *Soul on Ice* (1968)¹⁹ and Haitian Canadian writer Dany Laferrière’s *How to Make Love to a Negro Without Getting Tired* (1985).

While it lacks the trenchant sharp edge of Cleaver’s prose, Laferrière’s novel, when it addresses the rape of white women, does reproduce what Fanon terms “This sexual myth—the quest for white flesh—perpetuated by alienated psyches...” (*Masks* 81). In a chapter titled “The Great Mandala of the Western World,” Laferrière writes, “Put black vengeance and white guilt together in the same bed and you had a night to

¹⁹ Eldridge Cleaver (31 August 1935–1 May 1998) was an author and an influential member of the Black Panther Party.

remember” (18–19). The phrase points to miscegenation as the outcome of psychological damage engendered by racism.

Unfortunately, unlike the work of Fanon, Garvey, or Cleaver, Laferrière, as his translator David Homel admits, “does not take a clear stand against racism” (8). Laferrière sensationalizes Fanon’s discourse for personal gain. In the Introduction to *Negro*, Laferrière explains “My novel is a handsome hunk of hope. Myonlychance” (9). Born in Port-au-Prince, Laferrière was a journalist during the regime of Jean-Claude Duvalier. In 1978, Laferrière immigrated to Montreal, where he worked tanning cowhides in a factory. He began writing *How to Make Love to a Negro* around this time. Thus, the novel becomes Laferrière’s chance to progress not as an immigrant in commerce but as an author.

Laferrière’s aspirations as an immigrant and author are an important because they point to a characterization of black heterosexual male identity in the diaspora. Jana Evans Braziel says of the English translation of *How to Make Love to a Negro* that it

...reveals something profoundly significant about American (and Canadian) sexual representation of black masculinity which the American racial *machine desirante* (“desiring machine”): the stereotype of the violently aggressive, hypersexualized, insatiable black man...marks the exhaustion of the cultural imaginary that always frames black men. (867)

However, black gay male identity offers an alternative beyond the exhaustion of the cultural imaginary that frames black men. Amy Abugo Ongiri, in her article “Black Nationalism, Black Masculinity, and the Black Cultural Imagination” (1997), cites film director Isaac Julien, most famous for his 1989 documentary entitled *Looking for Langston*. Julien says,

Desire is always the axis along which different forms of cultural policing takes place. And desire across racial and sexual lines was the site for constructing my film *Young Soul Rebel* [1991]. The crossing of these lines causes anxiety and undermines binary notions of self/other, black/white, and straight/queer.” (qtd. in Ongiri 280)

Ongiri and Julien understand that desire, specifically black gay male desire, can be a catalyst for change. Ongiri’s meaning is clearly shown in Marlon Riggs’ declaration from his film *Tongues Untied* (1989), in which he declares that “Black men loving black men is the revolutionary act of our times.” Ongiri makes the point that Julien’s “desire” is “...formulated as a force and symbol of radical transformation or radical and traumatic stasis” (Ongiri 280). By highlighting desire in Isaac Julien’s work, Ongiri focuses on the problem of desire as it is figured within the African diasporic tradition, particularly in the discourse of black cultural nationalism (280). It is this axis of black identity—where Black Nationalism and sexual desire meet—that is important to this thesis.

Frantz Fanon lived and labored under a racist hierarchy where whites were superior to blacks. Born to a middle-class black family in Martinique, which was then a French colony, Fanon grew up amid descendants of African slaves brought to the Caribbean to work on the island’s sugar plantations. As a teenager, he was politically active, participating in the guerilla struggle against the supporters of the pro-Nazi French Vichy government. After the Free French Forces gained control of Martinique in 1943, Fanon volunteered to fight in Europe. In 1944, he was wounded in the battle at Colmar, and received the *Croix de Guerre*. Thus he emerged a decorated war hero and stayed in France to complete his education and train as a psychiatrist in Paris and Lyons. There he found that his service to the France made no difference to the whites around

him, who regarded black French subjects like himself as “other”—as alien and inferior, yet frightening and dangerous (Macey 100). Fanon came to understand that despite his intelligence, high level of education, and mastery of the French language, he was regarded not as a human being, but as “a specimen of an exotic and savage race, viewed through racial stereotypes developed over centuries of racial prejudice (*Masks* 191).”²⁰

His lived experiences with colonial racism lead Fanon to publish *Peau noire, masques blancs* in 1952; in 1967, it was translated and published in the United States as *Black Skin, White Masks*. It is from this translation that this project derives most of its conclusions.²¹ For Fanon, the reason for producing such a text was to highlight the debilitating effect of racism on the black psyche; Fanon cites instances of psychological damage presented in white (European) cultural productions of black identity.²²

Chapter Six of *Black Skin, White Masks* is entitled “The Negro and Psychopathology.” Fanon says of this chapter, “There has been much talk of psychoanalysis in connection with the Negro” (151). The “talk” to which Fanon refers is about the film *Home of the Brave* (1949). *Home of the Brave* was produced in the United States under the direction of Mark Robson. In the film, a paralyzed World War II veteran, Private Peter Moss, undergoes psychoanalysis. He starts to recover from his paralysis and begins to walk only when he confronts his fear of forever being an outsider. In the scene when Private Moss’s recovery begins, his white psychiatrist forces him to confront and overcome his paralysis by shouting “I am not a nigger!” The

²⁰ Fanon evokes this sentiment in *Black Skin, White Masks* when he speaks of “the un-reflected imposition of culture” (191). He describes a situation in which the Negro is negatively defined so that European culture can define itself positively (190). This “projection” is an unreflected imposition of culture because it becomes a defining aspect of the colonial collective unconscious. In this way, the negative definition becomes part of the collective unconscious of both the colonizer and the colonized subject (190–91).

²¹ The original French version, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, was consulted to reconcile the ambiguity in the translator’s use of the word homosexuality. In the original French document, Fanon uses the two words: “pedophilia” and “homosexuality.”

²² Cultural productions are advertisements, comic strips, films, and literature by whites that portray black people pejoratively.

National Board of Review of Motion Pictures rated *Home of the Brave* the eighth best film of 1949 (Nickel 27). The film does address how a black man experiences racism in the United States military and how that experience positions him as an outsider. However, the criticism of the film was that its resolution was too simplistic (Nickel 27). It seemed reductive that one primal scream would start to resolve a lifetime of racial oppression and empower Private Moss to agency (Nickel 27). The scene allows Private Moss to feel that he will never again be a victim of racism and to know that he can mend his body and his life through force of will. The film did not propose solutions to societal ills. Racial prejudice was external to Private Moss and had led to his psychic and physical damage. Although the film did portray the fact that the internalized neurosis of Moss's psyche could be healed, and that that healing could begin to mend his damaged body, the film did not address the fact that Private Moss would return to face a systematically racist culture that would mentally and physically damage him again. The psychoanalyst who helped Private Moss did not moralize on the constructed nature of societal racism. The film is flawed both because of its reductive nature and because it reproduced the discourse of psychoanalysis to create a fantastical catharsis that had no relation to the realities of racism.

Fanon takes issue with the way the discourse of analysis was appropriated. He wrote his perspective of black identity vis à vis the discourse of psychoanalysis. Fanon states, "Distrusting the ways in which it might be applied [psychoanalysis], I have preferred to call this chapter 'The Negro and Psychopathology'" (151). In other words, the film outraged Fanon. He dedicated an entire chapter of his book to highlighting what he saw as a misdirection and misuse of psychoanalysis. Fanon's outrage over the film is important because it shows that he was sensitive to cultural racism and its inability to honestly confront the damage it causes the black psyche. However, this anecdote will

later be an example of how Fanon makes a similar mistake concerning gender and homosexuality.

One of the ways in which Fanon attempts to correct the misuse of psychoanalysis is by accentuating the exteriority of pathology. Fanon writes, “It is too often forgotten that neurosis is not a basic element of human reality” (*Masks* 151). His premise is that neurosis is an illness. It is a deviation from the normality of human health. It is a disease caused by external social influences on the individual. He bases his argument on Jacques Lacan’s concept of the “family as a psychic circumstance and object” (*Le complexe* 5). Fanon interprets Lacan to mean that “in Europe” the family represents a normative model of the world to the child:

There is a direct connection between the structure of the family and the structure of the nation. For example, militarization and the centralization of authority in European countries automatically entail a renewal of the authority of the father. In Europe and in every country characterized as civilized, or in the process of civilizing, the family is a miniature of the nation. As the child emerges from the family, he finds himself ruled by patriarchal authority that resembles the father as head of the family. Thus, a normal child that has grown up in a normal family will be a normal man. (141–42)

Fanon asserts that the above formulation is the opposite of what happens to “a normal Negro child.” A child that has grown up in a normal Negro family will become abnormal with the slightest contact with the white world. He believes this is true because a Negro child grows up believing he is acceptable, that he is an equal in the world, until he encounters the white world that uses patriarchal domination to prove to him that he is not acceptable that he is not an equal (143). This point is important

because it is the first instance where Fanon describes a race-based trauma to one's identity. This racial trauma creates neurosis in the black psyche. If the Negro child remains within his community and never leaves it, no psychological damage will be done. Fanon states, "As long as he remains among his own people, the little black follows the same course as the little white" (149).

Despite this insight, when Fanon comes to construct black gay male identity, he makes an epistemological U-turn. Fanon reproduces the logic of the arguments he had once attacked. For example, Fanon seeks to highlight the fact that psychoanalysis as set forth by "Freud and Adler and even the 'cosmic Jung' did not think of the Negro in all their investigations" (*Masks* 151). Nor could they have, because to do so would have required them to think in terms of the black man's *Erlebnisse*, the lived experiences of black men (144–45). Still, Fanon claims that "It would be relatively easy for me to show that in the French Antilles ninety-seven per cent of the families cannot produce one Oedipal neurosis" (152). Classic Oedipal neuroses are pedophilia and homosexuality. The remaining three per cent of Antilleans who do produce Oedipal neuroses, in Fanon's summation, are "misfits" who are affected "slowly and subtly—with the help of books, newspapers, schools and their texts, advertisements, films and radio..." (152). Fanon goes on to claim that even in the "closed environment" of the Antilles, "the world view," as reproduced the culture and institutions listed above, is "white." If Fanon's claim that Freud, Adler, and Jung were culturally blind, and that they were "imbued with the complexes of their own civilization" (152), he proves himself to be equally blind concerning the culture of black gay men. Fanon is operating from a heteronormative, Black Nationalist perspective, which means that he is "imbued with the complexes" of that particular hegemony.

Fanon represents the first major intellectual voice to theorize black gay male identity, even if this first iteration is crippling in its negativity. While implicitly claiming that three per cent of the Antillean population is homosexual, Fanon simultaneously erases the existence of gay black men, whom he replaces with heterosexual male cross-dressers:

Mentionnons rapidement qu'il ne nous a pas été donné de constater la présence manifeste de pédérastie en Martinique (Let us observe at once that we had no opportunity to establish the overt presence of homosexuality in Martinique). (*Masks* 180)

There is no disambiguation. He continues:

Il faut y voir la conséquence de l'absence de l'Œdipe aux Antilles. On connaît en effet le schéma de l'homosexualité. Rappelons toutefois l'existence de ce qu'on appelle là-bas "des hommes habillés en dames" ou "Ma Commère". (The schema of homosexuality is well enough known. We should not overlook, however, the existence of what are called there "men dressed like women" or "godmothers"). (*Masks* 180)

As in the example of the film *Home of the Brave*, his conclusion is too simplistic. He cannot define more complex forms of black gay male identity because he does not have the *Erlebnisse* to recognize their existence and to describe the cultural homophobia that predicates their daily lives. This fact is never more apparent than when he confesses, "I have never been able, without revulsion, to hear a *man* say of another man: 'He is so sensual!'" (*Masks* 155). The form of Fanon's enunciation obeys the terms of his own definition of phobia as "terror mixed with sexual revulsion" (155).

By naming homosexuality distinctly, Fanon constructs a definition of homosexuals as damaged heterosexuals: “Je consens à le mener sur celui de la psychanalysé, c’est-à-dire des rates, au sens où l’on dit qu’un moteur a des rates” (*Peau* 152). In the original French version of *Masks*, Fanon indicates that homosexuals are misfits, “les rates” (failures), that they are broken black heterosexual men (*Peau* 152). They are created from, but not born into, Antillean culture. Their genesis stems from damage that they experience early in their childhood from their exposure to white culture. Their damage is analogous to the damage of engine failure. Interestingly, in Jamaica there is a similar metaphor for engines and queerness: “Battyman like a wagon [Volkswagen] cause dem engine in de back!” In other words, black gay male sexual motivation, their metaphorical “engine,” desire is located in their batty (buttocks), not in the front, the phallus, as is the case with black heterosexual men.

Oddly, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, black gay men in Martinique are not defined by their sexuality (i.e., the sexual acts they perform with other men), but by the clothes they wear. These black men appear to be cross-dressers. These individuals are gendered male but wear clothing that is gendered female. The element that defines their queerness and makes them visible is that they are wearing women’s clothes in public. Importantly, Fanon calls these men homosexuals but denies their homosexuality: “I am convinced that they lead normal sex lives...and they are not impervious to the allures of women” (180). Given his revulsion to men who find other men “sensual,” according to Fanon’s lived experience, “normal” is heterosexual. Unfortunately, for these homo-sexless men—these *ma commère*—gender, in their culture, is physically policed: “They can take a punch like any ‘he-man’...” (180). Fanon’s commentary serves to highlight the fact that *ma commère* are objects of physical attack.

Fanon speaks of the external ills of the racism that plagues black men. However, he seems unable to connect the external ills of homophobia that plague black gay men in the Antilles. He is nonchalant concerning the physical violence directed at black gay men, and he is blind to homophobia, even though he has described it. These men are accustomed to standing up to physical attack and are subject to the “allure” of women. In other words, these homosexuals are not completely or irretrievably damaged by racism; they can be lured or coerced back to heterosexuality. Again, a brief comparison with the film *Home of the Brave* is appropriate. In the film, the therapist encourages Private Moss to scream “I am not a nigger!” Fanon’s discourse equates black gay men with the French and English language pejorative for the word homosexual. It seems that Fanon would have black gay Antillean men scream, “I am not a complete faggot! I am subject to the allure of women!”

In contrast to the image of the homo-sexless gay black men that he has created in the Antilles, Fanon characterizes black gay men in Europe as sexually passive. Passive homosexuals in Fanon’s description are men who prostitute themselves to other men. Fanon writes, “In Europe, on the other hand, I have known several Martinicans who became homosexuals, always passive” (*Masks* 180). Once again, the significance of Fanon’s construction of homosexuality is that homosexuals are created. They “become” gay. Presumably, they originate from otherwise heterosexual men, “Martinicans”. This a homophobia based on the fear of becoming homosexual. It is also points to the fact that, while Fanon is presenting an essential heterosexuality, he is at the same time showing its constructed nature by defining heterosexuality against black gay male identity. In French, Fanon remarks, “Par contre en Europe nous avons trouvé quelques camarades qui sont devenus pédérastes, toujours passifs. Mais ce n’était point-là homosexualité névrotique, c’était pour eux un expédient comme pour d’autres celui de

souteneur” (*Peau* 170). Here it is clear that *pédérastes* are *homosexuels* and not *pédophiles*.

Fanon describes passive homosexuals in the most demeaning term possible: *pédérastes*. These men, who have become homosexuals, but “not neurotic homosexuals,” are sex workers. He has defined and conflated the two ideas (*pédérastie* and *homosexualité*) as one and the same. A pederast is a man who has or desires sexual relations with a boy. Also, in a wider sense (chiefly derogatory), a pederast is a man who practices anal intercourse, or a male homosexual. Fanon claims to “know this schema of homosexuality well enough.” By conflating the two terms, Fanon puts all references to homosexuality in insulting language. He is not saying that these men want or desire sexual relations with boys. He is clearly indicating that these men are selling themselves, their bodies, including their anuses, to other men (white men) for sex. While the translator uses the word “homosexual” in place of both terms, he would be equally justified in using a pejorative term in English, such as “faggot.” For according to Fanon’s definition of homosexuals “known” in Martinique, and men who “become homosexuals, always passive” created in Europe, men are homosexuals in the derogatory sense of the word because they practice anal intercourse. Fanon defines misfits, queers, and gays in Martinique as being active—they have sex with women. He defines gays in Europe as “passive” because they are obliged to earn their living as sex workers. Whether active or passive, these men are “misfits,” queer. Because Fanon conflates the terms, they are one and the same. These pejorative appellations are as damaging for black gay male identity as the pejorative “nigger” is for black identity.

Fanon’s exegesis of black Antillean gay men in *Black Skin, White Masks* demonstrates that his discourse preferences heteronormativity over homosexuality. It does so to such an extent that black gay male identity is negatively characterized as

“other,” alien, and inferior to black male heterosexuality. Also, black gay sexuality is erased. Nonetheless, black gay male identity is so frightening that it must be policed by violence. Interestingly, Fanon produces black gay male identity as an example of how colonial racial prejudice damages the psyche of black Antillean men. Unfortunately, his Black Nationalist remedy is mimetic in that it reproduces the tools of colonial racism (e.g., by “othering,” making people inferior) and aims them at black gay men.

We have discussed the works of Black Nationalists and their negative configuration of black gay male identity in an African diaspora of desire. But how can we find positive images of black gay male identity? Black Nationalist discourse, as exemplified by Garvey, Cress Welsing, Fanon, and Cleaver, marginalizes or excludes black gay male identity from its scheme of origin construction, construction of Black Nationalist identity, and excludes black gay male identity from Black Nationalist leadership. It accomplishes this by essentializing black male heterosexuality and describing black gay male identity as something that is apart from and a threat to a true black identity. This is a genocidal practice. Moreover, Fanon (and, to a lesser extent, Garvey with his invocation of “Africa for Africans at home and abroad”) intervenes by marking the wounds of racism on the black male psyche, implicating the black diaspora as he claims that black men who move from the Antilles to Europe will ultimately “become homosexuals.”

This Black Nationalist gesture to the construction of a movement of black people and ideas over geography—the black diaspora—is inadequate if it cannot conceive of a positive black male identity. Taken at face value, the concept of a black gay male identity seems to be an essentialist construct. But Kobena Mercer correctly delineates why black gay male identity is not an essentialist construct:

What is at issue in the politics of identity articulated in their work [the work of black gay men] is not that they constitute some wretched subaltern subculture, damned by double or triple “disadvantage,” who therefore warrant your “right-on” sympathies, but on the contrary: how their work interrupts commonsense essentialism in favor of a relational and dialogic view of the constructed character in any social identity. (221–22)

Positive characterizations of black gay male identity have intrinsic value not simply because they exist, but “because of what they *do* and, above all, because of the freaky-deaky way in which they do it” (222). Mercer could easily have extended the dialogic scope of the antiessentialist work (work that black gay male identity performs as it informs and disturbs the Black Nationalist discourse) to positive characterizations of black men produced by the black community in general. An example of this is the positive characterization of Harry/Harriet in Michelle Cliff’s *No Telephone to Heaven*.

But how to critique what black gay men do and “the freaky-deaky way in which they do it”? Mercer’s argument, and his appeal to the “freaky-deaky,” calls for a theoretical queer perspective. Thus, because of Fanon’s characterization of black gay men, and Mercer’s queering of essentialism, diaspora theory and queer theory are necessary.

Although they are called out individually, diaspora theory and queer theory work in tandem to make black gay male identity a visible and positive aspect of black identity. Both theoretical schemes work to de-essentialize the “natural,” but their work is layered. Diaspora theory works against essentialism at the level of the community, while queer theory works at the level of the individual, at the level of the body. Both theories reach their most powerful iteration when they inform one another (see Butler, *Gender*). For example, queer theory offers a challenge to the hierarchical and the fixed binary of

heterosexual/homosexual identities, whereby the former is normative, and the latter is rendered other (see Turner, *Genealogy* 14; and Halberstam, *Female* 18). In seeking to deconstruct the normative sexual binaries, and in arguing for a diverse and complicated range of sexualized subjectivities, queer theory has obvious convergences with Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*.

Gender Trouble provides a means of solving the problem that Fanon presented. Fanon's essentialization of black gay men can be deconstructed using Butler's method of de-essentializing identities. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler breaks the essential link between body and identity. Butler replaces biologically rooted identity with an identity that is not inherited but rather socially constructed. She describes the social construction of identity as performativity. She theorizes that other forms of difference might be derived from sexual difference (*Bodies* 167). Interestingly, Butler qualifies her theory. She cautions that her theory of performativity is limited, and she warns that her theory of performativity should not be used as a simple analogy that is appropriated from the discourse of sex onto that of race: "The sexualization of racial gender norms calls to be read through multiple lenses at once, and the analysis surely illuminates the limits of gender as an exclusive category of analysis" (*Gender* xvi).

Considering Butler's warning, what's needed is a diaspora theory that works to highlight the constructed nature of black identity. In terms of naming diaspora, then, one could summon the large body of intellectual work dedicated to understanding the connections between African-descended peoples. Seeking to build a community to combat global white supremacy, racism and imperialism, diasporic thinkers sought a sense of solidarity and political kinship. The value of utopian visions of diaspora and the varieties of humanisms imagined by a range of black Atlantic thinkers—from Edward Blyden to Joseph Casely Hayford, W. E. B. Du Bois to Kwame Nkrumah—is that they organized a transgeographical network of black people. However, only Paul

Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernism and Double Consciousness* theorizes a diasporic identity that is not based in essentialism.²³

Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993) describes the diaspora of African-descended people across the Atlantic as a rupture, in the sense that people were forced to leave their place of origin. Gilroy shows that the conceptual core of diasporic culture is the loss of home, the meaning of memory, and the struggle to find a usable past (ix).

Gilroy's writes,

I have settled on the image of ships in motion across the spaces of Europe, America, Africa and the Caribbean as a central organizing symbol...Ships immediately focus attention on the middle passage, on the various projects for redemptive return to an African homeland... (*Black* 4)

Gilroy's concept is path-making. It seems to be an elegant answer to the question of anti-essentialist, African diasporic organization. However, his "slave ships" have received criticism. For example, Joan Dayan, in "Paul Gilroy's Slaves, Ships and Routes: The Middle Passage Metaphor," argues that

Gilroy stops short of questioning the choice of exile and passage by a minority of educated elites whose names we remember: Delany, Douglass, Du Bois, and Wright, to name a few of Gilroy's chosen, along with the conveyors of "hip-hop," soul music, and rap in Gilroy's new, "keep on moving," world. Gilroy's Middle Passage and his celebration of "cross-cultural circulation" and "nomadism" thus lends a false idea of choice to forced migration. ("Ships" 188–89)

²³ See Blyden's *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (1887); Joseph Casely Hayford's *Ethiopia Unbound* (1911); W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903); and Kwame Nkrumah's *African Personality* (1963)

Ultimately, Dayan finds that slavery and the Middle Passage “becomes nothing more than a metaphor” (188). It is difficult to be a path-maker. What seems elegant and inspired to one generation becomes “closed and conservative, while seeming open and radical” to another (188). Yet, interestingly, as Dayan takes umbrage with Gilroy, Du Bois et al., she elevates Fanon’s reexamination of Hegel’s master and slave complex in *Black Skin, White Masks* to counter Gilroy’s use of Hegel. One could certainly ask Dayan to answer her own question, “at what price culture?” Fanon erases gay black men from the Antilles and stigmatizes them in the diaspora. In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon bolsters Black Nationalism, but at the expense of black women, in particular Mayotte Capécia. bell hooks succinctly explains:

We have not begun to create new norms of masculine behavior, blueprints for the construction of self that would be liberating for black men. Until black men can face the reality that sexism empowers them despite the impact of racism in their lives... (*Yearning* 75)

That being said, Dayan does pose an interesting question: “Where, oh where do we find the slaves’ point of view?” (188) One answer is in the narrative. Rather than using ships, which may be construed as metaphor, we can examine novels that positively represent black gay male identity in relation to the slave narrative to locate rupture. These narratives locate rupture in the sense that they highlight diasporic concerns: being forced to leave one’s home, the meaning of memory, and the struggle to find a usable past. Thus an understanding of diaspora can be defined as “the play of power in the contemporary moment, the relation between sovereignty, citizenship, immigration, and social belonging” (Goyal 5).

As Gilroy does with ships, Michelle Cliff also constructs a sign that signifies Africa, slavery, and a redemptive return. However, in creating the cotta, Michelle Cliff

constructs a Jamaican Black National female identity that is bolstered by black gay male identity. In *No Telephone to Heaven*, “the *cotta*, the circle of cloth women wound tightly to make a cushion to balance baskets on their head, was an African device and African word” (12). Interestingly, globally, men and women use implements to balance burdens on their heads. Both male and female laborers carry burdens on their heads instead of on their backs. Indeed, head carrying is not isolated to Africa. The peoples of Australia,²⁴ Native Americans,²⁵ and, as recently as 2012, male laborers in Bangladesh have been chronicled participating in head carrying.²⁶ By using transgeographical and ungendered implements that facilitate burden carrying, Cliff, like Gilroy, gives an ordinary object meaning in order to define a black diaspora. The *cotta*’s diasporic nature resides in its displacement. This first reference to the *cotta* appears in the first chapter of the novel:

Slapping her backless black bedroom slippers along the clay road, cutlass in right hand. Basket on head, resting on a *cotta*, bought years ago in Knightsbridge, a gallery specializing in African art, carried as a talisman. Now being put to use, its true properties recognized. It had not been comfortable on a glass shelf; it belonged on a woman’s head. She spoke to the shopkeeper in the name of her grandmother. (*Telephone* 12)

However, the *cotta*’s “true properties” are that it symbolizes not just African identity but Jamaican Black National female identity. Cliff uses the *cotta* as a racial and gender construction to combat the politics of slavery and colonialism. This object, made by human workmanship, is out of place in the exclusive retail district just west of

²⁴ Aboriginal women in Australia traditionally head-carry loads balanced on ring pads called *akartne* (Thomson 101).

²⁵ Native Americans, both male and female, used tumplines to carry head burdens (Conover 36).

²⁶ An observational study was conducted in Dhaka, Bangladesh from 1999 to 2001. The study’s focus was on spinal cord injuries due to falls from carrying heavy loads on the head. Although the studies focus was exclusively men between the ages of ten and fifty years old, it is and underscores the fact that women are not the only practitioners of head carrying (Hoque, “Cervical” 277). Web. 05 March 2014.

Buckingham Palace: “it has not been comfortable on a glass shelf.” By ascribing human emotion to the cotta, Cliff signals the cotta’s displacement. It is taken out of place and out of context. Due to the Atlantic slave trade and colonization, the cotta has been removed from the place where it was made to be of use, and is located, like the enslaved body, on display and for sale by the slaver/colonizer. However, both Clare Savage and the cotta become a focus of displacement from which Cliff creates a symbol of black female identity. To create this symbol, Cliff makes the cotta a talisman. Importantly, a talisman must be charged with magical powers by its creator, and this act of consecration or “charging” is what gives the talisman its alleged magical powers. While an amulet can be used for generic purposes, such as averting evil or attracting good luck, a talisman is always made for a specific reason (Campo 40). The specific purpose for which Cliff creates the talisman is to endow black women with black female history and agency.

We begin with a description that creates a hybrid cultural artefact, an object that is a specific cultural signifier. The distances that lie between this signifier and its ultimate signification produce a community that is related, but has new politics and a new sensibility. Important to understanding Cliff’s revolutionary construction of national identity is her construction of the “cotta.” Interestingly, there is semantic congruence to the description that Cliff establishes on page twelve and the definition she provides in the novel’s glossary. She defines a cotta as a “round cushion of cloth, used to balance burdens on the head” (*Telephone* 210). The glossed definition allows the cotta to become more than just a balance for baskets. It enables women to balance a wider range of burdens on their heads.

Therefore, another of the “true properties” of the cotta is that it allows women to join—and lead collectively—a female history in which they feed their communities in a

way that subverts the acquisitiveness of colonialism and capitalism. In the quote above, the cotta enables Clare to bring produce to the shop in St. Elizabeth, where she can barter “speak” as her grandmother had.

The last paragraph of the first chapter reveals the connection between women’s history, surplus, and the subversion of acquisitiveness:

The rest of the surplus, all that they could not barter, was distributed by Miss Mattie’s granddaughter to people around who did not have enough land to support them. It had been a practice of her mother and grandmother.

The woman was used to it—what other use could be made of extra food?

(Telephone 12)

At this point, the protagonist, Clare, who has not been named, can be defined only through her connections to the communal female practice of feeding those who cannot feed themselves. The final question at the end of the chapter subverts acquisitiveness in that it denies knowledge of commodification. In other words, as an omniscient narrator, Cliff denies knowledge of the transformation of people, goods, and objects into property with monetary value.

Moreover, in the above context, the cotta is liminal in that it occupies the space between the weight of the basket and the woman’s head. It occupies the threshold where the burden meets the body. But the cotta is also the liminal space itself, the threshold, the intervening space where Cliff creates identities. In relation to capitalism, Cliff creates a revolutionary black female identity that depends on a black gay male identity. They aid her fictional group’s revolution. In the novel’s beginning, there are “at least twenty people” standing in the back of a truck (4). They are “little more than a band. But their survival dress could make them feel, seem to be, an army” (5). The aim of this army is to blow up an American film crew that is filming on the island. The film crew

represents yet another colonial exploitation. They have come to Jamaica because they can film and sustain themselves for less money than they would in America. One member of the film crew states, “You can’t beat the prices. And besides, they need the money. [The Jamaicans] are trapped. All tied up by the IMF” (201).²⁷ But in the beginning they are heading to their hideaway. Clare, who is not named, is in the truck with the twenty soldiers. The only soldier that is named is Harriet. She is formerly a nurse at the Kingston Hospital, and is the only owner of a camouflage jacket (7). The camouflage cloth worn by all of the revolutionaries, men and women, “became them as uniforms, signifying some agreement, some purpose—that they were something together” (7). Again, it is a cloth—like the cotta—that stabilizes the revolutionary identity of the men and women into a single revolutionary identity. It brings the revolutionary bodies into a group and allows them to bear the burden of revolution. But it is the metaphor of the cotta and its ability to mitigate burdens that demonstrate how the character of Harry/Harriet aids in the construction of the national, racial, and gender identity ideals that will drive the revolution. The fact that Harriet is named provides uniqueness to his character right from the start. As his position in the truck indicates, he is an agent of change as well a caretaker.

Behaving as metaphorical cotta, it is the character of Harry/Harriet that allows Clare to bear the burden of patriarchy. Harry/Harriet “comforted” Clare when she attended the party at Buster Said’s house: “She did not think of his sperm [Paul H.’s] congregating in her, so that his line might not have ended. In a few days she bled. She was free of him” (118). It is the cotta-like character of Harry/Harriet that enables Clare to define the burden of revolutionary responsibility and thereby balance it. After the

²⁷ The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been the focus of controversy in Jamaica since 1977. As a lender of last resort, the IMF is able to determine the economic policy for nations in which it is involved. Cliff’s reference indicates that Jamaica under the IMF was colonized yet again. It had no economic sovereignty. The IMF is headquartered in Washington, D.C. (Brown 1).

party, Clare prepares to leave Jamaica to study in Europe. Harry/Harriet counsels:

“Come home. I’ll be here. Come back to us, once your studies are finished. Could help to bring us into the present...Jamaica’s children have to work to make her change”

(127).

Moreover, Harry/Harriet is the threshold, the cotta, which helps Clare recognize and bear her burden of female agency. His letters to Clare become a welcome reminder of her strengths and her power to effect change (159). His first letter finds Clare in England:

Jamaica needs her children—I repeat myself, I know. Manley is doing his best but people are leaving in droves—those who can. The poor, the sufferahs, of course remain. I know you think I nag you too much, but there is terrific distress. And there is no end in sight... (140)

In this instance Harry/Harriet is trying to convince Clare that she can make a difference in the lives of Jamaica’s poor, “the sufferahs.” As he indicates, it is a reiteration of the conversation they had before Clare’s departure. In that conversation, Harry/Harriet affirms his belief that it is the education that Clare brings from Europe that will help modernize Jamaica: “Could help to bring us into the present.” But in his reiteration there is only the news of the suffering of the poor. However, in his next letter to Clare, Harry/Harriet indicates that she is a Jamaican landowner: “I understand your need for time. Frederick and Violet say your grandmother place is left to you now. Their new address is enclosed, for they may not get the chance to write before they grab their cash and lif’ up” (145). Harry/Harriet is indicating in this letter that one way in which Clare can effect change is to come home and claim her land to aid the poor.

Finally, Harry/Harriet reminds Clare that, in addition to aiding the poor, she has a responsibility to poor women in Jamaica. His act of writing is a threshold that connects

Clare to a female warrior tradition: “We are supposed to be remembering, through our hypocrisy, the 167 old women who burned up in a fire started by some bastard... We got to do something besides pray for the souls of our old women” (160). Harry/Harriet’s letter is literally a threshold. It ends chapter six and reveals the theme of chapter seven, entitled “MAGNANIMOUS WARRIOR!” The liminality of Harry/Harriet’s epistolary call connects Clare to a history of warrior women:

Magnanimous Warrior! She in whom the spirits come quick and hard.
Hunting mother... Warrior who sheds her skin like a snake and travels into
the darkness a fireball... Warrior who labors in the spirit. She who plants
gunga on the graves of the restless... Mother who carves the power-stone,
center of the world. Warrior who places the blood-cloth on the back of the
whipped slave... She is River Mother. Sky Mother. Old Hige. The Moon.
Old Suck... (164)

Thus Harry/Harriet is the cotta. He is the threshold on which Clare’s revolutionary warrior’s burden is balanced on the strength of the body of her history.

Instances of the cotta being used to balance identities reveal the importance of “labrish,” or gossip, in *No Telephone to Heaven*. One example appears in chapter three, “The Dissolution of Mrs. White.” In this chapter, Clare’s family, her mother Kitty (née: Kitty Freeman), her father Boy Savage, and her sister Jennie have joined the diaspora of Jamaica’s economic migrants. The family flies from Montego Bay to Miami. From Miami, the family journeys northward to New York. In the words of Kitty Savage, the family “fled” Jamaica (53). Kitty’s voice is important in this chapter because it defines the allegiance to blackness as an exemplary form of resistance against the racism she experiences in the United States:

Busha, is maybe time we cut the cotta...what you think? She broke the silence, addressing him as overseer, with reference to divorce among the slaves who had been among their ancestors. Slicing the device on which their burdens balanced. She spoke in code because the girls were in the kitchen washing the dishes. Still, her words fit. (82)

In this quote, the cotta delineates the existence of multiple social boundaries: history, slavery, marriage, and coded language. By referencing divorce among slaves, Cliff creates labrish, gossip in the form of undocumented female folk history, to highlight the cotta's ability to mark and balance identity. Moreover, labrish, like the cotta, becomes a culturally specific Jamaican word. *No Telephone to Heaven* is a novel that gossips from the point of view of its female Jamaican author. Its labrish evokes the female revolutionary identity in the person of "Nanny" by equating Africa and resistance (5)²⁸ and inserts Jamaican black female identity into the central Christian myth of Mary and Jesus: "The garden the grandmother [Clare's] had planted was gone. Her carefully planned flowers, a devotion of fifty years, a way, she said, of giving something back to the Almighty, as she had given her son to Him, as He had given His son to her" (8).

Clare's mother, Kitty, wields the cotta to sunder her connection to patriarchal oppression, but not before it kills her. Clare says, "I do think my father is accountable...if we had not left she might well be alive...If he had listened to her fears...heeded her...we might have returned...to where we belonged. Home would not be something in my head" (82). However, it is the character of Harry/Harriet, through

²⁸ Nanny, or Queen Nanny, led the Maroon resistance against the British from 1725–1740. Nanny Town, a village in the Blue Mountains of eastern Jamaica was named in her honor. Most of what we know about Nanny comes to us from oral history. For example, Nanny was an honored Obeah practitioner. Her ability to hold off British troops was due in part to her ability to catch bullets in her buttocks and fart them back out.

his battyman labrish, who becomes the most powerful iteration of the “true properties of the cotta.”

Acting as Clare’s friend, caretaker, and supporter, Harry/Harriet creates a threshold that helps Clare realize her Jamaican black female identity. He does this by creating a queer discourse that reveals undocumented folk history. However, Harry/Harriet’s queer discourse is linked to his identity as a gay black man. To understand his discourse, we must answer a critical question: To what extent does Harry/Harriet represent black gay male identity? This question is important because Harry/Harriet eventually becomes just Harriet. In the chapter “Homebound,” on her final return to Jamaica, Clare encounters Harriet: “‘Harry?’ ‘Harriet, now, girlfriend...finally.’ ‘Then you have it done?’ ‘No, man. Cyaan afford it...Maybe when de revolution come...but the choice is mine, man, is made. Harriet live and Harry be no more’” (168). This exchange is important because Harriet clearly is defining herself as preoperative transgender woman.

His transformation from the Harry/Harriet to the female Harriet encompasses Jamaican communal descriptions of black gay male identity. Although Harriet is a male-to-female transsexual person, to be seen as herself in the novel, she “passes”²⁹ by using black gay male identity. In Jamaican culture she inhabits the role of a black gay male; ultimately, she moves beyond black gay male identity. This fact is made apparent when Clare and Harry/Harriet are teasing each other about their sexuality:

Clare ignored the last observation; of course she had been teasing, wanting to dismiss the subject. ‘Is where you read Plato?’ ‘Ah, girlfriend is pleased we can switch to book.’ Their eyes met with understanding. Harry/Harriet

²⁹ “Passing” is a term created within the racial hegemony of white supremacy. It connotes the ability of a black person to move from subjugated black identity to be identified as white.

continued. ‘Nuh read him at Calabar?’³⁰ When I was schoolbwai. You forget how them drill us in them labrish? De master mek us read about five of dem dialogue... Teaching us to be gentlemen... disdaining us all the while. (123)

This scene is important because it points to the moment in which labrish becomes discourse, a discourse that defines black gay male identity.

Similarly, black gay male writings and texts that respond to or represent black gay male identity reproduce this need to self-define not only as human, but also as part of the black community. Although Harry/Harriet is transgender, intertextually he is characterized as a gay man. Although Plato’s *Symposium*, the white text that he cannot make speak, does not understand—“couldn’t comprehend”—it defines him as a black gay male. In the chapter “Et In Arcadia ego”, Clare discusses this with Harry/Harriet the text of the Colonial master:

“And what did you think? About the dialogues, I mean.”

“Dem nuh tell us what to think? But, even so...even with them talk about golden age this and Platonic love that, I couldn’t...my twelve year old self couldn’t comprehend why it so gold if dem keep slave...if dem women lock up so. Why Jamaica den nuh golden eh?”

“You didn’t tell the master this?”

“I did.”

“And?”

“And him was sharp. Him tell me since me is battyman in-training, me should cleave to Plato. An him say that Jamaica is paradise wasted on the likes of we. And the rest of the class laugh.”

“What did you do?”

³⁰ Calabar High School, a well-known all-male secondary school in Kingston.

“I don’t remember. It was not the first time they held me to
ridicule...hardly...nor the last...” (123)

The instructor has pejoratively named Harry/Harriet. By calling him a battyman, the schoolmaster has double-voiced the white text to produce and silence black gay male identity. Thus Harry/Harriet’s battyman labrish reveals the negative affect of the Enlightenment on black gay male identity. It is the double-voiced metaphor of “Platonic love” iterated by the “master,” who wields power in the community by virtue of his role as an official in the hegemony. The master’s interpretation of the white text has the power to subjectively define Harry/Harriet. In the *Symposium*, the highest calling is to become a philosopher or, literally, a lover of wisdom. The love to which the participants otherwise refer is mostly male homosexual love, reflecting the social reality in classical Greece (v). Again, the schoolmaster uses this connotation of homosexuality to name Harry/Harriet as a faggot, and to silence his black gay male voice by “[holding him] to ridicule.” When asked how he responded to the naming and shaming, Harry/Harriet says, “I don’t remember” (123). This deletion of memory leaves black gay male identity in the novel voiceless as it faces homophobia. Most importantly, this scene shows that in the black Jamaican community Harry/Harriet is not perceived as transgender. He is considered to be a battyman, a black gay man.

By creating Harriet, a transgender character, Cliff breaks the essential heterosexual gender binaries of male and female. Harry/Harriet undermines patriarchal gender norms, the binary categories of “man” and “woman.” Her characterization does not cede to biologically essentialist definitions. Her existence makes it possible for someone assigned a male gender at birth to truly be a woman. Harriet is also remarkable because some gay, lesbian, and feminist activists distance themselves from transgender issues in their cultural politics. They feel that transgender people have a false

consciousness of gender oppression and seek to mutilate their bodies rather than liberate their minds. For example, Janice G. Raymond, in her antitranssexual book *Transsexual Empire* (1979), characterized female-to-male transsexuals as “traitors to their sex, and to the cause of feminism” (23). Raymond moves on to characterize male-to-female transsexuals as “rapists engaged in an unwanted penetration of women’s space” (23).³¹ However, in the 1980s, the female-to-male (FTM) community began to organize. Lou Sullivan, an FTM activist who identified as gay and was HIV positive, played a leading role in this effort. In 1986, inspired by the leadership of FTM pioneers such as Mario Martino, Steve Dain, Rupert Raj, and Jude Patton, he founded the FTM International, the leading advocacy group for FTM individuals, and began publishing “The FTM Newsletter.” Sullivan was an important community-based historian of transgenderism and also played an instrumental role in persuading medical and psychotherapeutic professionals to provide services to transgender individuals, like himself, who identified as gay or lesbian in their preferred social genders.³²

Kate Bornstein, discussing the idea of preferred social genders, says, “Here’s the tangle that I found: sexual orientation/preference is based in this culture solely on the gender of one’s partner of choice. Not only do we confuse the two words, we make them dependent on one another” (32). Of course, transgender men of color and black gay male identity are not the same thing. However, each exists in a discursive field that makes the other possible (Mc Bride 368). For example, in *No Telephone to Heaven*, we

³¹ Raymond’s views on transsexuality have been criticized for being extremely transphobic and constituting hate speech against transsexual men and women. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle argue that *Transsexual Empire* “did not invent anti-transsexual prejudice, but it did more to justify and perpetuate it than perhaps any other book ever written” (Stryker and Whittle, “Sappho” 131).

³² In the years since Sullivan’s death in 1991, his successor Jamison Green has emerged as the most vocal and influential FTM activist in the United States.

can locate the intersection between the black gay male identity of the femme queen³³ and transgender identity by reading how Harry/Harriet talks about his “pussy”:

Harry/Harriet puts on a bikini-bra stretched across his hairy, delicately mounded chest, panties cradling his cock and balls—and starts to dance to “Hey Jude”...People laugh but nobody takes Harry/Harriet to heart... “I shall be at Cable Hut tomorrow dancing with the sun behind me.” Pause. “Come if you want to some pussy.” “Lord, Harry, where you get pussy?” “You would be surprised, massa.” (21)

The black femme queen is part of the black gay male identity that Harry/Harriet transitions through. In the scene above, it is clear that the Jamaican community sees Harry as a black gay man. They call him Harry. The narrator references his male body, noting his “hairy chest, cock and balls.” The discontinuity between the image that the narrator creates and Harry’s “freaky deaky” femme queen discourse creates a hiatus that in its iterability creates agency. It is this same agency of iterability that we saw above in the declaration of femme queen extraordinaire Assoto Saint. In this instance, Harry offers his pussy to the men at his half-brother’s pool party. It is here that his effeminate discourse destabilizes black heteronormativity by suggesting that black men can have sex with one another. Moreover, Harry’s femme queen discourse problematizes racial binaries by suggesting that the male penetrating (i.e., top) would be the master of his femme queen pussy (in this case, Harry is suggesting he is a bottom to the penetrating top).³⁴

³³ Again, for the purposes of this thesis, “femme queens” are people who are assigned male gender, but who present in female or feminine ways.

³⁴ In the United States, drag queen, actor, model, and recording artist Ru Paul Andre Charles (born November 17, 1960 in San Diego, California) uses hiatus as an iterability of agency. In his song *Sissy That Walk* (from his 2014 album *Born Naked*, available on iTunes) he sings ‘I’m a femme-queen of the House of No Shame. My pussy is on fire now kiss the flame!’ Ru Paul also is the host for the reality television show *Ru Paul’s Drag Race (RPDR)* premiered on February 2, 2009 on the Logo TV network. It is now in its ninth season and can now be found on NETFLIX). On the reality show, Ru Paul routinely

Although Cliff initially characterizes Harry/Harriet as a femme queen, she registers her discomfort with Harry's femme queen brashness in the voice of her protagonist, Clare Savage:

For Clare's sake, Harry/Harriet wore a proper dinner jacket, but his face bespoke his usual brave, glamorous self... "Harry, is what shade of lipstick that? I think it's a bit outré...even for you..." "Look, darling, I felt especially colorful tonight. And given the fact that I draped myself in this drab garb, without so much as an earring to recommend me, for your sake, you might be more appreciative...or at least kinder. (121–22)

Of course, part of Clare's discomfort with Harry/Harriet is her homophobia. But, interestingly, Harry/Harriet deploys his femme queen discourse to tease Clare about being a lesbian, indicating that Clare's reaction is internalized homophobia:

"Tell me something, you ever been tempted?" He raised a meticulously shaped eyebrow as if to mock his question. "Tempted by what?" She asked, knowing full well what he was asking her. "Pussy, sweetness... loving your own kind." "Jesus, Harry! Sometimes you are too much." She was annoyed that the question made her uncomfortable and answered her friend too sharply. (122)

Harriet's creation, transformation, and ultimate social acceptance as a fellow revolutionary highlights and alters the ambivalence in the lesbian community to transgender people.

Importantly, Harry/Harriet disturbs the Fanonian conceptualization of black gay male identity. He describes the scene in which he was raped as a child by a colonial

asks contestants to show their "Courage, Uniqueness, Nerve, and Talent." This represents Ru Paul's subversion of the word "cunt."

officer. This scene is important because it speaks to Harry/Harriet's understanding of his black gay male identity. Harry/Harriet tells Clare about being raped: "And no, girlfriend, before you ask, if you intended to ask, or assume, that did not make me the way I am. No, darling, I was born this way, that I know. No just sun, but sun and moon...No, man, that t'ing didn't make me who I am. Didn't form me in all my complexity" (128).

Harry/Harriet's rape also connects black gay male identity to rape of black women under the masculine regimes of slavery, colonial oppression, and essentialist Black Nationalist discourse:

Darling, I know it is hard to listen to all of this; it is hard to tell. I have been tempted in my life to think symbol—that what he did to me is but a symbol for what they did to all of us, always bearing in mind what some of us, many of us, also do it to each other. But that's not right. I only suffered what my mother suffered—no more, no less. (129)

The point merits repetition. If Harry/Harriet's rape is not specifically symbolic of colonial oppression, his rape is a symbol of the gender oppression that women must bear. The moment above foreshadows Harry/Harriet's declaration of her status as a transgender woman. Yet in the above statement Harry/Harriet has not become Harriet. He, at this juncture in the novel, is a cypher that cannot be defined by one binary gender paradigm (i.e., male or female) but must be seen in all his "complexity," as both at once. He is "not just sun, but sun and moon" (128). The form of his complexity is the liminal space that mitigates gender boundaries. In this sense, Harry/Harriet's characterization as a cypher points to and mitigates black female oppression.

Moreover, it is Harry/Harriet's body and his gender that black heterosexuality defines itself against:

Then Harry/Harriet, boy-girl, Buster's brother-sister, half-brother-sister actually, who was always strange, since childhood, they say, but everyone tolerates him, as if measuring their normalness against his strangeness. He is *only* one, after all, one that nature did not claim. He is vastly outnumbered, will—unless they protect him, because he is also one of them, though apart from them, reminding them of their wholeness—he will end up in some back-o'-wall alley in Raetown, fucked to death... (21)

This scene is important because the description exemplifies what Fanon describes as “men dressed like women” (*Masks* 180). Fanon is one of the most important intellectuals to catalogue the psychological damage racism causes to the psyche of black men and women. Fanon harnesses the discourse of psychoanalysis to describe how homosexuality is a neurotic response to racism and colonization in Martinique. Fanon's intervention is a psychological diagnosis of the internalization of Negrophobia.³⁵ Cliff's description is more nuanced in that she creates a character with a name: Harry/Harriet. Fanon, on the other hand, creates a group of men whose identity is constructed to symbolize otherness. In both cases, Cliff's Harry/Harriet and Fanon's “faggots”³⁶ are both indicating that in the construction of national (i.e., Jamaica and Martinique) heteronormative identity, gayness is an oddity, a species of “strangeness” that black men are not born with. It is not part of their natal, natural, or essential identity. Notably, in both constructions, black gay male identity is a hybridized other. In Cliff's construction, Harry/Harriet's strangeness was produced in his childhood. As noted above, Fanon's faggots are the product of white supremacy over black (*Masks* 100, 180).

³⁵ “The Negro is a phobogenic object, a stimulus to anxiety. From the patient treated by Sérieux and Capgras to the girl who confides to me that to go to bed with a Negro would be terrifying to her, one discovers all the stages of what I shall call the Negro-phobogenesis....What is phobia? Phobia is a neurosis characterized by the anxious fear of an object (in the broadest sense of anything outside the individual) or, by extension, of a situation” (Fanon, *Masks* 151,154).

³⁶ I argue elsewhere that Fanon uses the term *pédéraste* as a pejorative term in the original French version of *Black Skin, White Masks*.

Both authors produce descriptions of black gay male identity that belong to, but are apart from, black male heteronormative identity. As Fanon creates black gay male identity as an indicator of sexual-psychological damage created by racism, he verifies the existence of black gay male identity in the black community. But the verification of existence is neither a validation nor acceptance of black gay male identity as a permissible or, importantly, essential part of black identity, or of black national identity. Cliff details this phenomenon as “one that nature did not claim,” yet gayness, as represented by the character of Harry/Harriett, is an indicator, a reminder of black heteronormative “wholeness.” For both authors, black gay male identity exists outside the limits of the heteronormativity that defines its limits.

Judith Butler’s concept of “gender performativity” is crucial to explaining how black gay male identity is both a part of black male identity and something separate from it. Butler theorizes that gendered essences (i.e., normative gendered roles that are considered real, natural or essential) “produce that which it posits as outside itself” (*Gender* xiv-xv). A thing is created by defining what it is not. This created outside becomes the limit of a gender’s possibility. It is the limit of what can or cannot be. Normative accounts of gender (male and female) determine “which expressions of gender are acceptable, and which are not...” (xxi). The implication here is that gender is a means of determining other identities. In this case, racial identity is solidified by the creation of a gendered other. Fanon uses the discourse of psychoanalysis to construct the homosexual black man as a black man who is mentally ill. His goal is to illustrate the extent to which racism damages the black psyche. He describes a force that comes from outside of the black community—white supremacy over black—and the psycho-sexual damage that results if the black community does not fight it. To interrogate this external force and its effects, Fanon asserts, “If one wants to understand the racial

situation psychoanalytically, not from a universal viewpoint but as it is experienced by individual consciousness, considerable importance must be given to sexual phenomena” (*Masks* 160). Fanon’s logic is that the black man can “free himself of the arsenal of complexes that has been developed by the colonial environment” (*Masks* 30). Homosexuality is one of these complexes of which black men must free themselves. Remarkably, Fanon’s remedy for the neurotic complexes that plague black men is alterity. Initially Fanon creates alterity by suggesting that Négritude, the love of the black self, is the remedy for the abject negation of the black self that is created by white supremacy:

If he [the black man] is overwhelmed to such a degree by the wish to be white, it is because he lives in a society that derives its stability from the perpetuation of this complex, in a society that proclaims the superiority of race; to the identical degree to which that society creates difficulties for him, he will find himself thrust into a neurotic situation. (*Masks* 100)

To heal the alienation that is caused in the black psyche, Fanon proposes black love for itself based on historicity. Historicity in this case is the validation of black beauty and black successes in science, arts, and religion before white colonization. Fanon sings the praises of Négritude.³⁷ Yet he admits that Négritude is but one strategy of alterity. Négritude can be assailed as yet another form of the “substantive absoluteness” of racism.³⁸ Therefore, alterity for Fanon is rupture. It is a break that allows for an alternative means of self-definition that conflicts and battles with the idea of victimization “based on the exploitation of a given race by another, on the contempt

³⁷ Fanon relies on the conception of Négritude that Aime Ceasar—and, to a lesser extent, Leopold Senghor—espouses in his poetry; but Fanon equivocates, saying that “the man who adores the Negro is as ‘sick’ as the man who abominates him. Conversely, that black man who wants to turn his race white is as miserable as he who preaches hatred for the whites.” The quote defines a limit to the extent that Négritude or black self-love should not descend to oppression (*Masks* 8).

³⁸ Fanon makes this point as he speaks against Jean Paul Sartre’s description of Négritude as “an anti-racist racism” (*Masks* 132). This quote is from Sartre’s *Orphee Noir* (Senghor, *Anthologie* x1).

in which a given branch of humanity is held by a form of civilization that pretends superiority” (*Masks* 224).

Fanon suggests that alterity arises not from idealism, “but quite simply because he [the black man] cannot conceive of life otherwise than in the form of a battle against exploitation, misery, and hunger” (*Masks* 224). In this regard, Cliff’s *No Telephone to Heaven* and Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* are in accord. Specifically, both authors espouse beliefs that the contempt held by one branch of humanity towards another is wrong. Also, it is the struggle against injustice that constructs identity. Unfortunately, because Fanon creates black gay male identity as something that is caused by white supremacy, he recreates the behavior of othering that he argues against. Notably, Michelle Cliff’s description of black gay male identity in *No Telephone to Heaven* aligns itself with Fanon’s remedy but avoids the recreation of othering behavior.

Cliff’s characterization of Harry/Harriet in *No Telephone to Heaven* is positive because it is Harry/Harriet’s battyman labrish, his gay discourse, that connects black gay male identity to the historical black identity that resulted from slavery and the Atlantic slave trade. Harry/Harriet creates an opening for the incorporation of black gay male identity in the Atlantic slave trade: “I hear a lot of dem back den was on the queerish side...is true...or is a piece of battyman Labrish? Oh...yes, Labrish, but also true-true” (121). Importantly, Harry/Harriet uses his labrish to interrogate folklore for a usable memory that will locate queer identity within the slave narrative.

Harry/Harriet’s battyman labrish also underscores the fact that Cliff’s novel is autobiographical. As Cliff presents her story, she reveals her family’s involvement in the slave trade as slave owners. Her novel becomes a slave narrative, similar to Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Cliff explained in an interview that her “alternative histories attempt to set the record right by reconstructing and making

visible these hitherto hidden histories of resistance and inserting within them the crucial part played by women” (“Art” 71). Jacobs says of her autobiography:

I do earnestly desire to arouse the women of North to a realizing sense of the condition of two millions of women at the South, still in bondage, suffering what I suffered, and most of them far worse. I add my testimony to that of abler pens to convince people of the Free States what Slavery really is. (i)

Thus both women are telling their stories in an effort to create a usable past. By calling her novel an “alternative history,” Cliff offers another connection to Jacobs’s narrative and to all slave narratives in general. William L. Andrews affirms that “Slave narratives comprise one of the most influential traditions in American Literature” (1). However, the positive textual descriptions of black men and women that the slave narratives recount were largely ignored by historians as texts worthy of critical examination. For example, Ulrich B. Phillips suggested in 1929 that, as a class, “their authenticity was doubtful” (32). It wasn’t until the publication of the work of John Wesley Blassingame—*The Slave Community* (1972), *Black New Orleans, 1860-1880* (1973), and *New Perspectives on Black Studies* (1972)—that the slave narrative became a legitimate subject of academic research. Blassingame wrote that “One mistake that our intellectual ancestors frequently made that we must strive to avoid is that they often became alienated from the black masses and the cultural artifacts they produced” (*New Perspectives* 25).

Interestingly, before Jean Feagan Yellin was able to verify Jacobs’s narrative in 1987, *Incidents* was regarded as a work of fiction. Thereby, Yellin was able to “embed [Jacob] appropriately in American cultural history” (xx). As Cliff will do later with the

character of Harry/Harriet, Jacobs inscribes Luke into the slave narrative. The escape of the slave Luke is gossiped about in Jacobs's narrative because its queerness highlights the injustice of the slavocracy. In "'The Strangest Freaks of Despotism': Queer Sexuality in Antebellum African American Slave Narratives" (2006), Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman pinpoints black gay male identity in the slave narrative. Abdur-Rahman explains that Jacobs' portrayal of Luke, who is a black gay man, makes him an official part of cultural history.

In this way, Luke and his labrish—in this case, gossip concerning his escape—become an official part of black cultural history. Interestingly, black gay male labrish emerges from female labrish or gossip. Jacobs's narrative is multivalent in its strategy. She focuses on homosexual sexual abuse to portray slavery as a system that is morally bankrupt and perverse. While she does focus on heterosexual abuse to reach the same end, it is important to note that the overarching theme works to produce a positive identity for those trapped in the system of chattel slavery, to portray them as resourceful human beings. The construction of Linda Brent as victor over Dr. Flint also affirms Jacobs's commitment to writing an empowering text, one that supported women assuming greater control of their realities. In her evaluation of male-authored slave narratives and their portrait of black women, Frances Foster found that they contributed to the stereotypes of slave women. Describing the public's image of slave women, Foster writes, "They see her as victim—to be pitied, perhaps—but neither respected nor emulated" (84). Foster shows that slave narratives tend to provide male narratives that objectify women. However, Jacobs's narrative argues that black men who are damaged by chattel slavery deserve sympathy. She shows that the male slave narrators objectify not only women, but also men.

This is what happens with the characterization of the slave Luke and with Jacobs's construction of black gay male identity. Jacobs presents Luke's body: he is half-naked, covered only by a shirt; ultimately his entire naked body is revealed when he is forced to bare his back to the master's whip. By revealing Luke in this way, Jacobs means to create a sympathetic character that is to be pitied, but not emulated. Jacobs's back-handed appellation for Luke—"poor ignorant and much abused"—is an indictment of the system of slavery that produces Luke's raped body, but it is also an indictment of Luke's moral failings in his strategy to escape from slavery (150). At one point, Luke steals money from his master, Henry. The scene points in two directions at once. First, it indicates that Luke is morally flawed; second, it shows that his moral failings are engendered by the institution of slavery:

He then told me of the advice he had received, and the plans he had laid. I asked if he had money enough to take him to Canada. "Pend upon it, I hab," he replied. "I tuk car fur dat. I'd bin workin all my days fur dem cussed whites, an got no pay but kicks and cuffs. So I tought dis nigger had a right to money nuff to bring him to de Free States. Massa Henry he lib till ebery body vish him dead; an ven he did die, I knowed de debbil wuld hab him, an wouldn't vant him to bring his money 'long too. So I tuk some of his bills, an put 'em in de pocket of his ole trousers. An ven he was buried, dis nigger ask fur dem ole trousers, an dey gub 'em to me." With a low, chuckling laugh, he added, "You see I didn't steal it; dey gub it to me. I tell you. I had a mighty hard time to keep de speculator from findin [the money] it; but he didn't git it." (150)

Jacobs interprets Luke's actions as morally reprobate, but caused by the institution of chattel slavery:

This is a fair specimen of how the moral sense is educated by slavery. When a man has his wages stolen from him, year after year, and the laws sanction and enforce the theft, how can he be expected to have more regard to honesty than has the man who robs him? I have become somewhat enlightened, but I confess that I agree with poor-ignorant much-abused Luke, in thinking he had a right to that money, as a portion of his unpaid wages. He went to Canada forthwith, and I have not since heard from him. (150)

Taken in context, Jacobs's words place her in comparison to Luke. She has been privileged in that she has been educated by her mother's mistress, who has taught Linda Brent (Jacobs's fictionalized version of herself in *Incidents*) "the precepts of God's Word" (19). Yet, even in her identity as a privileged slave, she recognizes the moral slippage between the precepts of Christian dogma and the institution of chattel slavery. Upon the death of her good mistress, Brent says, "I could not have helped having some hopes that she had left me free [in her will]" (19). But the good mistress does not free Brent. She becomes the slave of her mistress's infant daughter. In the narrative, Jacobs positions the education and moral teaching side by side with her feelings of being wronged. As stated above, Jacobs's mistress taught her the precepts of God's Word:

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them. But I was her slave, and I suppose she did not recognize me as her neighbor. I would give much to blot out from my memory that one great wrong...I try to think with less bitterness of this act of injustice. While I was with her, she taught me to read and spell; and for this privilege, which so rarely falls to the lot of a slave, I bless her memory. (11)

The positioning is important. As with Luke's story, it demonstrates Jacobs's back-handed speech that both impugns and praises a character when she wants to highlight the injustices of chattel slavery. Henry Louis Gates Jr. speaks to the subject of literacy and what it meant to slaves:

Black people, the evidence suggests, had to represent themselves as "speaking subjects" before they could even begin to destroy their status as objects, as commodities, within Western culture. In addition to all of the myriad reasons for which human beings write books, this particular reason seems to have been paramount for the black slave. (*Signifying* 141)

The very fact that Jacobs writes her own autobiography announces to her white reading audience that she is in possession of a humanity shared in common with Europeans (*Signifying* 140). Gates affirms that this form of signifying, of describing oneself in writing, counters the idea that slave narratives "could only be read as a testimony of defilement" (140). Jacobs's autobiography—and her descriptions of Luke and black gay male identity—can thus be seen not just as a facile collection of rapes, whippings, and degradations, but as an act of transporting black female and black gay male identity from the morass of chattel slavery into the realm of full and unadulterated humanity.

The sexual component to Luke's story is absent in descriptions of other male slaves who are whipped in *Incidents*. For example, in chapter nine, entitled "Sketches of Neighboring Slaveholders," Mr. Litch, a slave-owner, beats an unnamed body servant (i.e., slave):

Mr. Litch returned from town one evening in a partial state of intoxication. His body servant gave him some offence. He was divested of his clothes, except his shirt, whipped, and tied to a large tree in front of the house. (41)

This scene is important because it points to a trend in *Incidents* of black men being degraded by being whipped while half-naked. However, the contrast between Luke's abuse and this whipping is that the man being whipped above retains his shirt. This point of fact is significant because Luke, in contrast, must reveal his entire naked body to Henry's lash. Abdur-Rahman's assessment is correct: "The relationship between Luke and his owner qualifies as an instantiation of sadomasochistic, intra-gender abuse and reveals in general the entwinement of desire and coercion" (231). Importantly, it is the slave-owner's desire that is manifest, and the black body that must be coerced. In the same paragraph, Jacobs tells the story of a slave who is beaten for stealing from Master Litch:

Another slave, who stole a pig from this master, to appease his hunger, was terribly flogged. In desperation, he tried to run away. But at the end of two miles, he was so faint with loss of blood...he crept back that long distance on his hands and knees...He had no strength to rise and open the gate. He moaned and tried to call for help. I had a friend living in the same family...She went out and found the prostrate man at the gate...The back of his shirt was one clot of blood. By means of lard, my friend loosened it from the raw flesh. She bandaged him, gave him cool drink, and left him to rest.

(41)

In both cases, it is clear that the enslaved black men are whipped by Mr. Litch with their shirts on. Their bodies are obfuscated, hidden in ways that Luke's body is not. Although the tone of both tellings registers the degradation of the two men being sadistically whipped, the hint of the sexual is absent from both accounts. Essentially, Mr. Litch is a despot created by the institution of slavery. But he is not sensual or licentious in his whipping of the black men. Therefore, one can assume that although Mr. Litch

likes to degrade his black male slaves, there is nothing queer about him or his actions in Jacobs's account. He is a typically cruel master in the cruel system of chattel slavery.

There is an element of distancing that is created when Jacobs talks about the man who was whipped by Litch for stealing the pig. Neither of the slaves that Litch whips are named, which is at odds with Jacobs's chiasmic claim in chapter nine: "I can testify, from my own experience and observation, that slavery is a curse to whites as well as to blacks" (45). If Jacobs were present for the actions described above, she would surely have known the names of both black men. It may be the case that she knew who they were but left them nameless to protect their identity. But it is remarkable that she does not create a pseudonym for either man. Thus, the distance created is the lack in the allegorical nature that naming and names can provide, as in the case of Luke. We must also consider that it is Jacobs's friend that hears the moaning slave at the gate, which means that Jacobs herself was not a first-person witness to the man's distress, or condition. Her friend would have had to tell her. Similarly, before telling the story of Luke's abuse, Jacobs states, "I was somewhat acquainted with a slave named Luke" (148). She qualifies her testimony and her position as a first-person observer to Luke's circumstances. Both iterations create a disconnect between the actions, Jacobs, and the reader. This disconnect is exemplified by the Irish aphorism *Dúirt bean liom go ndúirt bean léi*: "I heard it from a woman who heard it from a woman." Simply put, what these scenes describe is black male degradation and black male sexual abuse. But they describe them at a remove; they describe hearsay. The purpose of drawing attention to Jacobs's distance from the men, or from the scenes of degradation, is not to call into question the veracity of her narrative. Her voice in these instances is a communal voice, so the events that it describes are no less accurate than if she had been there in person to

witness all the beatings and rape. While Jacobs distances herself from Luke, she creates communal knowing with her labrish.

While Jacobs creates distance between herself and Litch's beatings of black men, she draws a linguistic veil between herself and Luke. This fact is exemplified in her transcription of black dialect when she has Luke tell his story. Luke's speech is the strongest use of black dialect in the autobiography. This is the moment when the reader hears Luke tell his labrish:

"Pend upon it, I hab," he replied. "I tuk car fur dat. I'd bin workin all my days fur dem cussed whites, an go no pay but kicks and cuffs. So I tought dis nigger had a right to money nuff to bring him to de Free States. Massa Henry he lib till ebery body vish him dead; an ven he did die, I knowed de debbil wuld hab him, an wouldn't vant him to bring his money 'long too. So I tuk some of his bills, an put 'em in de pocket of his ole trousers. An ven he was buried, dis nigger ask fur dem ole trousers, an dey gub 'em to me."

With a low, chuckling laugh, he added, "You see I didn't steal it; dey gub it to me. I tell you. I had a mighty hard time to keep de speculator from findin it; but he didn't git it." (150)

In direct contrast, immediately following Luke's recounting of his story, Jacobs offers a summary:

This is a fair specimen of how the moral sense is educated by slavery. When a man has his wages stolen from him, year after year, and the laws sanction and enforce the theft, how can he be expected to have more regard to honesty than has the man who robs him? I have become somewhat enlightened, but I confess that I agree with poor-ignorant much-abused Luke,

in thinking he had a right to that money, as a portion of his unpaid wages.

He went to Canada forthwith, and I have not since heard from him. (150)

Why does Jacobs distance herself from this man in this way? Jacobs's stance can be attributed to the fact that she is trying to develop for herself an identity of someone who is not raped by the slave master's licentiousness. In effect, she is not raped like the others. But by trying to linguistically distance herself from Luke, she places herself and him on two sides of a cultural veil. A facile explanation for Jacobs's casting of Luke's voice in black dialect is, as affirms, in his article "Dialect and Identity in Harriet Jacobs's *Autobiography and other Slave Narratives*" (2006), Albert Tricomi offers a facile explanation for why Jacobs would use black dialect for Luke: "transcribing black dialect intimates an attitude of condescension or at least superiority" (619). In contrast, the use of standard English "bolsters the author's authority as a literate person" (620). Ultimately, using black dialect is a means to distinguish slaves that were black in color from those that were mulatto, or who looked white (620). This, however, is not the effect that Jacobs seeks in providing the contrast between her voice and Luke's.

Linguistically, Tricomi finds that black characters in slave narratives are diminished and given low-class standing using "eye dialect," which is a written dialect that includes "spelling substitutions that do not change at all the pronunciation of the words themselves. Far from even trying to approximate black speech...eye dialect functions to mark the speaker, invidiously, as ignorant and of low class" (622). Examples of such spellings are 'sed' for 'said,' 'kum' for 'come,' and 'kase' for 'case'. In the transcription of Luke's dialect above, the only word that could potentially resemble "eye dialect" is the word "tuk" (622). However, the insertion of 'u' for the double-vowel 'oo' changes the pronunciation of the word to such an extent that it cannot be considered "eye dialect". Tricomi finds that Jacobs's use of black dialect is a

genuine attempt to express Luke's speech pattern *just as she heard it*: "Thus while Jacobs disapproves of Luke's 'ignorant' way of thinking and renders his speech in dialect, she uses the anecdote to humanize the character and only then to moralize... on the moral blight of slavery" (627). Slavery made him ignorant.

The link between Jacobs's use of black dialect and Luke's black gay male identity is that his story incorporates the idea of the witty slave, the celebrated trickster of African American folklore whose wit overcomes the superior power of the master and chattel slavery. By tricking the master class—"You see I didn't steal it [the money]; dey gub it to me"—Luke becomes a mimetic construction of the Yoruban god Esu Legba. As the anthropologist Michael Taussig observes, "mimesis is deeply linked to alterity and the production of otherness." Gates quotes Yoruba scholar Ayodele Ogundipe on the subject:

Certainly Esu is not restricted to human distinctions of gender or sex; he is at once both male and female. Although his masculinity [his penis] is depicted as visually and graphically overwhelming, his equally expressive [breast and pudenda] femininity renders his enormous sexuality ambiguous, contrary, and genderless. (qtd. in *Signifying* 34)

Gates also quotes Juana Elbein and Deoscóredes Maximiliano dos Santos:

Being result and issue, he inherits the nature of all the ancestors. He exhibits the characteristics of the male ancestors, the Egun Irunmale, as well as those of the female, Iyam-mi Aje. By compounding their morphologies, he partakes of either group and can circulate freely between them all. (qtd. in *Signifying* 34)

Put simply, Abdur-Rahman is correct that Jacobs does narrate a character whose identity is homosexualized by the sadomasochistic, same-sex desire of Henry, his master. However, Jacobs overlooks the resourcefulness Luke expresses in his labrish. She overlooks his trickster nature. And she also overlooks the idea that Luke might have been gay before being raped. Basically, she overlooks an entire lexicon of African American survival strategies related to trickster iconography, which can be traced back to Esu Legba. Jacobs survives and escapes slavery because she is able to deploy her sexuality to entice Mr. Sands into a liaison. It is short-sighted at best to assume that Luke has no sexuality. The fact that he is able to survive Henry's desire can be attributed to his double-natured trickster sexuality: "he partakes of either group and circulates between them all." Here there is an opening for sexual alterity, difference. He is not an abject character or an abject identity. He reprimands Jacobs when she reminds him of the Fugitive Slave Law: "De risk ain't so bad for me, as 'tis for you. 'Cause I runned away from de speculator, and you runned away from de massa" (*Incidents* 149). Jacobs might be superior to Luke in her ability to read the white word and the white world. But by using his labrish, Luke reads her from his own world, to say in the parlance of black gay male identity, "Miss thang you ain't all that." In other words, Jacobs survives and escapes slavery and her master's desire by using her sexuality and wit to run away. The implication is that Luke stays but ultimately escapes slavery by surviving his master by using his sexuality and wit. Luke exemplifies a black gay male identity in the slave narrative that is not always abject.

Both Jacobs's and Cliff's narratives use black gay male identity to create a liminal space by which black women's claims to power and voice can be heard. As Dwight McBride rightly says regarding the role of women in Black Nationalist agendas: "they cannot speak any more than the gay or lesbian brother or sister can. If these are part of

the structural demands of race discourse, the erasure of subtlety and black difference, insistence on and the creation of new and more inclusive ways of speaking about race” (376).

Chapter 3

The Touching of Totees

The purpose of this chapter is to interrogate the characterization of the black gay male identity known as the “butch queen” in Lawrence Scott’s novel *Aelred’s Sin* (1998) and H. Nigel Thomas’s *Spirits in the Dark* (1993). Importantly, Scott analogously connects the slave narrative and notions of power and identity. In *Aelred’s Sin*, Scott organizes characterizations of the butch queen to create a narrative that parallels the two main tenets of organization belonging to the genre of the slave narrative. The two tenets of the slave narrative genre are the ideas that slavery is damaging for both blacks and whites and that religion is subverted when it is made to serve the slavocracy. In chapter thirteen, “The Church and Slavery,” Jacobs speaks of the “discourse” of Christianity and slavery. In this discourse, Jacobs claims,

There is a great difference between Christianity and religion. If a man goes to the communion table, and pays money into the treasury or the church, no matter if it be the price of blood [the blood of slaves], he is called religious. If a pastor has offspring by a woman not his wife, the church dismisses him, if she is a white woman; but if she is colored, it does not hinder his continuing to be their good shepherd. (115)

Here we can see the trauma that is inflicted on the black community by the hegemony of white religiosity. More importantly, we can see how the slave narrative highlights the discourse of sexual hypocrisy of the church. In this instance, Jacobs’s narrative destabilizes the church’s discourse of what it means to be a “good shepherd.”

Likewise, Jacobs's narrative highlights how racial slavery, as a hegemonic institution, is harmful for whites as well as blacks. In chapter six, "The Jealous Mistress," Jacobs recalls,

Mrs. Flint possessed the key to her husband's character before I was born. She might have used this knowledge to counsel and screen the young and innocent among her slaves; but for them she had no sympathy. They were the objects of her constant suspicion and malevolence. (ch. 6)

Although Mrs. Flint is aware that her husband's character is base, she wrongly assumes that it is the slave-women who must be controlled. However, it is Jacobs's account of Dr. Flint's licentious behavior that reveals the truth:

As I went on with my account her color changed frequently, she wept, and sometimes groaned. She spoke in tones so sad, that I was touched by her grief. The tears came to my eyes; but I was soon convinced that her emotions arose from anger and wounded pride. She felt that her marriage vows were desecrated, her dignity insulted; but she had no compassion for the poor victim of her husband's perfidy. She pitied herself as a martyr; but she was incapable of feeling for the condition of shame and misery in which her unfortunate, helpless slave was placed. (ch. 6)

Jacobs's condition as a slave and victim of both Dr. and Mrs. Flint is evident. Also evident is that slavery is both the hegemony of white over black and of white male over white female. Slavery is bad for whites because the discourse of marriage (sacred vows) is subverted, and white womanhood is insulted.

In *Aelred's Sin*, Laurence Scott creates a neo-slave narrative for black gay male identity. The two main tenets that elevate to the level of the neo-slave narrative are the

ideas that homophobia is damaging for both gay and straight men, and that religion, as represented in the novel by the Catholic Church, is subverted when it is made to serve heteronormative hegemony that preferences heterosexuality over homosexuality.³⁹

Despite receiving glowing praise in the popular press, academics have taken a more critical stance in relation to *Aelred's Sin*. Scott's novel received high praise in the popular press. In the *Trinidad Guardian*, Keith Jardim wrote that Scott's novel is "a compassionate, beautifully written and thoroughly explicit story of homoeroticism. *Aelred's Sin* is a big work in every way [and] will further reinforce Lawrence Scott's reputation as an established and important Caribbean writer." Raol Pantin wrote in the *Trinidad Sunday Express* that the novel is "a fine and sensitive and compassionate book that, disturbing as it sometimes is, demonstrates genuine literary skill...A gifted achievement; it is a worthwhile contribution to the hallowed tradition of West Indian literature." Ken Ramchand wrote in the *Trinidad Sunday Guardian* that Scott is "a writer who is slowly building up a solid reputation as one of the important writers of a new generation...There is a great deal of sensitivity in Scott's portrayal of all his characters...an important work to sensitize and effect change."

Hena Maes-Jelinek, in her article "Lawrence Scott's Caribbeanness: A Personal Reading of *Witchbroom* and *Aelred's Sin*" (2000), questions "...the parallel between the horrors of slavery and the ostracism of homosexuality" (135) in *Aelred's Sin*. Her concern is that the connection between slavery and ostracism is questionable. Jelinek's intervention contrasts with the point of view of this thesis: namely, that *Aelred's Sin* makes a cogent connection between slavery and homosexuality because it preforms as a neo-slave narrative that recalls the tenets of Harriet Jacobs's slave narrative.

³⁹ For the purposes of this thesis, hegemony means the social and cultural predominance or control of one group within a society over another.

Interestingly, Maes-Jelinek's argument begins with the qualification to Scott's novel, "Though written from a white man's point of view" (116). Her qualification raises the issue of white or Western queerness in the Caribbean. Evelyn O'Callaghan explains this well in an interview with Sheryl Gifford:

I've actually heard it said at a conference, [that] this "theory business" is a bit like homosexuality, it's a Western fashion that you're bringing to impose on us, it's colonization all over again. But really what that meant was, "I can't be bothered to read it and understand it, so I'll just criticize it as foreign." (3)⁴⁰

O'Callaghan's intervention acknowledges and criticizes Fanon-like conceptualizations of the conference attendees, that queerness is a colonial imposition on the Global South. Lee Easton and Kelly Hewson provide a similar perspective: "Just as queer theory has been criticized for its tendency to project a North American image of queerness globally, similarly, queer theory is problematic when it approaches the postcolonial" (89).

But the whiteness, Westernness, and foreignness of queer identity is disturbed by Easton and Hewson when they say, "Scott's achievement [in *Aelred's Sin*] therefore is twofold: he racializes the queer body and (homo) sexualizes the black body" (91). This statement is important because it marks how *Aelred's Sin* in particular in challenging fictions can in general influence cultural biases ("Conversation" 5).

Unlike *Aelred's Sin*, in which Jean Marc de la Borde is unable to return home, H. Nigel Thomas's *Spirits in the Dark* uses the characterization of the butch queen and the African-based religion of the "Spirituals" to create a narrative in which a self-identified black gay male, Jerome Quashee, becomes a means to critique the discourse of the

⁴⁰ Terry Goldie also identifies the problem that homosexuality is thought to be foreign to the Global South on page 21 of "Queerly Postcolonial." *ARIEL* 30.2 (April 1999): 9–26.

racist and class-ridden culture. Moreover, the novel proposes that the remedy to the ills of racism, and classism, is self-love instigated by black gay men.

Unlike the femme queen character of Harry/Harriet, who is flamboyant and references his pussy, butch queen characterizations are best understood by their tortured relationship with homophobia. This relationship engenders double-consciousness in black gay men that is akin to W.E.B. Du Bois's ideas about the phenomenon. Du Bois writes in the *Souls of Black Folk* (1903):

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (2)

Du Bois's description of two competing identity constructions is a helpful starting point in understanding that some black men suffer from internalized racism. But it is necessary to push further to gain insight into black masculine gender construction. In his article "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity" (2001), Michael Kimmel makes the case "that homoerotic desire is cast as feminine desire, desire for other men." "Homophobia," he continues, "is the effort to suppress that desire, to purify all relationships with other men, and homophobic flight from intimacy with other men is the repudiation of the homosexual within" (284). What Kimmel's description lacks in relation to the characteristics of the butch queen is that butch queens pass as heterosexual black men, except when they are having sex with men. However, Kimmel alludes to this characteristic of the butch queen to pass as a heterosexual black male when he describes homophobia as a central organizing

principle for culturally defining manhood: “It is more than the irrational fear of gay men; it comes out of the depths of manhood as a label of ultimate contempt for anyone who seems to be a sissy, un-tough, un-cool” (285). Kimmel surmises that “it is the fear that other males will un-mask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men” (285).

What we gain from Du Bois’s and Kimmel’s descriptions is the understanding that, in general, black butch queens face a world that views them with contempt and pity because their male desire is cast as feminine; that black butch queen’s desires to be both black and gay are diametrically opposed competing identities; and, importantly, that black butch queens internalize homophobia. Ironically, as the butch queen tries to pass, he reveals the normative structures that police race and gender. Being a butch queen requires one to be, like the black femme queen, a politically engaged black gay male. As Kimmell shows, academic criticism is helps to create a discourse of the butch queen. Still, no discourse from the academy is needed to understand the butch queen in the Caribbean or even in the black gay male diaspora. The discourse exists within the community itself. For example, the African American gay community produced the phrase “On the down low” or “on the DL” (Herring 197), a response to the communal policing of black gay male desire. It is impression management. Put simply, this is what butch queens do to deflect homophobia by presenting themselves in a manner that is consistent with perceived norms about masculine behavior. These men pass, or publicly identify, as heterosexual but secretly have sex with men.

“On the DL” is an apt description of the black gay male identity of Claude McKay, a pioneering Jamaican writer who migrated to the United States in 1912. A financial gift from his mentor, Walter Jekyll, enabled McKay to move to New York in 1914, where he opened a restaurant and married Eulalie Imelda Lewars. After their marriage failed,

Eulalie returned to Jamaica and gave birth to their daughter, Ruth Hope. In his book *Claude McKay: Rebel Sojourner in the Harlem Renaissance* (1987), Wayne Cooper claims that, although there is ample evidence of his homosexuality, McKay never publicly identified himself as a homosexual (75).⁴¹

However, McKay primitivized what Langston Hughes called the “low-down” culture of black people in his autobiography, *Big Sea* (1940). It is the tension between the high and the low life that disturbs the agenda of racial uplift. By adopting what Sam See terms the “chiastic balance between the terms low-down and down low,” we can determine how the butch queen and his sexually transgressive behavior destabilizes the agenda of dominant racial construction (801).

See’s invocation of the chiasmus in relation to race and sexuality is in keeping both with what Gates calls the prevalence of the chiasmus in the slave narrative (*Signifying* 185–86) and with the assertion made that the butch queen narrative has characteristics of the slave narrative. Moreover, the DL represents a form of Judith Butler’s gender parody in that it is a subversive bodily act (*Gender* 175).

For example, it is the touching of totees (the rubbing of penises) — a down-low and low-down action—in Lawrence Scott’s *Aelred’s Sin* that iterates desire and disrupts identity, while at the same time problematizing “the fetishistic implications of primitivism” (see See, “Spectacles”).

Aelred’s Sin won the Commonwealth Writer’s Prize Best Book (Canada and Caribbean) in 1999, and it was nominated for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award in 2000. The novel is partly autobiographical: Scott was born in Trinidad in 1943 and was educated at San Fernando Boy’s RC School in Trinidad (1950-54). He was also educated by Benedictine monks at the Abbey School, Mount Saint Benedict, in

41 Also see Carl Van Vechten, Bruce Nugent, Gary Edward Holcomb, and Tyrone Tillery.

the town of Tunapuna (1955-62). Speaking on the subject of himself and the novel, Scott said, “I am a novelist. I tell a story, a love story. *Aelred’s Sin* is a story that deals with the theme of growing up and what happens to boys as they grow up; it gives an exploration of various possibilities for male relationships” (qtd. in Ali 8).

In the novel, it is the boys’ low-down behavior creates conflict in the novel:

They had been small when it started. It seemed as if it was as far back as he could remember that he and Ted used to play games which were to do with touching and other things. They used to undress together. “Rub my totee.” He heard their boyhood word. “Suck me now.” “Yes.” “Put it in.” “Where?” “In my bottom.” “My finger?” “No.” “Come. Come. Push it in. Push it in.” He remembered when their first orgasms started. “Let’s jock together.” “You break yet?” “Yes, yes.” They held each other hardly breathing. It smelt like the smell of swimming pools. Then they had to go to confession. It was impure, a mortal sin. They would go to hell. “Lick, *suck*,” Aelred heard those words from far away. He could not settle down to his *Lectio Divina*. “Break”, another word of childhood, threaded itself through his thoughts. *Le petit mort*, someone had once told him it was called when he was grown up. (*Aelred* 83)

Their love is described as vice. This relationship between the black boy Ted Salter and the white boy Jean Marc (J.M.) becomes the driving force of the narrative. See says specifically that “when low-down race and low-down gender intersect, the chiasmic center is queer feeling, an effect that rejects identity and claims non-normative experience (racial or sexual) as natural” (801–02). In other words, because *Aelred’s Sin* offers intersections of race, color, class and religion, the orgasmic, queer feeling that the two boys experience from totee-rubbing troubles the constructed nature of all the

identifications listed above, plus gender. Unlike *Aelred's Sin*, Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* does not produce an orgasmic queer feeling for Harry/Harriet:

Darling, I know it is hard to listen to all of this; it is hard to tell. I have been tempted in my life to think *symbol*- that what he did to me is but a symbol for what they did to all of us, always bearing in mind that some of us, many of us, also do it to each other. But that's not right. I only suffered what my mother suffered – no more no less. (129)

Harry/Harriet recounts the story of how he was raped by a white colonial officer. The colonial discourse that reduces Harry/Harriet to a “sweet lickle monkey” causes him to think analogously of rape, black gay male identity, the black community's policing of gender, and the rape of women.

However, *Aelred's Sin* handles black gay male rape and sexuality differently. The novel is narrated not by J.M. but by his heterosexual brother Robert de la Borde. Robert painstakingly reflects on the life of his dead, homosexual, French Creole brother who has left Les Deux Isles, a fictionalized appellation for Trinidad and Tobago. By focusing on J.M.'s story, Scott enables the butch queen narrative to perform in the manner of the slave narrative. The straight white brother becomes an example of how homophobia and white supremacist racial construction is harmful for the gay white brother as well as the straight white brother. Upon reading J.M.'s journal entry concerning the rubbing of totees, Robert reflects:

Touching, yes, lots of boys somewhere along the line touched each other's totees. Rub totee, as we called it. We all joked about jocking in the bath queue. “Watch you slip and break your neck, boy”, someone sniggered as one boy followed another into the shower. There was lots of laughter and pushing, but lick, suck! Yes, they sucked each other, some of them. But the

other? I always think of dogs stuck together in the heat. But J.M. writes of it as something so hidden and secret, something so precious, savoured from childhood; something that came back like a perfume. He knew that it was a sin. "Can you find any of that in yourself?" Joe asks. I don't know. Miriam says, "You must look into yourself." Joe says, "You must keep an open mind." Something in the life I'm discovering moves me. They ask if I would accept all those things between men and women. I shrug yes. "So it's not the acts in themselves?" They ask. Acts! Well, I'm not sure about that. (88)

The scornful sniggering and Robert's animalistic imagery highlights and exposes the primitive nature of the acts that the boys engage in. Juxtaposed with the down-low's secret, and, in this case, "precious" nature, the secret queer act reveals a chiasmus in which the butch queen and his discourse is revealed. In other words, J.M.'s positive conceptualization of totee-touching that transfigures the low-down nature of the act. J.M.'s discourse elevates the "act" from the level of animalistic behavior to the level of humanity, to something that is acceptable for people to do together. This black gay male identity and its discourse of touching totees that iterates desire disrupts heteronormative identity. To come to terms with J.M.'s homosexuality, Robert must revisit his own non-normative sexual play that disturbs hegemonic heteronormativity. But, importantly, he must revisit the guilt he has sustained into adulthood. The guilt is engendered from the scene in which Robert is forced to become his brother's persecutor:

After the burning shame, which the monks and lay teachers ignored, and Ted and J.M. tried to pretend hadn't happened, I lived with my brother's reputation, not fully understanding, and not wanting to betray him, but tempted, when the teasing got too much...The stamping got worse and worse...I could see the other boys looking at me to see if I was joining

in...More eyes looked at me. I could feel my feet lifting and falling. My hands were on the knives and forks. I was banging them down on the tables too. I was joining in I was banging them down on the table too... (92)

Robert is also forced to face his notions of race and the constructed nature of race because J.M. did:

I see now that there were other things which bothered him, for instance, the special significance he gives to those boys: Redhead, Espinet, Ramnarine and Mackensie. Obviously looking back he felt guilty about the colour business. He didn't have to go through all that we had to go through with Black Power. It doesn't seem natural, his preoccupation with race. (92)

Interestingly, it is this foundational relationship between the black butch queen Ted and the white butch queen J.M. that occasions J.M.'s self-love that ultimately mediates the ills of racism and classism. Crucially, J.M.'s growth is instigated by the butch queen as a representation of black gay male identity. Ted is the one who forces J.M. to confront the fact that their relationship is interracial:

But suddenly Ted blurted out, "So, my grandmother's black." "She can't be black because you're not black. That's stupid." "She is black. I should know." They were shouting these words "black" and "white" in particular... were ringing out with venom and insult mixed with incredulity in J.M.'s voice and stoic assertion in Ted's. "Anyway, you aren't black, so," J.M. hit back. Then Ted said, "But I'm blacker than you. Look...I know what you're like. I've seen you. You don't have to show me. Don't show me," J.M. shouted. "Don't you like it?" Ted teased. J.M.'s anger brought tears. (119–20)

J.M. is troubled because his assertions concerning race are troubled. In this scene, J.M. is not able to face the consequences of his interracial relationship with Ted. Later, in Ashton Park, J.M. admits that “a lot of my friend’s troubles at school had to do with his race” (237). What threatens heteronormativity is the black butch queen whose gay black male identity has been exposed:

To say it of Ted! He didn’t deny it. But he chose silence which meant guilt to everyone. Then his standing in the college, as head boy, and captain of both football and the cricket team, was at its height. He was everyone’s hero...Ted Salter is a *buller*. But he [Robert] knew that if it was said about J.M. alone it would peter out, last for a day or two. Linked with the name of Ted, that was dynamite! (126–27)

This scene demonstrates that Ted occupies the top roles of normative masculinity. He is active, a leader, and a hero. These signifiers are subverted when their meanings also include a black gay male identity. Thus, Ted is a danger to and problematic for the racial and sexual assumptions of the novel. The narrative reverberations of J.M.’s relationship with Ted cause his brother to struggle with these classifications as well. Robert says, “I keep coming back to these two things, sorting out in my mind my brother’s love for a man and his guilt about race” (106). Importantly, it is the black butch queen that causes these white men to question heteronormativity and race.

There are numerous pieces of evidence that support using this ethnic framework as a means of understanding the novel’s protagonist and the narrator-brother. First, in a 2009 interview, Scott confirms this as he describes both his and the novel’s French Creole social background as marked by wealth, social standing and a politically-minded ideology, attitudes to race characterized by Caribbean colonial sensibilities, belonging

to the Roman Catholic faith, and having at least one family member pursue a vocation as a nun or a priest (Ali 10).

For example, J.M.'s character is at once an insider and outsider to black race politics as it relates to slavery and colonialism. This is made manifest in two ways. The first is the characterization of J.M. as a white creole; the second is J.M.'s naming and constructing the tale of the slave boy Jordan. There is no overt reference to J.M.'s race until Robert reveals the epistolary exchange occasioned by J.M.'s application to St. Aelred's Abbey in England. The parish priest in Les Deux Isles, Dom Maurus de Boissiere, sends J.M. to Father Justin, the novice master at St. Aelred's. Dom Maurus describes Jean Marc as "a wonderful child with a marvelous mother from one of the good old families out here, who inculcated in her son from a very early age a special love for our Blessed Lord and his Immaculate Mother, the Blessed Virgin" (66).

This description points to class separation on Les Deux Isles. The text hints at a possible class distinction and suggests that the class distinction has to do with race. Further on in the letter, Dom Maurus makes the qualification that, "He [J.M.] is from one of the very best families. Not that I wouldn't recommend a boy from one of the poorest of our good Negro people" (70–71). The novel wants us to understand that being from one of the best families on Les Deux Isles means that J.M.'s family is not poor and not from the "good Negro people." Nonetheless, this assertion is not sufficient: Edward, the newest novice at St Aelred's, still questions whether J.M. is white enough (168).

Although J.M. is white, he relates to black identity. By creating a network of connections between the Caribbean, England and Africa, Scott's narrative recreates the history of the slave trade and the subsequent plurality and merging of ethnic legacies that have come to characterize the Caribbean. That catalyst of this (re)formulation of the

historical migration characteristic of Empire—which becomes crucial for J.M. to resolve his internal conflict regarding his sexual identity—is the painting of the white aristocrat and the African slave-boy that J.M. discovers on the walls of the monastery in England.

The second piece of evidence that supports the use of this ethnic framework is the scene in the novel in which J.M. gazes at a portrait, which unleashes a flood of memories of his youth in the Caribbean, including recollections of his black friends describing him as “all you French Creole” and saying things like “Who all you white boys think you is?” (79).

Third, what becomes obvious in Funso Aiyejina’s interview with Scott is that the author speaks of his French Creole background (173) and the protagonist’s brother as a “Trinidadian French Creole” (197). Finally, in her assertion that “French Creoles” signify “an amalgam of descendants of Europeans who still dominate the local economy,” Rhoda Reddock allows a parallel to be drawn between the J.M. of *Aelred’s Sin* and the ascendant white plantation owner figure in the person of Dabydeen’s poem *Turner* (114). *Aelred’s Sin’s* diaspora-themed painting is not Turner’s, but the parallel sets the stage for exploring similarities between the past and the present. This provides a repetition of a historical account of sexuality, complete with alternative sexualities and the rape of young male Africans, as represented by “Jordan” in the monastery’s painting.

The painting that is described as hanging in the Ashton Park Monastery is John Riley’s 1692 portrait of Charles Seymour, 6th Duke of Somerset. It is featured in the novel as part of the décor of the English monastery but becomes more than just well-produced art. It is of *central* importance in transcending national and ethnic signifiers. The white nobleman stands in the foreground, and leaning towards the right and back of the landscape are his black servant/slave and black dog, both looking “admiringly” up at

the Duke (*Aelred* 78). Riley, who was the court painter to the English royals, William and Mary, represented the pinnacle of the English school in painting. Although it is a portrait of Charles Seymour, it is analogous to J.M.W. Turner's painting of a slave ship (1840) as described by Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic*. Both paintings work as a record and critique of "the tainted splendor of [English] country houses" (14).

Here is the presence of Riley's Duke, who represents the white colonizer of the Caribbean, with the base African, who Riley considers to be more beast than man (hence the presence of the black dog). As J.M. cleans the picture he feels his face "...superimposed upon that of the boy whose face shone from beneath, so that the black face seemed to be his own" (*Aelred* 78–79). J.M.'s identification with the black boy and not the white Duke speaks to his status both as a privileged white Creole, a product of colonial ideas of racial and sexual supremacy, and a victim of the very same values created by his white ancestors.

The encapsulation of the triangular slave trade bridges nationalities, ethnicities, and sexualities. Memories of his childhood with his black friends and nurse in the Caribbean flood J.M.'s mind. He considers the slave trade and the legacy it has left in the Caribbean and its diaspora. Easton and Hewson suggest that J.M. experiences the shared histories and movements that emerge from the picture, all comprising strands of a complex postcolonial narrative that include metaphors of racial difference, violence, cruelty, displacement, subjugation, and abjection (83).

Remarkably, the connection to the English country house can be deduced from the novel:

Aelred stared. The portrait drew him into its world. It was a triumphant landscape of fields, lakes and mountains, dark and somber, unfolding behind the figures, through arches and the rich folds of drapes. There was a town in

the distance and towers and spires. This was England. There was a port from which a tall ship was setting sail. (*Aelred* 78)

Interestingly, the black prince, who “is offering the duke a purse of jewels” (*Aelred* 78), is reminiscent of the young prince Gronniosaw offering up his gold to the Dutch slaver. Importantly, the tall ship leaving the harbor without the prince conjures J.M.W. Turner’s famous painting: “Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying” (also known as “Slave Ship”). The painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1840 to critical acclaim. Though its subject is the shackling and drowning of African slaves, for the critics this was a mere afterthought. So much emphasis is placed by critics like Ruskin upon Turner’s composition and use of color in the painting (the “genius” with which he illuminated the turbulent sea and sky during a typhoon) that the Africans lost amongst the swirling water are overlooked and forgotten. Ruskin even goes so far as to say that “Slave Ship” was “the *noblest* sea... ever painted by man.”

Before Scott reimagined Riley’s painting in prose the poet David Dabydeen used verse to tell a story of the rape of enslaved black boys. Dabydeen inverts Turner’s nobility by casting him as the pedophile captain of the ship:

At sea, Turner’s smile shrunk like a worm’s sudden contraction; strange words spat from that gentle face that so often kissed us, His favoured boys, in quiet corners, unseen passages, and when cold night winds growled outside, curled us warmly to his bed... I lie dazed, barely able to cry... He whispered eloquently into our ears even as we wriggled beneath him, Breathless with pain, wanting to remove his hook Implanted in our flesh.

This telling mirrors the rape of Jordan in *Aelred’s Sin* (368–69). The boys on Turner’s ship, like Jordan, are assaulted as they sleep, and like Jordan their bodies cannot escape their master’s penis. Thus, the slave ship and the slave in Riley’s portrait

of the Duke summons Turner's "Slave Ship" the mirroring that both authors (Scott and Dabydeen) create in telling the stories of the raped slave boys, implicating slavery, the slave-trade, and the tainted splendor of the English country house.

The portrait emphasizes Scott's fusing of the dehumanization of the black body with the dehumanization of the queer body. Remembering and trauma are catalysts. It is J.M.'s rape that triggers him to create the slave narrative of Jordan. Moreover, it is the bodies of the two boys that resonate with J.M.: "They lay like twins, the brown boy and the black boy..." (342). The interaction with the black butch queen Ted is the primary motivator for J.M.'s political growth in terms of race, abjection, and creating a discourse that speaks against the painting, and the book *The Life of Saint Aelred*.

Importantly, J.M.'s memories of Ted, his own rape, and the portrait are encapsulated in J.M.'s journal. The fact that Robert is given the journal and it triggers his growth is symbolic of the slave narrative because, as already stated, must come to terms with the damage that heteronormativity as hegemony has wrought on him. This fact parallels the tenet of the slave narrative that argues that slavery is as devastating for whites as for blacks. J.M.'s journal inverts this axiom to implicate sexuality: heteronormativity is debilitating for gays as well as for straights. To highlight this connection to the slave narrative, Scott has J.M. create a slave narrative within his journal. The journal becomes a slave narrative within a slave narrative. Two scenes of male rape in the journal connect the slave narrative and the butch queen narrative of its oppression under heteronormative policing. The rape of Ted and J.M. represents heteronormative sexual policing. The rape of the slave Jordan represents a racial and sexual catharsis in relation to his rape, and recognition of the importance of the black butch queen.

Interestingly, these reflect J.M.'s experiences not simply as a French Creole who has been transplanted from the Caribbean into the metropole, but rather as a *homosexual* Caribbean, that Other man in search of a safe space to be himself. J.M. then begins to identify with the black boy in the picture, whom he has named Jordan, enslaved and submissive under the white Duke. The latter is seen as representative of the white colonizer who dominated centuries ago.

Further, because the portrait hangs in the abbey, the Duke becomes a metaphor for the relationship between the colonizer and the Church. The Church is implicated as an institution that is supported by and supports colonization. *Aelred's Sin* is concerned with the intersection of colonial racism and the Church and with how both police the gay experience. In the novel this is achieved, by the Church, through its rituals and surveillance techniques: "Always in threes, never in twos" became the assiduous admonition of the presiding monks to control male sexual experience in the monastery.

As Tyrone Ali correctly explains: J.M.'s identification with the black boy, rather than with the white duke creates a challenge to the postcolonial assumption that homosexuality is a specifically white problem ("Masculinity 8). However, in the novel, J.M. creates a raped identity for the slave boy in the portrait, whom he calls Jordan:

Master Walter come back drunk from a drinking bout. I must watch him in that state. For then he can fly into a fury. But tonight is different. He is stumbling around in the stable with his breeches down and he is calling wildly for his little nigger boy...He is standing over me, Master Walter. I pretend to sleep even when he kick me. Even when I feel the hot steam of piss over my face. Even when he kick me again. Even when he kneel and open my mouth for the hot stream of piss. Even when I choke and vomit. Even when he finish with his pissing and even when my mouth a soft and

slippery hole for his member. And he straining and staining and it won't finish, it won't finish till what he do I cannot tell you. For my mouth is suffocated against the straw and he is humped on my back like a pig at the trough... (368–69)

This sexual assault on the boy is similar to that experienced by Harry/Harriet, and Luke. The rape could be rationalized, as Fanon does, as the genesis that creates the damaged homosexual identity in black communities. Yet to create such a rationale would erase agency, and the queer identity of the black gay male subject before the rape. In the example of slave Jordan, it is the political awareness of the Butch Queen that empowers Jordan to escape. He knows that his safety “depends on Miss Amy and her kindness” (370). But as a butch queen Jordan knows that there will come a time when he will not be able to rely on Miss Amy to protect him from his master’s sexual assaults (See 370). Ultimately, Jordan does not choose a raped, abject identity. He chooses agency and decides he “must plan to run” (370).

Similar to the decision of the Butch Queen Jordan, from this point on in the novel J.M.’s trajectory is outward. As Ali describes, his trajectory is “out of the monastery, out of the proverbial gay closet, and out of a racialized space where things have traditionally been viewed as the dichotomous black or white—and into a more fluid sense of identity, one that encompasses notions of ethnicity, nationalism, sexuality, and class” (8).

J.M. can now come *out* because the description of Jordan’s rape is a retelling of his own rape:

Did you have them both? One and then the other. I saw O’Connor come out and there was blood all over his prick. Do you know what he did? He went

round. And when Macdougall went in, he shoved it down one of their mouths. I heard him say, Suck it clean, you cunt. (309)

The scene represents catharsis in the twinning of the details. But more than the details, the impetus for self-acceptance and revelation of self, motivated by the now dead butch queen Ted, happens after both tales of rape have been told: “You don’t know of this, my love for that boy since I was twelve... And they killed Ted. Sometimes I think I killed him, but they did. They who jeered and they who did nothing about it” (380). This revelation to the Abbot represents J.M.’s coming-out speech. The Abbot turns his gaze away as J.M. “...stared at him openly, not even wiping his tears away, but letting them flow freely and bathe his cheeks” (381).

Like the slave narrative, the butch queen narrative gives examples of how hegemony works against itself. The oxymoronic construction is manifest in the pitting of a Saint against sin. Was Aelred of Rievaulx sinful for writing his controversial *Spiritual Friendship*? Or is it the French Creole, Aelred of the Caribbean, who engages in homosexual sex and distances himself from the Church? Saint Aelred is epitomized in these words. For many, homosexuality is no sin; for others, it is. Perversion and rape, resulting in feelings of emasculation for many men, however, is truly a moral atrocity. And this is the sin engendered in the white plantation owner’s vast arcade of games during the colonial encounter, all for sport and entertainment, marked by a libido gone wild as he engaged in acts of rape and revulsion toward his same-sex African slave. In the novel, Master Walter rapes Jordan (368–70). It is not difficult to fathom, then, the sins of the colonial father visiting the children, as his French Creole descendant inadvertently becomes captive to the same standards he created. What emerges is a gender identity that becomes painfully embroiled in a terror-filled rite of passage—one

perpetuated by the children of the very men he brutalized and commanded to aspire to hegemony— before any measure of sanctuary can be found.

This bifurcated process means that these stories, like the slave narratives, must appeal to a Western audience. There is a realization that sexual behavior transcends racialized and ethnic identities in the construction of masculinities among Caribbean males. Heterosexuality is seen as the overwhelming orientation by which men are measured to determine whether they may be considered men. The shift to a focus on transsexual and homosexual orientation among male literary figures is one that represents the sexual masculinities that are prominently revealed in metropolitan lands. This acceptance in the metropole is not replicated in the Caribbean.

Ali's assertion is that "one must migrate or at least come into contact with the metropole before one can articulate an alternative masculine construction" (8). However, this kind of thinking does not admit the possibility the black butch queen exists in his birth community. King declared that the portrayal of sex and sexuality in West Indian literature published from the 1980s to the present can be interpreted as "coming to light because writers increasingly have focused on aspects of sexuality that were previously silenced or kept in the dark. In particular, writers have exploded silences... around homosexuality" (31–32). This has certainly been the case in Scott's writings, which are marked by an almost insatiable need to write of alternative sexualities that reflect homosexuality. King seems to share this study's view:

For most Caribbean texts, we have lost the opportunity of reading the literature alongside criticism from the same time that focuses on sex and sexuality. Now, however, scholars have the opportunity, and the responsibility to examine sex and sexuality in the region with the gravity used to address topics such as race, colonialism, and history, which

themselves are inevitably intertwined with sex and sexuality... Just as Caribbean authors have broadened and enriched our understanding of the region by “sexing” Caribbean literature, so critics and scholars can, through examining sex and sexuality, elucidate and critique new paradigms, as well as those that are not new at all. (King 36)

Interestingly, because J.M. is from a colony of Great Britain, he is perceived as being black by the community at Ashton Park:

“This is Brother Aelred.’ Benedict introduced Edward. ‘Aelred is from Les Deux Isles in the Antilles’. ‘The British West Indies. Oh, how exotic! I remember collecting those wonderful colourful stamps of all kinds with pictures of exciting flora and fauna. And the unusual names like Antigua, Trinidad and Tobago. Those two always went together,’ Edward joked. Benedict smiled to encourage the new novice but glanced at Aelred, gauging his response. ‘Exotic? Oh, yes...’ It’s a very beautiful island, Les Deux Isles, but I’ve never thought of it as exotic.’ ‘A long way away,’ Edward continued, frowning at Aelred. ‘A desert island...’ ‘Yes, I could see at once you weren’t English,’ Edward continued. ‘Oh! Aelred looked at Benedict for explanation and support. Aelred was feeling awkward...Aelred passed on, offering cake and tea. The sleeves of his habit were rolled up to his elbows, showing his brown arms recently heightened by the sun from working on the farm and in the garden...Then Aelred overheard Edward say to Benedict, ‘He’s very dark,’ looking at Aelred. (*Aelred* 160-161)

Although O. Nigel Bolland, in his article published in the March-June 1998 issue of *Caribbean Quarterly* entitled “Creolisation and Creole Societies: a Cultural Nationalist View of Caribbean Social History” says that “The meaning of the term

‘Creole’ varies in different societies and over time” (1), he says also that “generally, the term ‘Creole,’ referring to people and cultures, means something or somebody derived from the Old World but developed in the New” (1). He goes on to report that, “In the United States of America, in accordance with racist pressures in the nineteenth century, Creole came to refer to Caucasian people of French or Spanish descent, but elsewhere the term was not so racially differentiated. ‘Creole’ refers to locally born persons of non-native origin, which, in the Americas, generally means people of either African or European ancestry or both” (1). In *Aelred’s Sin*, the English monk’s response to the colonized other operates under this definition of Creole that was used outside of nineteenth-century United States.

Edward, the newest novice at the Abbey, asks Aelred (Aelred is the name that the Church gives JM upon his ordination), “You’re—excuse me asking: I was wondering, and remarked to Benedict that first afternoon I met you— you’re not coloured, are you?” (167). J.M. says of himself and his origins when quizzed by the novice Edward that,

Oh, actually, my mother is half Spanish... And by the way, you could say that I’m creole. ‘Creole,’ Edward repeated, getting his lips around the word. Yes, like Joséphine... Joséphine Beauharnais. Who’s she when she’s in choir? Edward looked down his nose at the red rose. Napoleon’s first wife. Aelred smiled and swept up some cuttings from the verge near the flower beds. You know, from the exotic island of Martinique” (*Aelred* 168).

The implication is that Aelred is a Creole of French and Spanish ancestry. He is defining himself as white. This point is important because J.M. is aligning his racial identity with whiteness. Richard Cavendish’s “Joséphine de Beauharnais born in Martinique” gives a complete account of Joséphine’s ancestry. He connects her to minor French aristocracy and discounts the idea that she could have been of mixed race (1).

Moreover, by saying “Who’s she when she’s in choir?”, Edward, the new novice, seems to be mocking his senior Brother Aelred. Indeed, Edward’s sarcasm towards Brother Aelred begins the moment they are introduced: Edward’s mocking of Brother Aelred implicates race. Even though Aelred has declared himself to be white, a Creole of European ancestry, Edward’s commentary implies that Aelred’s creolization renders him an outsider from England and from whiteness.⁴²

Thus, Edward is implying that Aelred is of both African and European ancestry. Moreover, Edward’s criticism of Aelred does not end with the racial. Edward creates an insider/outsider binary between himself and Aelred based on race and gender. After the awkward introduction, Benedict insists that Aelred gives Edward the job of changing the flowers for the novitiate’s shrine (163). Benedict explains to Aelred his reasoning for the request:

s you remember, it’s always been the duty of the junior member of the novitiate. Remember you took over from Charles? [Aelred agrees, but Edward objects]

....

Do I have to take this duty on? Brother Aelred clearly enjoys the chore. I’m not great at flower arranging.’ ‘Edward smiled at both Benedict and Aelred. Did Aelred pick up the very slightest inflection of sarcasm in his tone on flower arranging? It was possible that Benedict did... ‘I think it’s best if Edward takes over the flower arranging.’ Benedict emphasized the word

⁴² J.M.’s sense of alienation is similar to that of Anna Morgan’s in Jean Rhys’s *Voyage in the Dark* (1934). Anna is a white Creole character who is othered as colored when she comes to England, no matter how much she insists on her pure white ancestry. Lucy Wilson makes the point that this experience was true of Rhys’s experiences not only in England, but also in Europe (L. Wilson 68). Thereby in the cases of J.M., Anna Morgan, and Rhys herself, Creole was understood to mean mixed race in Europe, particularly in England, regardless of how they tried to define themselves.

‘arranging’. A new novice needed to begin to learn humility. He was also feeling protective to Aelred. (163–64)

Ironically, J.M.’s double-consciousness is based on the English monks perceiving him as black. At this point in the novel, the love affair between Aelred and Benedict is just beginning. Aelred wants to speak with Benedict about his feelings for him, but Benedict silences Aelred. Immediately after, the narrator tells us that

Aelred went off to his cell feeling hurt and confused. Some of it was to do with Benedict refusing to let him speak, but there was this nagging feeling that he was different. He didn’t like the tone of Edward’s voice. He hadn’t liked the way, now that he put it altogether, that this morning’s conversation and the first meeting at recreation went, when Edward joked about Les Deux Isles being exotic and talking about the stamps of the islands. He had a way of talking down to him, he felt. Then he remembered his remark about how dark he was. Aelred could feel himself being homesick, like he used to get when he had first arrived. (165)

By juxtaposing Aelred’s memory of Edward’s remark “about how dark he was” and his homesickness upon his arrival at St. Aelred’s Abbey, Scott points to the fact that Aelred is aware of his status as racial outsider in England. This status makes Aelred uneasy because he is at once a part of the monastic community yet apart from it. The quote above summons DuBoisian double-consciousness. In other words, Aelred “feels his two-ness,” his racial double-consciousness. The irony of applying the concept of double-consciousness in the case of Brother Aelred is that he is a white man. Jean Marc de la Borde is a white man from a white Creole family.

However ironic it may be to explicate white Creole Jean Marc de la Borde’s double-consciousness, it is important to analyze his relationship to blackness. Lawrence

Scott was born in Trinidad on a sugarcane estate where his father was the manager for Tate & Lyle. Scott is a descendant of Trinidad's French and German Creoles. His father's family came from Germany in the 1830s, and was called Schoener. His mother's family, the Lange dynasty, was French-descended and part of an established white Creole community. Thus Scott, like his protagonist Jean Marc de la Borde, is a white man. Megan E. Kuster, in her 2014 thesis *Unsettling Belongings: Settler Colonialism in the Selected Works of Jean Rhys and Elizabeth Bowen*, points out that since "Anglo-Irish and Creole identities were formed out of the dynamics of settler colonialism in places where settler states never emerged, the crisis of settler colonialism is...one of belonging, emanating from a tension between identity and place, encapsulated in the refrain 'Who am I, and where do I belong?'" (ii).⁴³

These questions are the laser beam focus that Toni Morrison draws to the function of Africanism and its connection to literary blackness. It is "the manipulation of the Africanist narrative" (Morrison 53). Morrison is addressing the erasure of black identity from American literature. Simply put, the manipulation of the Africanist narrative can be described as "the way black people ignite critical moments of discovery or change or emphasis in literature not written by them" (viii). It is to "discover, through a close look at literary 'blackness,' the nature—even the cause—of literary 'whiteness'" (9). This focus on the constructed nature of blackness and whiteness in literature disturbs the "pattern of thinking about racialism in terms of its consequences on the victim—of always defining it asymmetrically from the perspective of its impact on the object of racist policy and attitudes" (11). Interrogating the idea that settler colonial Creole Jean Marc de la Borde suffers from double-consciousness turns the focus of "the impact of racism on those who perpetuate it" (Morrison 11).

⁴³ A comparison of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Lawrence Scott's *Aelred's Sin* would not be useful. The two novels present literary representations of racial hierarchies, both white and black. However, Rhys's novel is silent on the subject of black gay male identity.

To interrogate Jean Marc's double-consciousness, it is important to understand what Morrison means by the term Africanism. Morrison says, "I use it as a term for the denotative and connotative blackness that African peoples have come to signify, as well as the entire range of views, assumptions, readings, and misreadings that accompany Eurocentric learning about these people" (7). This is a working definition for exploring denotative and connotative blackness, but what of black gay male identity? Morrison further explicates Africanism: "As a disabling virus within literary discourse, Africanism has become, in the Eurocentric tradition that American education favors, both a way of talking about and a way of policing matters of class, sexual license, and repression, formations and exercises of power, and mediations on ethics and accountability" (7).

Locating literary instances of Africanisms that police sexual license is, therefore, an opening for black gay male identity. Other instances would open a critical space of inquiry, which would allow for an interrogation of other forms of Africanisms, in the manner that Morrison interrogates American literature or American Africanism.

Although Morrison's intervention is aimed at African American literature, her line of inquiry is useful in the case of *Aelred's Sin* because of its construction of blackness. Again, Morrison explicates both problems:

Black slavery enriched the country's creative possibilities. For in that construction of blackness *and* enslavement could be found not only the not-free but also, with the dramatic polarity created by skin color, the projection of the not-me...What rose up out of collective needs to allay internal fears and to rationalize external exploitation was an American Africanism—a fabricated brew of darkness, otherness, alarm, and desire that is uniquely

American. (There also exists, of course, a European Africanism with a counterpart in colonial literature.) (38)

An example of this is Edward's policing of whiteness in the novel. Edward's response to his senior brother is an attempt to other Aelred. It indicates an exercise in power that polices the boundary of whiteness and blackness. In the novel, both Benedict and Edward have a sexual relationship with Aelred. And both Edward and Benedict attempt to control or police Aelred's responses to their homosexual relationship based on the racial hierarchy of white over black, and the projection of not-me. Aelred's mentor sets him to reading Aelred of Rievaulx's book *Spiritual Friendship*:

Aelred's imagination was fired by the reading of Aelred of Rievaulx's book *Spiritual Friendship* which Benedict had given him. *Lectio Divina* was now a special time. Aelred began to imagine the dialogue that he could have with Benedict, fired by the dialogues between the Abbot Aelred and Ivo his monk. He read and ruminated: 'to live without friendship was to live like a beast'. Those were Aelred of Rievaulx's words. (134)

It's not just Aelred's imagination that is fired by the hour of Divine Reading of the Abbot Aelred's book. He begins to demand more physical intimacy with Benedict: "You see the parallels with Aelred of Rievaulx's life?" Benedict asked. "Yes of course. I see a lot of things. Do you think we can talk more?" "In time. Don't rush it. And we've got our rules" (134). The irony is that Benedict is the one who breaks his vow of chastity with Aelred. In the scene of their sexual encounter, the power dynamic at play between Benedict and Aelred is revealed:

Benedict put out his arms to draw Aelred to him. Aelred felt himself held in a way that felt good. His heart began to beat fast. He liked the tender feeling

of being drawn close to the warm cowled body of Benedict...He felt frightened, but now it felt good and exciting. He felt suddenly nervous of others nearby, whom he could hear leaving the choir. But Benedict continued to hold him close to his body. They were hidden by the darkness and the alcove of the side chapel...he let Benedict hold his face in his hands. He let Benedict put his mouth on his...He let Benedict open his lips with his tongue. He let him put his tongue into his mouth. With his head tilted back, Benedict's hands on his neck, he saw the face of Ted in the constellations above him created by the flickering sanctuary lamp on the bare stone walls...Benedict freed his arms from the folds of his cowl and bent to lift Aelred's habit. His hands stroked his naked legs under the loose cassock. Aelred stood, without moving. He did not respond, letting the older man guide him. He let the older man kiss his mouth and touch him where he had not been touched since Ted had touched him the night before he died...He felt now that all this was good. He began to feel extraordinarily happy...Benedict had pulled down his underpants and his hands caressed his penis, which grew there. He held the tight balls in his hands, and then his palms ran over his buttocks. He pulled him into himself, and still Aelred stood and let himself be guided. He could feel Benedict's erect penis against his leg, then pushing into his groin. Another of the other monks coughed in choir and Benedict broke away abruptly, whispering, 'We mustn't go on.' Aelred held on to him. He began kissing him. He was now active in this new love. But Benedict now seemed agitated. He pushed Aelred away. He rearranged Aelred's habit and his own... (203)

In this scene, Aelred is able to feel but not able to act. Benedict is the actor or the active partner in their sexual relationship. This is not because Aelred is unable to be an active sexual partner—as we shall see further on in his relations with Edward—but because Benedict wields complete control of the relationship. This power dynamic is in part due to Benedict’s conception of racial hierarchy. He thinks of Aelred as his “brown-skinned boy” (153). Aelred has explained that he is not black, but because he comes from the Caribbean, the color epithet that points to race still persists as a fetish in Benedict’s discourse. Also, at the point when Aelred meets Benedict, he is not a boy. He is a man. At the time of their meeting, Aelred is “nineteen going on twenty” (152). It is true that Benedict is ten years older than Aelred, and Benedict is also Aelred’s mentor at the Abbey. In this sense, an argument can be made that in a hierarchical sense Aelred is Benedict’s boy. But this argument is sidelined by the novel’s intertextuality.

Benedict introduces Aelred to *Spiritual Friendship* after Aelred meets Father Justin, the novice master. Father Justin counsels Aelred against the writings on Aelred of Rievaulx and solitary meetings with Benedict:

‘Do you think you are able to understand the monastic authors of the twelfth century?’ Father Justin asks Aelred. ‘It may be better to keep to the tested spiritual teaching from texts which have been tried repeatedly.’ ‘I thought you would be pleased with me reading monastic writer, rather than the religious life of other traditions,’ Aelred answered, trying to take the bull by the horns. (136)

But Aelred is “bulled”⁴⁴ in this conversation with Father Justin:

⁴⁴ The close proximity of the metaphor and the imperative against same-sex intimacy creates the connection to the term for Caribbean queer “buller.” Andre Maiorana affirms that “buller” and “battyman” are both pejorative terms for queers in the Caribbean (997). Both are relatable to anal intercourse between men.

...instead Father Justin reiterated his old warning, 'Never in twos, always in threes.' 'What do you mean?' 'Who are you talking about?' 'Brother it's my duty to notice these things. I've noticed you and Brother Benedict...Never in twos, always in threes. If followed, there can be little danger.' Aelred did not reply immediately, but became alert and, without admitting it to himself at the time, angry. And, as he left the novice master's cell, Father Justin smiled. 'Beware of particular friendships, brother. Follow the reading which I've advised.' 'Yes, father.' Aelred closed the door as quietly as he could. He felt like banging it shut. (136–37)

This scene is important because it is another instance in which Aelred is only able to feel, not to act. He does not slam the novice master's door out of anger. He capitulates. His metaphor for controlling the direction of this particular conversation, and leading it where he wills it to go, points to a masculine discourse of desire and power in relation to Aelred and Benedict.

Directly after Aelred's meeting with Father Justin, Aelred and Benedict again find themselves alone in each other's company. Again, this scene exemplifies the act of Aelred being "bullied." He is led, albeit willingly, by Benedict and his intertextual discourse of masculinity and desire:

Benedict was careful to spend time with his other fellow monks and not too quickly spend his time with Aelred. They find themselves getting closer and closer on the walk, so that they could quite naturally be next to each other and it not seem in any way different to being with any of the other monks. At last they were with each other. The rest of the group had walked on, so that there was a gap between the other monks and Aelred and Benedict. They walked, Aelred listening to Benedict, who was telling him of books he

had been reading and books that he should read... 'Have you read that poet I once mentioned to you?' 'Gerard Manley Hopkins?' 'That's the one.' 'Yes, I enjoyed "Felix Randal".' "'The Farrier".' "'Big boned, and hardy-handsome.'" 'And "Pied Beauty" from which I quoted to you last time.' "'All things counter, original, spare, strange;/ Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)"' 'Who does know how?' 'What?' Aelred felt nervous. 'What is not quite right.' 'Is that what it means?' 'I think he is glorying in the imperfections of nature and seeing beauty in them. Maybe even in the flaw in nature from original sin.' 'Yes, I see,' Aelred said, but uncertain what he was understanding. (*Aelred* 138)

It is Benedict's time that is spent with Aelred. It is Benedict to whom Aelred listens. Aelred seems to enjoy the masculine representation, "big boned", and "hardy-handsome." Yet he does not quite understand how Benedict connects queerness in Hopkins's "Pied Beauty" to create a dialectical response to heteronormative desire. Put simply, in the Hopkinsian construction of masculine desire for itself, homoeroticism can glorify nature by virtue of depictions of masculine beauty.⁴⁵

Scott uses the life of Saint Aelred of Rievaulx (1110 to 12 January 1167) to define the Catholic Church's stance on homosexuality. One of the oldest curias in the Church is the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. The Congregation finds that homosexuality is "intrinsically disordered Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection." This is an admonition for the laity. But it is also applicable to homosexual priests.

⁴⁵ Hopkins's poetry can be interpreted as homoerotic, as Scott does for *Aelred's Sin*. However, the homoerotic imagery is usually interpreted as a glorification of God (Sobolev 151).

However, like Benedict and his heterosexual namesake, Aelred believes that engaging in sexual behavior is sinful. In the novel's beginning, the narrator tells us the reason why Jean Marc de la Borde left Les Deux Isles for the Abbey in England:

He was here to seek God according to the rule of the Holy Father St Benedict, who first wrote his Rule for Monks in the cave at Subiaco in the Italian hills near Rome in the fifth century: a young man, escaping the materialism of Roman society, his young passion tempted by the devil in the shape of a beautiful woman, so that he had to throw himself into a patch of brambles to stem the passion before moving to his monastery at Monte Casino. (32)

Ostensibly, de la Borde leaves Les Deux Isles to find God in a Benedictine Abbey where monks renounce sexual desire as sinful. They take a vow of chastity (32). It is important to note that the parable of St. Benedict focuses on heterosexual sexual desire. In *Aelred's Sin*, Aelred's perceived blackness and his sexual attraction to men changes the discovery and emphasis on sexual sin to being not only heterosexual but also homosexual:

Benedict felt that God wanted it expressed differently, Aelred of Rievaulx's way...He felt the church was right, though at times harsh in how it advised. He tempered that official rejection, with an understanding for passion and growth. He felt that, yes, even physical passion could be a start on the way to spiritual passion. One must not hate what God has made. Ours is an incarnational religion. (151)

Then Robert quotes Aelred's journal, which quotes Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Glory be to God for dappled things.../All things counter,' I [Robert] said" (151). After

Robert quotes from Aelred's journal, Benedict's response is what indicates Aelred's otherness: "He smiled that I had read J.M.'s journals and remembered them. You're an attentive reader, he said. He was so intuitive, your brother" (152). Benedict does not view Aelred as a rational thinker. Aelred acquires knowledge without inference or the use of reason. Juxtaposed with Benedict's constant appellation of Aelred as "brown and bonny," "my boy from the tropics..." and "my brown-skinned boy" (30, 50, 153), Benedict's use of the term "intuitive" to define Aelred speaks to what Morrison describes in her chapter "Romancing the Shadow" as the extraordinary power of impenetrable whiteness (33). Images of this power, in the novel "appear almost always in conjunction with the representations of black or Africanist people who are dead, impotent, or under complete control" (33). Images of impenetrable whiteness, in Morrison's opinion, need contextualizing.

What is impenetrable about whiteness is that it is blindingly banal. It is a culturally engrained signifier to the extent that it is invisible. For example, the phrase "the pot calling the kettle black" is a trite way of revealing hypocrisy. However, the fact that linguistically the phrase binds color with negative meaning is made startlingly obvious when an alternative color is inserted, for example "the snow calling the rice white." The reversal inverts the color blinding and disturbs the signification that white is always associated with positive outcomes. This is a facile representation of how Morrison interprets language in relation to impenetrable whiteness. She complicates her argument by interjecting black surrogacy:

Because they appear in conjunction with representations of black or Africanist people who are dead, impotent, or under complete control, these images of blinding whiteness seem to function as both antidote for and meditation on the shadow that is companion to this whiteness—a dark and

abiding presence that moves the hearts and texts...with fear and longing.

(33)

Simply put, Morrison describes how blackness is made to serve whiteness. For example, in Scott's novel, the first images of impenetrable whiteness appear in the prologue:

This was a wild place...The rivers surged around ancient stones, pulling at the roots of old trees; dragging at these mountains, at their might and wildness... a small band of men built a cloister and a church...within this place of natural solitude, they fashioned spaces of light and shadow; shade from the heat, gardens with flowers and shrubs; oleander, pink like coral, white like first—communion clothes... Within these walls, this band of men became attached to higher qualities. They sought to detach themselves from mortals. They sought a Divine Wisdom. As one of their ancient writers wrote of them: '... as angels might be, they were clothed in undyed wool spun and woven from pure fleece of the sheep. So named and garbed and gathered together like flocks of seagulls, they shine as they walk with the whiteness of snow.' This was a paradise, a cloistered heaven. Outside this cloister, they built a school for boys. They hoped that some of these young boys would join them... Dom Maurus had white hands and beneath his pale skin the veins ran dark blue...Dom Maurus's breath smelt of white wafers of Holy Communion... In the whirl of the school-yard play, the monk drew the boy and his best friend close to him, into the clouds of his white cotton habit... Here, close to his friend, in the folds of the monk's habit, in the embrace of his cowl, the boy looked out at the world of other friends whose

blood he could not see below the colour of their skin. In the heat, he saw
rouge playing like flame on their hard black cheeks. (17–19)

Morrison's African American theory is structured specifically to American literature. However, in relation to *Aelred's Sin*, it is a reliable means of interrogation. Specifically, it is this profusion of images of whiteness that reveal embedded racial assumptions. Simply put, whiteness is linked to the monks and their work. They in turn represent higher qualities that are essentially Divine Wisdom. In short, whiteness represents God. This fact is made clear by the transubstantiated Holy Communion wafer. The wafer is white because it is the body of God. Further, the assumption is that these white men are tamers of wild places. They bring paradise to the wilderness. The embrace of the white cotton cowl of the pale Dom Maurus represents the point of view of white righteousness. Thereby, J.M. and Ted look out onto a world inhabited by the othered friends of the hard black cheeks. Like the black boy Ted, who is contained with J.M. inside the embrace of the monk, and, metaphorically, of the Catholic Church, black people are under the control of the Church as well. However, it is Thomas's creation of the voice of Jerome Quashee as a native of Isabella Island that disturbs monolithic impenetrable whiteness.⁴⁶

The Polar Opposite of Whiteness: Spirits in the Dark

Spirits in the Dark (1993) is a bildungsroman of Jerome Quashee's coming to terms with his black gay male identity. The politics of the butch queen in H. Nigel Thomas's *Spirits in the Dark* also follows the characteristics of the slave narrative, in that Jerome Quashee speaks to how religion is subverted when it is made to serve the colonial power. Doing this, Thomas creates a native subjectivity that is both response

⁴⁶ The use of the word native is created by Fanon in *Wretched of the Earth* (1965) to mean a member of the black underclass born in a particular country (166).

and solution to racism and homophobia on Isabella Island. Black gay male identity in *Spirits in the Dark* represents the chiasmus of conflict related to homophobia and religion used as a tool of colonization (Chin 136). Because he inserts the characterization of the black butch queen, Thomas creates a remedy for the colonizing effects of Christian religion: the remedy is black men loving themselves. The purpose of Jerome's spiritual journey is, as Pointer Francis tells him, "to get to know himself and renew himself and come out a different person" (*Spirits* 1). The imperative of the journey is important because it points to the things that Jerome does not possess. Jerome does not possess a self-acknowledged black gay male identity; he is not able to mend or renew himself from the wounds that his community inflicts upon him in relation to racism and homophobia; and the imperative points out that, to be whole, Jerome must become a different person. The person that Jerome must become is a self-identified black gay male.

The word "native" is important in relation to Jerome Quashee because, as his surname suggests,⁴⁷ Jerome is a member of the impoverished, socially and politically dispossessed black underclass on Isabella Island in a colonial society that privileges whiteness and devalues blackness (Marsh-Lockett 18). As such, Jerome is unlike Jean Marc de la Borde in *Aelred's Sin* in that Jerome is from the black underclass and is not able to emigrate; unlike the black butch queen Ted in *Aelred's Sin*, Jerome does remain alive; and, unlike Harry/Harriet in Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven*, Jerome is not a black transsexual who transitions through black gay male identity. In this context, "native" means that Jerome is a black gay male who lives inside the black community and must negotiate his culture without leaving. While Jerome's ability to learn how to read and write in the colonial school system on Isabelle Island initially promises him an

⁴⁷ Quash-ee, i.e., a person who is quashed.

escape from the impoverished estate lifestyle of his parents, his effort to hide his emerging homosexual identity eventually leads to his expulsion from school:

Miss Blunt continued to wear her miniskirts to class... They still continued to move further up her thighs whenever she was writing on the board... It happened one Tuesday morning. She was writing away on the board, and Jerome was making signs at her bottom and looking around at the class to see how they were reacting. It was her scream that alerted him. She ran into the corridor, and all the teachers came out of their classrooms. (88–89)

Jerome's attention is not focused on Miss Blunt; he is intent on the reactions of his classmates. The fact that Jerome acts to impress his classmates rather than from sexual desire is made clear when it is compared to the actions of the object of Jerome's sexual attraction, Peter: "Peter had stopped focusing on his erections but would cup his hands and put them behind the cheeks of Miss Blunt's buttocks as if he was massaging them" (88–89).

Jerome must impress his friends because they know that, unlike them, he does not prefer girls sexually. The boys gossip about Jerome: "But serious now, wha' wrong with Jerome?"... "Pamela say she pull him down 'pon she one time, an' he get up an' run an' bawl fo' his mother"... "But serious, Errol, you, and Jerome used fo' be good friend—he even used fo' invite yo' fo' read under his mother bed—Loud laughter" (*Spirits* 13).

After this scene in the novel there is no other description of Jerome having any kind of intimate relationship with another boy or man. Although the community suspects that Jerome is gay, Jerome contents himself with passing comments and works to negotiate a space for himself as a bookish type in his community: "He [Jerome] not got nothing in his trousers... I hear that when yo' read too much book, it does shrivel up and break off" (13). Jerome is able to exist in his community because he becomes

sexless. The definition of the butch queen on the down low does not apply in Jerome's case. Jerome is certainly gay, but his physical absence from any scene of male sexuality in the novel excludes him from what might be considered low-down behavior. However, Rosamond S. King writes in *Island Bodies* (2014) that visibility, confirmation, and Caribbean men who desire men are predicated on the "open secret" (63).

The open secret is "a situation in which many people know someone is a homosexual though the fact is not openly acknowledged... People know the secret without being told, through any combination of factors such as behaviors, speech, or dress" (King 63). Jerome's behavior, his escape from heteronormative sex play, and his sexless adult life is open to community knowing. King also affirms that the open secret "is both known and relatively tolerated by those around the individual... the open secret requires the community's complicity" (64). King's description of the open secret seems applicable to Jerome's situation in the community on Isabella Island. However, King finds virtue in the open secret because it points to communal agency for Caribbean communities to cope with homosexuality (64).⁴⁸ King takes issue with Western expressions of homosexuality because they focus too intently on the individual and individual agency (64). She says that "instead of a mandate of constant revelation, in Cariglobal communities there is a mandate of discretion, which is not always the same as hiding" (64). Ultimately, King's argument is that "international activists should allow direct political action to be led by those located in the region" (91).

However, King's appeal for Caribbean males to live under the open secret is problematic. She points to the problem in her argument: "The ability to comfortably live such a life [the life of the open secret] depends, not surprisingly, on the individual's gender expression, class, and geographic location, among other factors" (90).

⁴⁸ To cope is to deal with something that is difficult. By definition, the word summons Fanon's psychoanalytical discourse of the broken black gay man. Put simply, in King's conceptualization, homosexuality is something to be dealt with, not simply and openly accepted.

Importantly, Jerome Quashee's story is a bildungsroman of a native butch queen that exemplifies how religion, when it is made to serve heteronormativity, is subverted. As such, it answers King through Thomas's description of Jerome's lived experience on Isabella Island. For example, the angst that precipitates Jerome's fear of intimacy with men is a tale of sexual policing:

He knew that when his cousin Boy-boy had been a teenager, he had arranged with a young man to meet him in one of the cane fields around Compton. When he got there, there were ten of them. They took turns buggering him; one even used a beer bottle; then they beat him into unconsciousness and left him there. He'd refused to name the young men. But everyone knew who they were because they'd bragged about what they'd done—everything but the buggering. Boy-boy had told his mother the entire story. Jerome was eight at the time and they hadn't known he was listening. (199)

This scene is important because it describes what happens to black men on Isabella Island when they are not able to live within the confines of the open secret. At age eight, Jerome interprets this story to mean that any sexual contact with other men has deadly consequences. Jerome internalizes the lesson of Boy-boy's rape and remains celibate. Shortly after Jerome is expelled from school at seventeen because of his mimed fondling of Miss Blunt, he begins to reflect "on suffering in the world. No doubt the off-shoot of his own suffering" (13). Subsequently, Jerome becomes involved in a Methodist congregation, the Church of the Saints Militant, "an evangelical group that came to the village on Wednesday evenings... The mission was run by a White American, Pastor Oberon" (13). During his sojourn with the Methodists, Jerome becomes aware that the discourse of patriarchal, colonial Christianity fails the colonized.

He understands the hegemonic implications of the hymn “There is a fountain filled with blood.”

He finds the image of perpetually flowing blood from Christ’s wounds revolting. And the determination motivated by that blood was a gorier ugliness. Little wonder so many massacres had been committed to further Christendom. ““And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilt stains’ – it made you want to vomit... What were his stains? They say it was his sins, but the Whites and Blacks believed deeply it was the color of their skin. ‘Wash me in the blood of the lamb and I shall be whiter than snow.’ Blacks did not know how ridiculous they sounded when they sang that” (111).

As Jerome decides to sublimate his sexual desire in the Christian belief system, he realizes that sin has more to do with racial difference with any action that black people perform. Marsh-Lockett finds that “the church in its attempt to preserve its identity [in the Caribbean] accentuated the identity problem of black people” (158). If the Methodist Church that Jerome is involved in is racist, it is also patriarchal in its heteronormative view of women.

Only Albert and he [Pastor Oberon] could offer opinions, for, apart from praying and singing, women weren’t supposed to speak: Once Sister Biddows asked Pastor Oberon to clarify something. He stayed silent a long while before replying, and at the next Bible study session, he chose to explicate Paul’s argument in favour of silencing women in church (129)

Jerome’s interpretation of Christian racism and recounting the church’s misogyny makes him a butch queen in that he is politically aware of the forces that act upon his community. As a black gay man in his community—the native other—he is able to chronicle what others within the community cannot. For example, those in the community like Sister Belle, whose misery makes her a believer in the Methodist

Church, cannot perceive the racism and misogyny that the Church represents. She is a community insider. Jerome ultimately decides to leave the Church because he feels that “He was exploiting his own people... For a vague promise that he might go to study in America” (131).

Moreover, description of how Jerome breaks with the Church reveals the internalized racism of black community insiders. When the congregation comes to the Mission House for the evening service, Jerome opens the door holding his Bible that he has set aflame. He tells the congregation:

We have to burn our Bibles. Why do we have to wait for White men to come from America to tell us what to believe and how to live? Let White people in America teach White people in America to stop hating people, to stop burning people alive, Sisters, we are Africans—Don’t call me no African! Interrupted Sister Amelia. Is you what is the African. Is you what burning God word, said Sister Belle. He mus’ think we is cannibals an’ that we live in tree, added Sister Felicia... You gwine go to hell, that is what I know. (140)

The congregation cannot see the racial ramifications of the colonizing Church. Because they have internalized the racism that the Church moralizes, the congregation rebels against Jerome’s call to African solidarity. Interestingly, James implicates the Church’s oppression of African Americans in the United States.⁴⁹ His reference is to the lynching of black people that was part of the racial terror that continued until the mid-1970s in America. However, Marsh-Lockett reads Jerome’s encounter with the Church to say, “Like the Baptists and the Anglicans, the Methodists had a distinct role in maintaining the superiority of former slave masters in the Caribbean” (27). Her

⁴⁹ Thomas’s argument works here in relation to white churches in the United States. Black versions of these churches subverted white hegemony by being the genesis of the civil rights movement.

understanding reinforces the internalized racism caused by the double-consciousness of being both black and Christian in the Caribbean. In other words, these are conflicting identities. Black Africans are heathens and cannibals, monkeys that live in trees. Black Caribbean Christians are not.

The Methodist Church is also implicated as homophobic in *Spirits in the Dark*. Pastor Oberon represents the white gay male as a sexual menace (Schmidt 149). He perceives Jerome's black gay male identity. He tells him "Yer remin' me o' maself when I been your age" (132). He tells Jerome of the same sex experiences that he had when he was a teenager in Memphis, Tennessee (133). But as he recounts his story he connects homosexuality with sin: "I asked the Lawd ter show me the way" (133). After this, Jerome interprets the Church and Oberon as not only an insidious purveyor of racism, but also as an oppressor of gay identity. Jerome's struggle within his culture to find connections that he can consolidate into a black gay male identity is an argument against King's open secret. Without individual agency against communal homophobia, black gay male identity is impossible.

Jerome leaves the Methodist Church and tries to establish a career in the civil service, but he keeps encountering homophobia in the community: "He could see himself reprimanding the junior clerks, only to be told that they didn't have to listen to a buller" (199). Throughout his adult life, Jerome encounters these slights, all of which indicate that to live within the regime of the open secret is to live a life of disrespect: "They called you 'buller' because they could not get away with pushing a knife or pumping bullets into you, and they hoped that the way they said it would drive you to push the knife or pump the bullet into yourself" (199). At this point in the novel, Jerome is in his forties, and he starts to have a series of nervous breakdowns. His sexual repression and the community's barrage of homophobia has driven him to the brink of

insanity. Jerome starts to hallucinate that the black community rejects him as a black gay man because he is “contaminated” (45).

Jerome’s hallucination is predicated on distorted memories of African culture, the French language, and homophobia. For example, Jerome becomes the host of a Ghanaian exchange student named Yaw. He brings direct knowledge of Akan culture. He is accepted into the community of Isabella because he is African, and thereby a direct representation of African culture. The children in the community engage Yaw in a dancing game that involves a chant:

Bessy down! Bessy down!
For the sake of the pumpkin,
Bessy down.
I ask Mr. Yaw to bessy down
For the sak of the pumpkin.
Bessy down. (*Spirits* 44)

The song is a translation from the French: “Je demande á quel q’un de se baisser/ Pour l’amour de la citrouille” (*Spirits* 45). There are two disturbances in the translation from French to English. The first disturbance is in the verb *baisser* which means to place something or someone lower in relation to another. This meaning can denote subservience. In the novel Jerome thinks “Yo’want me fo’bessy down to yo’? Well, me don’bessy down fo’nobody” (*Spirits* 44). Thus he resists the idea of subservience. But *baisser* is also a vulgar way of saying “to make love.” However, in relation to the song, the translation of making love for the sake of the pumpkin is nonsensical, until Yaw tells the story of the pumpkin and heterosexual desire. To paraphrase the story, a man so desired a woman that he ejaculated into a pumpkin. Since his ejaculate was so copious, the pumpkin exploded, and the seeds scattered all over the world, which is why the

pumpkin is found worldwide (45). The imperative of the Akan story is to make love to preserve the pumpkin and increase humanity.

However, in Jerome's hallucination, the pumpkin becomes a three-headed horror. One of the heads is female. Jerome is swallowed by the female head, but instead of the pumpkin exploding, it spits him out and screams "Contaminated!" (45). Thus, psychologically, Jerome unconsciously reacts to his fear that his sexuality will cause his rejection from African and Afro-Caribbean culture.⁵⁰

It is at this point that he is found by the Spiritualists. They are a secret religious organization on Isabella Island that espouses traditional West African religious beliefs. They are led by Pointer Francis. He sends Jerome on a journey of isolation and self-discovery. "No light going to be in cave. No vision must come from outside. All yo' sight must turn inward, on yo' soul" (1).

Unlike J.M.'s journey of discovery outward, away from his home of Les Deux Isles, Jerome's journey is contained within his community and within himself. Jerome's journey is important because of the transnational focus on mobility. Conceptualizations of the transnational, as Rosemond S. King correctly says, "too often focus on those with the greatest mobility and the greatest access to the global North" (3). Therefore, the butch queen Jerome's search for a self-identity within his black community is unique. "Yo' feeling a little stronger now?" "Yes." "Good, because we ha'to go to the sacred room..." "Well, we can't tear this one up" (*Spirits* 198).

Jerome is in an ante-chamber away from the sacred room, a chamber in which there is light, connected to the sacred cave. Jerome's visions happen in the darkness of a cave, which represents the Akan people's connection to the earth. In essence, Jerome must travel under the earth and back into the light to find himself. Once he has made a

⁵⁰ Once again, the black gay man is a contamination with which the community cannot cope.

crucial self-discovery, he is brought into the light to explicate it. Jerome has had three visions. Pointer Francis has interpreted each vision for Jerome and brought to him an object that he must symbolically tear up as a form of catharsis. However, in this final vision, nothing can be exorcised. It is Jerome's core identity as a black gay male that he must face:

He was silent. "I think the meaning o'the whole thing clear to you – that you been hiding yo' homosexuality on account o' all the things people say 'bout homosexuals. You frighten to let people that yo'is that way. I don't blame yo'. But yo' ever thin the price yo' pay fo'hiding and sacrificing yo' life like that?" He could not believe what he was hearing. "Yo' ever saw anybody yo'like?" "Yes." "And what?" "Nothing happened." He told Pointer Francis about the fellow who had sent the messages and how he had handled it.

"Before you and me go on, we must clear up a few things. If yo' sleep with a man, who yo' hurting?" "I don't know." How yo' mean yo' don't know?"

"Nobody, I guess." "Right. Well, if yo' don't hurt nobody in doing it, where is the wrong in it?" He couldn't answer. "Yo' see what yo' did with yo' life? Yo' put the sex part o' yo' life 'pon a trash heap just fo' please society. If yo' did live in the South o' the United States, yo' would o' paint yo' self white?"

"I get your meaning." "I want yo' to promise me when yo' finish the journey that yo' will make a effort to find somebody yo' comfortable with and that cherish and respect yo'. Don' mind what people say. We all come from the earth so we is all children of God. Nothing is sinful 'bout sex. Is a natural thing. Yo' just have fo' accept the consequences and not use it fo' hurt people. Sin, my son, is hurting others and hurting the earth. "Every mortar need a pestle." He fell silent. "And every pestle need a mortar." He

was silent again. “Is hard fo’ come up with a proverb that will include you. I guess you is a case of a pestle needing a pestle.” (197–98)

In this final revelation, Jerome comes out to and accepts himself as a black gay man. By so doing, he becomes a characterization of the black butch queen. He is self-aware and he is politically aware. His statement, and Thomas’s description, of his lived experience, rebuffs King’s call to participate in the open secret. However, it exemplifies how black gay men can create a discourse of sexual liberation within their community that is at once individual and communal. The solution is that black men in black communities must learn to love and respect one another. *Aelred’s Sin* is the story of black gay male identity told from the perspective of impenetrable whiteness. By contrast, *Spirits in the Dark* describes a black gay male identity that is narrated from the position of a black community native. It speaks to blackness from the perspective of black identity, thus exceeding King’s appeal to the open secret. The story avails itself of the power of the individual to inform communal injustices.

Chapter 4

Call Me Kuchu: Gay Black Men in *Walking with Shadows* and *The Hairdresser of Harare*

For the majority of [African writers], homophilia is exclusively a deviation introduced by colonialists or their descendants; by outsiders of all kinds: Arabs, French, English, métis, and so on. It is difficult for them to conceive that homophilia might be the act of a black African.

—Daniel Vignal⁵¹

In the search for positive characterizations of black gay male identity, this final chapter investigates two more novels: *Walking with Shadows*, by Jude Dibia (Nigeria), and *The Hairdresser of Harare*, by Tendai Huchu (Zimbabwe). The thesis of this chapter is that these two novels create the first positive, self-identified, gay male voices in African literature. Moreover, by so doing, they contextually behave like slave narratives in that they produce the metaphor of the Talking Book.

If novels representing black gay men are rare in the Caribbean, they are even rarer in Africa. To date, there are two novels written by black gay men from repressive regimes that legislate against homosexuality in their respective countries,⁵² Jude Dibia's

⁵¹ Daniel Vignal, "L'homophilie dans le roman négro-africain d'expression anglaise et française," *Peuples Noirs, Peuples Africains*, 33(1983): 63-81.

⁵² Novels that address gay black male identity negatively are not considered here: *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2007), by Kabelo Sello Duiker (South Africa), has an overtly negative outlook; and *The Yacoubin Building* (2007) by Alaa Al-Aswany (Egypt), has a gay protagonist, Hakim, who objectifies his Nubian lover Abduh. Hakim's use of the Nubian Abduh is similar to that of the Saif's treatment of his black subject's in Ouologuem's *Bound to Violence*. Also, the police officer Abd Rabbuh is a sexual predator, stigmatizing homosexuality.

Walking with Shadows (2005), and Tendai Huchu's *The Hairdresser of Harare* (2010). These two novels, when thought of together, are unique in that their characters represent a black gay male identity that is self-affirming, positive, and, importantly, part of African culture. These novels are similar to the first slave narratives written by Africans, in that they establish the first speaking voice to describe themselves and black gay male identity. These narratives, like the slave narratives, represent black gay men as speaking subjects (Gates, *Signifying* 141). However critical the speaking subject may be to establishing a black gay male voice, Gates argues that "It is not enough simply to trace a line of shared argument as context to show that blacks regarded this matter [producing their written voice] as crucial to their tasks; rather, evidence for such a direct relationship of text to context must be found in the black texts themselves" (*Signifying* 142). For the sake of context, these novels are read here through Gate's double-voiced metaphor of the Talking Book (*Signifying* 143). This chapter begins with a survey of representations of black gay male identity in novels written by heterosexual African men and women. It then turns to the two novels written by self-identifying black gay men on the continent of Africa in an effort to refute the claim that black gay male identity is a condition caused by racism engendered from Arab or Western colonization.

Before the publication of *Walking with Shadows* and *The Hairdresser of Harare*, black gay male identity was marginal to—if not entirely absent from—African novels. The ideology of African writers has typically viewed black gay male identity as something that is not essential to Africa, but rather caused by the negative effects of the West on Africa. This fact is well established in articles written by Marc Epprecht, Deborah P. Amory, and Chris Dunton.⁵³

53 Deborah P. Amory's article "'Homosexuality' in Africa: Issues and Debates" has been cited over fifty times.

Dunton writes that “It remains true that the great majority of texts in which the subject occurs stigmatize homosexual practice as a profoundly ‘Un-African activity’” (423). Again, Dunton’s citations prove insightful. He uses, by way of example, Sierra Leonean author Yulisa Pat Amadu Maddy’s portrayal of black gay male identity as un-African in his play *Big Berrin* (1976). The grandmother in the play, like Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* who “has had no opportunity to establish the overt presence of homosexuality in Martinique” (*Masks* 180), is at a loss to locate black gay male identity in her community. This assertion is made plain by her question “‘Homosexuality? Wheyting be dat? [What thing be that]’” (Maddy 16). Homosexuality is foreign. Of all the narratives that Dunton cites, Wole Soyinka’s *The Interpreters* and Yambo Ouologuem’s *Bound to Violence* give the most nuanced yet jaundiced view of black gay male identity. In *The Interpreters*, the characterization of self-identifying gay, light-skinned, African American Joe Golder is remarkably unsympathetic (Dunton 423). Also, the characterization of Raymond Spartacus Kassoumi in *Bound to Violence* is only a quasi-sympathetic treatment of black gay male identity because it is not a self-defined identity. In other words, the protagonist Raymond Kassoumi does not define himself as a gay man. In effect, he is a straight man who has a gay experience, à la Fanon’s Martinicans who become gay for pay. Both novels portray black gay men in pejorative terms. In *The Interpreters*, Golder’s sexual behavior is likened to “the standard image of the voracious Western [white] homosexual” and thus a sexual and racial outsider (Dunton 440).

Again, Dunton’s article is instructive because it summarizes some of the terms that this chapter discusses in relation to African literature and black gay male identity. For example, Dunton cites Ouologuem⁵⁴ to say that black gay male identity is a

⁵⁴ Yambo Ouologuem was born on August 22, 1940 in Bandiagara, Mali. He published *Le Devoir de Violence* (*Bound to Violence*) in 1968. The novel won the Prix Renaudot. In 1969, Ouologuem published

“critique of orthodox modes of articulating African social and historical realities” (423). Black gay male identity is “granted a greater capacity to disturb, to call questions” (423). Simply put, in *Bound to Violence*, Ouologuem creates a cautionary tale of the effects of a father who is “intent on steeping his children in white culture” (124). But what must be analyzed is Dunton’s claim that *Bound to Violence* produces a sympathetic homosexual relationship “that is unique in the [African] literature to date” (423).

Ultimately, the theme of the entire gay narrative of *Bound to Violence* is the position of the black body in relation to the white body. The gay relationship between Raymond and Lambert is problematized by Ouologuem: “The problem of his body and skin, the body and money of his partner” (157). However, Ouologuem never produces a black gay male identity. He produces a black heterosexual male who, while in France, has an affair with a white Frenchman for monetary gain. Upon his return to Nigeria, Raymond Kassoumi gets married and leads a heterosexual life. This fact is the primary reason why *Bound to Violence* fails to produce an effective lens for determining the boundaries of what it means to be an African black gay male. On the subject of queer identity, *Bound to Violence* is not a “wide-ranging critique of orthodox modes of articulating African social and historical realities” (Dunton 440). Dunton is correct in saying that the union between Raymond and Lambert is best described as “a dream of peace and solitude” (Ouologuem 153). This treatment of a homosexual act is, as Dunton writes, unique in African literature which usually describes homosexual acts as depraved, disgusting, and immoral. One still wonders: Is Ouologuem actually writing an original black gay male voice? In his 2007 article “Richard Posner on Plagiarism; the

Lettre à la France Nègre and *Les Mille et une Bibles du Sexe* under the pseudonym Utto Rodolph. *Bound to Violence* was initially well-received as exemplified by its recognition as the Prix Renaudot prize winner. However, author Graham Greene took Ouologuem to court on the charge that *Bound to Violence* plagiarized Greene’s novel *It’s a Battlefield* (1934). Subsequently, the book was banned in France. Since 1977, the English edition of *Bound to Violence* carries the note: “The Publisher acknowledges the use of certain passages on pages 54-56 from *It’s a Battlefield* by Graham Greene.” Despite the controversy, the book remains one of the landmarks of postcolonial African literature.

Case of Yambo Ouologuem,” Amardeep Singh revisits the “back-story” of Ouologuem’s plagiarism:

In 1968, *Le Devoir de Violence* was published by Editions du Seuil to widespread critical acclaim... Critics in the West praised the novel’s authenticity, some calling it the first authentic African novel ever written (as it was described on the back of the American edition)... Matthew Gallez, writing for *Le Monde*, called it the first novel “digne de ce nom” [worthy of this name]. (1)

Singh continues:

It was discovered the Ouologuem had borrowed—even more heavily—from a French novel by Andre Schwartz-Bart, *Le Dernier des Justes* (1959), which had, also ironically, won the same literary prize—the Prix Renaudot. And in a manner characteristic of plagiarism, once discovered, it seemed to spread: “citations” were soon found to half a dozen other writers, listed by Serrano as “Victor Hugo, Guy de Maupassant, Pascal, Godard, and in the English translation, T.S. Eliot and Emily Dickinson.” (2)

Interestingly, in this listing of plagiarisms, Singh initially exchanges the word plagiarism for the word borrowed. Presumably, it is his attempt to remind his reader that “in the early 19th century a certain amount of borrowing was taken for granted and even allowed, as long as it was well-concealed and accompanied by fresh insights and work” (1). While he recognizes that “today, while both the law concerning plagiarism and the ethos of originality are quite different (today plagiarism is generally seen as shameful),” Singh argues that Ouologuem’s plagiarisms in *Bound to Violence* are in a “grey” area, neither good nor bad, black nor white (1–2).

Ultimately, Singh's intervention is to insert the concept of "value-added borrowing" (1). Moreover, on the subject of fresh insights and context, Singh cites postcolonial critics Christopher Miller and Kwame Anthony Appiah to assert that Ouloguem's borrowings are strategic in the sense "that they are used ironically, to send up European misrepresentations of Africa (2). Singh quotes Miller to say: "this is a novel so highly refined and perverse in its manner of lifting titles, phrases, and passages from other texts that it makes the binary system of quotation and direct narration irrelevant" (qtd. in Singh 2).

While Miller thinks that *Bound to Violence* is a parody of English notions of Africa, Appiah finds in the novel a criticism of African nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s:

The first generation of modern African novels—the generation of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and [Camara] Laye's *L'Enfant Noir*—were written in the context of notions of politics and culture dominant in the French and British university and publishing worlds in the fifties and sixties. This does not mean that they were like novels written in Western Europe at that time: for part of what was held to be obvious both by these writers and by the high culture of Europe of the day was that new literatures in new nations should be anticolonial and nationalist. These early novels seem to belong to the world of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary nationalism; they are theorized as the imaginative recreation of a common cultural past that is crafted into a shared tradition by the writer... The novels of this first stage are the realist legitimations of nationalism: they authorize a 'return to traditions' while at the same time recognizing the demands of a Weberian rationalized modernity. (2)

What Appiah critiques in early Black Nationalism is its essentiality, its authorized “return to traditions” aligned with a Western view of modernity. In relation to *Bound to Violence*’s gay story-line, it is subversive in that it critiques Western interracial male same-sex relationships and disturbs the African heteronormative identity-construction of the essential black male. Can an African man be gay? Is there equality in the novel’s interracial same-sex relationship? In this regard, regardless of whether Ouologuem plagiarized the gay love scene between Raymond and Lambert, Singh’s argument bolsters Dunton’s claim that it is unique in African literature.

Tangentially, when Maya Angelou was questioned concerning her “plagiarism” of facts in her novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, she replied that she was recounting the stories of her people, that she was recounting a communal story (McKean A27). This idea that African American literature builds on its communal history is apt in relation to the slave narrative and the metaphor of the Talking Book. Gates affirms that the metaphor has been repeated and revised from Gronniosaw to Equiano. In the third chapter of Equiano’s narrative, he describes his voyages from Barbados, to Virginia and England:

I had often seen my master and Dick employed in reading; and I had a great curiosity to talk to the books, as I thought they did; and so to learn how all things had a beginning: for that purpose I have often taken up a book, and have talked to it, and then put my ears to it, when alone, in hopes it would answer me; and I have been very much concerned when I found it remained silent. (ch. 3)

Gates says that Equiano’s purpose in deploying the metaphor is to create a list of wonderments (*Signifying* 168). However, in relation to the subject of plagiarism, building on a communal history, and “value-added borrowing,” Equiano’s use of the

Talking Book propels it into the realm of “sublime moments of cross-cultural encounters experienced by Equiano” (167). In contrast, Gronniosaw uses the metaphor because, he says, “the World despises me because I am black” (45).

However, accusations of plagiarism notwithstanding, Ouologuem’s description of the sexual act between Raymond and Lambert leave out any mention of the couple’s sexual organs. The body is bracketed out, absent from the relationship between. This is remarkable, because Ouologuem is far from mute when he describes heterosexual sex in the novel:

The caressing sun nibbled at her insolent, swollen breasts...Her mouth was still hungry for the man’s pink, plump mollusk, and the tongue in her mouth itched to suck at the pearl of sumptuous orient that flowed, foaming as though regretfully, from the stem... (168)

Ouologuem describes the act of fellatio that Raymond and his wife are involved in as one that is sensuous and tender; both the male and female bodies are represented. Heteronormativity is in full effect. Regretfully, Dunton’s assessment of the disembodied sex scene between Raymond and Lambert relies on adjectives such as “sensuous” and “tender.” He concludes that “the homosexual episode eludes accurate assessment unless it is seen in the context of Ouologuem’s larger strategy,” which is, Dunton says, to “consistently challenge false and falsifying representations of history” (440). However, Dunton’s assertion that Ouologuem’s use of black gay male identity challenges historical representations cannot pertain if the black gay male body is silenced. Dunton admits that the queer opening that Ouologuem creates “is an extremely reticent passage in its physical detailing” (436). Importantly, “there are no references to the couple’s [Raymond and Lambert’s] sexual organs” (436). This is an untenable simulacrum of heterosexuality that reproduces the idea that physically black gay male identity does not

exist. This fact is remarkable in that Dunton also finds the invisible gay black body “a conspicuous silence in a book in which genitals generally have attributed to them the vivid particularity of independent characters” (436).

Dunton acknowledges that “much of [*Bound to Violence*’s] quotation and plagiarism might have gone unnoticed were it not for the diligence of some early readers” (438), but he responds to the accusation of plagiarism as follows: “History is exposed as farce, suggesting that it *deserves* to be represented in this way” (436).

In his evocation of farce, Dunton suggests that Ouologuem’s capture of texts outside of *Bound to Violence* creates a double-voiced parody that highlights and critiques the constructed nature of African history and culture. However, because Ouologuem is not able to construct a black gay male body that relates to his conceptualization of normative sensuality and tenderness, his parody fails. In order to see how Ouologuem’s double-voiced parody fails, it is helpful to consider Gates’s explanation of the Talking Book. The Talking Book is a metaphor for black intertextuality (*Signifying* 60). It is a means by which black texts critique themselves. To explain how the Talking Book metaphor works, Gates cites the slave narrative of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw:

My master used to read prayers in public to the ship’s crew every Sabbath day; and when I first saw him read, I was never so surprised in my life, as when I saw the book talk to my master, for I thought it did, as I observed him to look upon it, and move his lips. I wished it would do so with me. As soon as my master had done reading, I followed him to the place where he put the book, being mightily delighted with it, and when nobody saw me, I opened it, in great hopes that it would say something to me; but I was very sorry, and greatly disappointed, when I found that it would not speak. This

thought immediately presented itself to me, that everybody and everything despised me because I was black. (qtd. in *Signifying* 149)

According to Gates, by depicting a book that would not talk to the African captive, Gronniosaw recorded his fundamental alienation from Western culture: “For Gronniosaw, the book—or, perhaps I should say, the very concept of ‘book’—constituted a silent primary text, a text in which the black man found no echo of his own voice” (*Signifying* 149). If Ouologuem has captured the scene from outside of the text, as McDonald has suggested, in his article “*Bound to Violence: a Case of Plagiarism*,” he might have done in light of his plagiarism of Graham Greene’s *It’s a Battlefield* (1934), he might have also plagiarized the same-sex scene, which lacks cohesion with any other sex scene in the novel, including, as shown above, sex scenes in which Raymond is an actor. “Gronniosaw cannot address the text,” Gates claims, “because the text will not address Gronniosaw. The text does not recognize his presence and so refuses to share its secrets or decipher its coded message” (*Signifying* 149).

Unlike Gronniosaw, Ouologuem is able to read Western texts. However, as Gronniosaw is fundamentally alienated from Western culture, Ouologuem, as a representative of African heteronormativity, is not able to hear the echo of his own voice in a Western gay male narrative. Yet he uses the text in an attempt to create a sympathetic black gay male character to critique orthodox modes of articulating African social and historical realities. While Ouologuem is able to read the queer narrative, he is unable to decode its message. The secret that Ouologuem is unable to find is that black gay male identity, like black heterosexual male identity, is sensual and tender, and it revels in its physical expression. This means that the characterization of Raymond Kassoumi as a sympathetic black gay male identity is untenable.

Moreover, Ouologuem does not address the fact that Raymond Spartacus, like his Roman near namesake, never escapes colonial oppression. The homosexual identity expressed in the novel has nothing to do with Raymond's affirmation of a cohesive self-acceptance as a black gay man. Raymond returns to heteronormativity, gets married, and returns home to Africa, to the fictional town of Nakem, to be controlled once again by the ruling Saif, who is empowered by the French colonial system. Ouologuem does not create a representation of black gay male identity. Rather, he creates a heterosexual man who has had a homosexual experience. He was gay for pay. In the end, Raymond is represented like other black people in the fictional Republic of Nakem-Ziuko: he is part of a sick society made up of powerless people who cannot help themselves. At the end of the novel, Ouologuem's *négraille* (Ouologuem's word in the original French text, translated as "niggertrash" by Ralph Manheim) are worse off than they had been: "Saved from slavery, the niggertrash welcomed the white man with joy, hoping he would make them forget the mighty Saif's meticulously organized cruelty" (35). At the end of the novel, the *négraille* are hopelessly locked under the control of French and Arab conquerors.

Importantly, because African novelists have situated black gay male identity in the contentious arena of the politics of constructing a racial and national identity—"we are who we are because we are not them" (*Signifying* 149)—black gay male identity becomes a lens through which one can delimit the terms of an African racial discourse. Interestingly, in the African narrative this discourse of black gay male identity did not progress between Fanon's description in 1952 and Ouologuem's gay for pay in *Bound to Violence* in 1971. Frantz Fanon claims in *Black Skin, White Masks* that there is no black gay male identity in his community. However, "In Europe, on the other hand, I have known several Martinicans who became homosexuals...For them it was a means

to a livelihood, as pimping is for others” (*Masks* 180). The statement indicates that black gay male identity is not essential to black communities, but it originates in Europe out of an economic imbalance. Simply put, black gay male identity is cognate with the social ills that attend European racism. We have seen that, more than twenty years after from Fanon’s disavowal of black gay male identity in the Caribbean, Maddy’s play *Big Berrin* (1976) creates a similar repudiation of black gay male identity: “Wheyting be dat?”

However, the documentary *Call Me Kuchu* speaks for the existence of black gay male that is not predicated on physical, psychological damage, or economic privation. *Call Me Kuchu* is an American documentary film directed by Malika Zouhali-Worrall and Katherine Fairfax Wright. It was premiered at the 2012 Berlin Film Festival and won the award for Best Documentary. At the beginning of the film, it is explained that *Kuchu*, a word of Swahili origin, is a way to refer to homosexuals in Uganda. The documentary revolves around the activities of several Ugandan gay rights activists and their detractors. The film documents David Kato Kisule’s activism and his subsequent horrific murder. David Kato Kisule (1964-2011),⁵⁵ a Ugandan gay rights activist, takes umbrage with the connection between his black gay male identity and the exculpation of black male heterosexuals in Uganda who are arrested and brought to court on charges of the crime of homosexuality. The statement “I was looking for money” is what makes black gay male identity invisible, according to Kisule (*Call Me Kuchu*).⁵⁶ The phrase itself suggests that black men are lured or forced into homosexuality. Kato says unequivocally, “I am Gay. I am who I am, and I have always been this way” (*Call Me Kuchu*). This statement is important because it is so similar to what Harry/Harriet says in *No Telephone to Heaven*. Yet Kisule’s brave proclamation of his black gay male

⁵⁵ *Call Me Kuchu*. Dir. Malika Zouhali-Worrall. Cinedigm Entertainment, 2013. Film.

⁵⁶ This statement recalls the Fanonian conceptualization of heterosexual black men who become gay for pay.

identity is made in the documentary, so it does not come from or add to the discourse of African literature. The two novels chosen, *Shadows* and *Hairdresser*, are the first literary representations of a self-identifying black gay male identity in African literature not simply because they share a self-affirming black gay male identity, which they do, but because of what they signify contextually through their use of the metaphor of the Talking Book.

The Talking Book and the Neo-Slave Narrative

Gates first locates the metaphor of the Talking Book in the slave narratives of Afro-British and African American autobiographies, including those of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw (published in 1772), John Marrant (1785), Quobna Ottobah Cugano (1787), Olaudah Equiano (1789), and John Jea (c.1815) (*Signifying* 145–83). Gates chooses these slave narrators because the Talking Book “has been one of presence, the presence of the human voice necessary for the black slave narrator effectively to transform himself—and to represent this transformation—from silent object to speaking subject” (*Signifying* 145).⁵⁷ These narratives are the first of their genre to make the claim that blacks are human beings. They also chronicle how these men from Africa—they are the first generation of slave writers to have come from Africa, and not have been born into slavery—became slaves.⁵⁸ For example, Gronniosaw was sold into slavery because his religious beliefs were at odds with his community’s; Cugano was captured and sold into slavery because of court intrigue in

⁵⁷ Interestingly, a similar scene is present in Scott’s *Aelred’s Sin*. The Abbot, Father Justin, admonishes Aelred: “Do you think you are able as yet to understand the monastic authors of the twelfth century?” (136). By questioning Aelred’s ability to understand and interpret ecclesiastical texts, the Abbot reduces Aelred to the level of an object to be acted upon. Conversely, Aelred is striving to become a speaking subject that can read and interpret the texts that inform the Catholic Church’s traditions.

⁵⁸ This statement is true, with the exception of Marrant. John Marrant was never a slave. He was born to free black parents in New York on June 15th, 1755 (*Signifying* 155).

the royal family of the Fanti people of Ajumako; Equiano was stolen from his village as a child by black slavers; and John Jea, his parents, and his brothers and sisters were all stolen from Africa, and taken to New York. For ideological, political, and financial reasons, Africans were selling each other into slavery. These narratives critique the politics on the continent of Africa that led to their enslavement and subsequent dehumanization. Like these prototypical tales of self-identification, Tendai Huchu's *Hairdresser of Harare* and Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows* use the Talking Book to create a positive self-identified black gay male identity and criticize the politics in Africa that prevent black gay men from existing safely in Africa.

“The trope of the Talking Book is not a trope of the presence of voice at all, but of its absence. To speak of a silent voice is to speak in an oxymoron” (Gates, *Signifying* 181). The first account of the Talking Book in *Walking with Shadows* appears in the prologue. The Talking Book metaphor comes about in a similar manner to how it occurs in Gronniosaw's slave narrative. In both cases, the advent of the Talking Book, the book that does not speak, is preceded by characters describing their alienation from their culture. The first paragraph in the prologue of *Walking with Shadows* reads:

Ebele was going to die today. He welcomed it. He was simply going to let it happen so that Adrian could be born. He only hoped it would be painless. It should be painless; after all he was surrounded by hundreds of black angels in gleaming white robes, just like himself waiting to be reborn though most of them didn't know it yet. This was a day for rebirths. (“Prologue”)

The scene is important because it establishes Ebele Njoko's double-consciousness. He sees himself as the son of a well-to-do family, but he recognizes early on that his effeminate behavior, his liking of female-gendered games, and his sexual attraction to other boys make him vulnerable to the scorn and abuse of his family and his

community: “His ten-year old mind was in a hurry to rid itself of the pathetic person he had always known as ‘Ebele’” (“ Prologue”). Ebele’s inability as a child to perform his gender correctly has left him alienated from himself, his family, and his community. For Ebele, the baptism is an exorcism of his nascent gay self. During the baptismal ceremony Ebele is able to choose a new name and a new identity. Ironically, he chooses a Western name, Adrian. The irony in Ebele’s choice is that in his effort to leave behind his queer identity, which he associates with his African name, he chooses a Western name. In the novel, gay identity is associated with the West, and Africa is the place where black gay male identity is impossible (ch. 5). If Ebele is to be believed, if he wants to give up his abject black gay male identity, it would make sense for him to relinquish a Western name in favor of an African one. In this regard, in the ironical inversion of signifiers, Ebele’s narrative resembles that of James Albert Gronniosaw:

When I left my dear mother, I had a large quantity of gold about me, as is the custom of our country. It was made into rings, and they were linked one into another, and formed into a kind of chain, and so put around my neck, and arms, and legs, and a large piece hanging at one ear, almost in the shape of a pear. I found all this troublesome, and was glad when my new master [a Dutch captain of a ship] took it from me. I was now washed, and clothed in the Dutch and English manner. (Gronniosaw 8)

In this description, Gronniosaw’s figurative baptism occurs when he gladly relinquishes the chains of gold that are signifiers of his culture. He gave up the cultural chains that represented the scorn of his friends and abuse of his father in his place of birth, Bornu (3–5). Gronniosaw is effectively othered from his community and made into an outcast. Yet, ironically, he wishes to be clothed in the raiment of the two of the countries that represent the slavocracy of the West. Symbolically, Gronniosaw’s

preference is for a set of chains that will strip him of his identity as a human being. Gates makes this point as he describes Gronniosaw's choice as an "ironic prefiguration of Brother Tarp's link to his cultural heritage, a prison gang, in *Invisible Man*" (*Signifying* 148).

During his baptism Ebele, like Gronniosaw, finds that the Talking Books does not speak to him: "[The pastor's] huge hairy left hand pressed on the submerged chest while his Bible wielding right hand raised up in celestial suspension as he screamed out his prayers and banished all the evil that may have once possessed the new child of God" ("Prologue"). The book cannot speak to Ebele. The space between the book and Ebele's submerged body is occupied is the body and voice of the nameless Pentecostal Pastor.

The Pastor figure in *Walking with Shadows* represents societal piety in the sense that he is an agent of a belief that is accepted with unthinking reverence. In short, the Pastor is a zealot. As such, he is an agent of gender policing in Adrian's community. But he is the one who wields the Talking Book. He gives a voice and significance to the words within the Talking Book. It is at this point in the novel that Dibia revises the metaphor of the Talking Book and deploys it similarly to the manner in which Ottobah Cugoano uses it in his narrative. Cugoano uses the metaphor as a tale within a tale to signify against religious zealotry and the West (*Signifying* 163).⁵⁹ In most of Cugoano narrative, he concerns himself with actions "so very disgraceful to human nature," which the "barbarous inhuman Europeans" engaged in on their quest for slaves (qtd. in *Signifying* 162). As Cugoano recounts the tale of "the base and treacherous bastard Pizzarra [Pizzaro]" he signifies against Christian religious zealotry in the form of the priest Father Vincente Valverde (*Signifying* 162):

⁵⁹ In this instance, "signifying" is a technique of indirect argument or persuasion (*Signifying* 59). In other words, "One does not signify something; rather, one signifies in some way" (59).

Father Vincente Valverde, chaplain of the expedition, advanced with a crucifix in one hand and a breviary in the other, and began with a long discourse, pretending to explain some of the general doctrines of Christianity...; and that Pope, Alexander, by donation, had invested their master as the sole Monarch of the New World...[Atahualpa] said, that he could not conceive how a foreign priest should pretend to dispose of territories which did not belong to him, and that if such a preposterous grant had been made, he, who was the rightful possessor, refused to confirm it...[Atahualpa] desired to know where Valverde had learned things so extraordinary. In this book, replied the fanatic Monk, reaching out his breviary. The Inca opened it eagerly, and turning over the leaves, lifted it to his ear. This, says he is silent; it tells me nothing; and threw it with disdain to the ground. The enraged father of ruffians, turning toward his countrymen, the assassins, cried out, to arms, Christians, to arms; the word of God is insulted; avenge this profanation on these impious dogs. (Cugoano 78–81)

Cugoano's narrative inverts Gronniosaw's account of the Talking Book. He inverts its meaning by having the noble Atahualpa disdainfully throw the silent book to the ground. He is not surprised by Valverde's performance of making the book speak, and he is unlike Gronniosaw, who gladly relinquishes his culture, language, and his voice, his ability to speak to the Talking Book. Atahualpa does want to relinquish power, and he has not forgotten what he is fighting against, to recall brother Tarp. "A text which contained no voice had no significance for Atahualpa; its silent letters were dead" (*Signifying* 163). Crucially, Atahualpa, when confronted with the assertions of "the fanatic Monk" and a silent book, is able to discern the perfidious nature of the former being the voice of the colonizing Spanish monarch. The Talking Book, when presented

with fanatical assertions, is untrustworthy. The Book itself is silent and therefore dead if it cannot be made to “hear,” to be made culturally relevant to the listener. Zealotry is perfidious because it is a tool that can be used in the service of political hegemony. Dibia constructs the character of Adrian Ebele Njoko to critique this connection to social piety and political hegemony. Dibia’s novel, *Walking with Shadows*, revises the metaphor of the Talking Book to insert black gay male identity into the discourse of national identity and politics as an insider and a speaking subject.

The novel is told from the perspective of Adrian as an adult. Following on from the description of Adrian Ebele Njoko’s baptism, the novel deals immediately with the consequences of the now grown-up Adrian being outed as gay. The reason for Adrian’s outing critiques national identity and its cultural politics. Adrian works for DialPlus, an American telecom company. Adrian’s job titles in the company are vague, but they parallel the role he plays within the novel. Adrian’s first position in the company is “Head of Human Development” and then subsequently “Head of Business Risk” (ch. 3). The risk to Adrian’s business career is the adverse circumstance that ensues when someone finds out that he is gay. As head of Business Risk, Adrian uncovers the fraud of his colleague, Tayo Onasanya, who is misappropriating funds and illegally diverting them to “private accounts” (ch. 3). Adrian confronts Tayo to tell him he, Adrian, will expose his fraud and have him fired. Tayo’s response is “*You bastard...I am going to tell them*” (ch. 1). Tayo ruins Adrian’s career and home life by disclosing the fact that Adrian is gay. Tayo is not Adrian’s lover. He has learned from an American colleague who accidentally discloses Adrian’s secret. Adrian, as an exemplar of Human Development, refuses to be blackmailed by Tayo. His report to the CEO of the company results in Tayo being fired. The aftermath of this work debacle leads the narrator to reflect:

Although under the company's handbook an individual could not be discriminated against due to his sexual orientation, Adrian knew that in practice if you are anything other than heterosexual, you would be discriminated against. Discrimination will come in guises such as being overlooked when it came to promotions and in some instances actual verbal abuses or even physical abuse. This was one of the reasons why he had wanted to be seen as the ideal professional with a sound family and he was, until recent events changed all that. Adrian could not also understand when the company stooped so low to start reacting to rumours such as this absurd accusation! He could feel the nasty hands of "Nigerianisation" tearing at the fabric of what was once an excellent multinational company with its sound American approach to work. Nigerians so hated each other sometimes that they would do anything to drag a successful person down... This vicious circle kept repeating itself. (ch. 7)

The narrator's perspective on the excellent multinational company's "sound American approach to work" is questionable. He does not account for the fact that the company cannot control workplace abuse or discrimination. Dibia's comments on the internal politics of Nigeria have merit. His generalization that all Nigerians hate each other seems fallacious unless considered in the context of what he means specifically. For example, Adrian, in an effort to dispel a rumor overheard by his assistant Rotimi, explains:

'But they believe that you singled out the Yoruba people you felt threatened by and made sure you got them sacked, especially Mr. Tayo,' Adrian understood the tribal undertone involved in the case in that the only people affected had been Yoruba. Over the years some Ibo, Adrian included, had

been fortunate to be recognized for their hard work and promoted to high ranking strategic positions within the company. Some of these promotions had been possible owing to Adrian's recommendations, but what many were apt to forget was that Adrian had recommended as many Yoruba as he had Igbos. The Hausa had a firm hold of the top corporate positions in DialPlus offices in the north with the exception of the Abuja office, which was run by a Yoruba... "They are saying that you are gay and Mr. Tayo knew about you and so you decided to get rid of him." (ch. 7)

Adrian's position is interesting because perceives all his colleagues to be Nigerian, regardless of tribal affiliation. However, his colleagues perceive themselves through the lens of their regional and tribal connections; tribal frictions and ethnic violence partly led to the Biafran War. Thus the narrator's comment is true to the extent that Nigerians compete along tribal lines, and, importantly, that accusing someone of queerness is a tool that Nigerians use to try to drag each other down.

The metaphor of the Talking Book re-emerges during havoc that Tayo's revelation has wrought in Adrian's private life. Adrian's brothers Chiedu and Chika learn of Adrian's hidden gay identity from a phone call at work (ch. 2). Chiedu's response is to call a pastor to flog the devil of homosexuality out of Adrian:

Adrian didn't know what to expect when he got to Pastor Matthew's home late that Friday night. All he knew was that Chiedu had called him and told him to meet him there for some discussions and that Chika would be joining them as well... He could not explain why he was feeling apprehensive but he kept having sporadic flashes of another priest who had baptized him many years ago...But that was not Pastor Matthew. Pastor Matthew was light-skinned with thick curly black hair that looked processed. He was not a

tall man, neither was he big. He never wore white robes, only designer suits and expensive designer shirts and accessories. The most distinguished thing Adrian could remember of Pastor Matthew was the nasal American inflection in his voice when he preached... [Like] in faraway Harlem, New York, in one of those black Pentecostal churches... [Whose] pastors preached of impending doom, hell fire and brimstone. (ch. 9)

Interestingly, evangelism is a Southern American Christian tradition. It is ironic that in the novel Adrian equates Pentecostal baptism and preachers with Harlem. To date there are less than one dozen Pentecostal churches in Harlem. Nevertheless, Dibia uses the initial baptismal scene of Adrian's childhood to speak (signify) against the fanatical excesses of the Pentecostal Church:

Adrian entered the room and, to his relief, Chiedu was there, sitting by the window and reading a Bible... 'Ebele,' Chiedu said closing the Bible. 'How far?' 'I'm alright,' Adrian replied... Chiedu went back to reading his Bible; at least it seemed he was reading his Bible with the silent way his lips kept muttering. (ch. 9)

Interestingly, although it will be Pastor Matthew that whips Adrian, it is Chiedu who has initiated what will be the most violent act of sexual policing in the novel and who wields the Talking Book. However, Dibia makes it unclear whether it's the Bible that Chiedu is reading. Adrian assumes he is reading the Bible as he enters the room, but his doubt makes the observation unstable in both cases when he observes the voiceless Chiedu's silent lips muttering. The Talking Book does not speak to Chiedu, and, importantly, it does not recognize Adrian. This is exemplified by the fact that Chiedu closes the book and addresses Adrian by his Igbo name, Ebele. Moreover, Chiedu speaks Standard English throughout the novel but greets Adrian in pidgin

English with the phrase “How far?” (ch. 9). The inversion occurs because Chiedu, who called for this Pentecostal policing of Adrian’s sexuality, represents by extension the Christian zealotry that is described in the account of Adrian’s whipping. In other words, as a zealot Chiedu cannot interpret or give voice to the Talking Book. He mutters silently in affirmation of what he believes to be in the book. His interpretation is exterior to him and to the Talking Book. It is social. When Adrian confirms the rumor that he is gay to his brothers, Chiedu’s response conflates the Bible with the law: “You know what the Bible says about homosexuals... God forbids it! The law says it’s a felony for a man to practice sodomy.” Adrian says, “I know what the Bible says... And it’s open to different interpretations. The law you speak about is dictated by the society we live in” (ch. 2). At this point it is important, by way of example, to record the level of brutality that the zealot is capable of when policing black gay male identity in Dibia’s *Walking with Shadows*:

Adrian tried to protest but suddenly felt the strong hands of the two burly men that once stood behind the pastor seize him and pin him to the floor. It happened so fast and so unexpectedly that Adrian did not have a chance to react. It was only moments later when he realized what was happening that he tried struggling and protesting, but by then his voice was drowned out by the fervent praying of the pastor and accompanying “Amen” coming from his brother and the two men that held him down. Things began to move even faster. The crescendo of prayer picked up as the pastor began speaking in tongues. Adrian cringed in horror as he felt his shirt being ripped off his body, rendering the upper part of his body naked. He watched in disbelief as the pastor withdrew a long five-pronged whip from behind one of the chairs and headed toward where he was held down... Chiedu, Adrian screamed.

Make them stop this madness... Chiedu... Adrian noticed Chiedu's eyes shut tightly in prayer... oblivious to Adrian's plea. His eyes focused on the menacing, approaching figure of the pastor who wielded the five-pronged whip with such vehemence and *fanaticism*... Then there was the first sharp and searing lash of the whip on his bare back... The pastor continued his *mad fervor*. Stroke after stroke, Adrian felt himself drifting in and out of consciousness... Banish the devil from your heart! The pastor was screaming. And accept God in your life. (ch. 9)

This scene is reminiscent of whippings in slave narratives. In particular, it invokes an inversion of what Luke experiences in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Luke's master Henry beats him to coerce him into homosexual activity. Luke's body is beaten into homosexuality. Adrian is being beaten so that he will behave like a man. He is literally having heterosexuality beaten into him.

Talking Book from Zimbabwe

Black gay male identity is treated as an aspect of the degenerate transformation wrought on Africa through its contact with the West (Nyanzi 1). In terms of locating black gay male identity in the realm of African political discourse, some novelists use black gay male identity as a symbiotic link between indigenous and Western interests in exploiting African people. When not seen as part and parcel of Western exploitation of African people, black gay male identity is characterized in African literature as part of a pattern of systematic disintegration, cognate to other violations of normal behavior (Chitando and Manyonganise 560). The first paragraph in Tendai Huchu's *The Hairdresser of Harare* seems to be a testament to this fact: "*I knew there was something not quite right about Dumi the very first time I ever laid eyes on him. The problem was,*

I just couldn't tell what it was. Thank God for that" (Huchu 1). The implication is that homosexuals are not normal. Yet this novel is important because Huchu creates the character of an African man who self-identifies as black gay man. Dumisani Ncube becomes one of the first positive representations of black gay male identity in African literature. Dumi's journal performs as—and inverts—Gates's *Talking Book* because it is a book written by a black gay man that is culturally impenetrable to a black woman. Dumi's journal, the *Talking Book*, cannot speak to Vimbai until she learns to accept Dumi's black gay male identity. Dumi is African, and yet his queerness is subtle: it is easily perceptible but unintelligible to his female coworker, Vimbai, who is the focus of the novel. It seems an odd choice for a gay black man to write a novel about a self-affirming gay black man with a narrative that centers on a female character. However, this strategy enables Vimbai to come to a better understanding of herself. In this sense, black gay male identity serves the dominant social gender in the social hierarchy.⁶⁰ In other words, the novel is a bildungsroman concerned with the development of Vimbai's character. Dumi, as a representation of black gay male identity, aids Vimbai's social growth. For example, as quoted above, at the very beginning of the novel Vimbai thanks God that she could not tell what it was about Dumi that makes him queer. However, by the end of the novel, Vimbai risks her life to save Dumi. As Dumi's sister, Michelle Ncube, recounts Dumi's coming out story, she informs Vimbai:

Dumi came out to us just after he finished high school, he wasn't seeing anyone at the time. Dad went ballistic; Patrick [Dumi's older brother] wanted to bust his knee caps, it all went crazy. Nothing happened for a year until one of dad's friends mentioned in passing that he had met Dumi on

⁶⁰ This statement owes much of its heft to Rosamond S. King's statement that "In Caribbean literature, trans characters are also typically portrayed as tortured but benevolent angels" (25). However, Dumi is gay, not transgendered. Also, Huchu's portrayal of Dumi as a representation of black gay male identity is anything but angelic.

holiday with some white guy. You should have seen my dad howling with rage. To try to protect the family name, dad arranged with his pals in the police to have the Canadian dude deported before anyone knew what was up with his son. (185)

The importance of this revelation is that Vimbai is finally privy to Dumí's complete story. The scene is important to the study of gender, sexuality, and race because it points out that Dumí is African, that he is a self-identifying gay man, and that his sexuality is not predicated on Western violation. The father's rage is not lost on Dumí. His father stops Dumí's allowance, which breaks Dumí financially. For the first time in his life, must work to support himself. He notes in his diary, "At least I know I can earn a living as a hairdresser, if anyone will take me" (164).

One of the first signs of Dumí's queerness is that he is a man wanting to work in a profession that is gendered female. Vimbai says, "These were difficult times and jobs were scarce but I'd never thought that men might try to get a woman's job. A male hairdresser, who'd ever heard of such a thing?" (7). The differentiation of salon worker roles is highlighted when Vimbai states, "There were three other hairdressers, Memory, Patricia, and Yolanda plus Charlie Boy, our barber" (2-3). In the novel, the role of hairdresser is gendered female, and the job of barber is its male equivalent. A worker's sexuality is not necessarily related to the gendered role he or she occupies. However, Vimbai's misinterpretation of Dumí's desire connects gender to sexuality in a manner that renders him heterosexual. Dumí responds to a vacancy at Khumalo Hair and Beauty Treatment Salon. As he enters the salon he stares intently at the client, Matilda that Vimbai is styling. Dumí is trying to ascertain how to improve on Vimbai's work, impress Mrs. Khumalo, and get the job. But Vimbai's interpretation of the scene is different:

[Dumi's] searching eyes studied everything from our stocks to the seats. I took fatty Matilda out from under the dryer and led her to the cash desk. The young man could not take his eyes off her. Men want their women big and round, *mutefetefe*. Her voluptuous buttocks bounced around as if to mock me. (6)

This scene is telling in that Vimbai sees Dumi checking out the shop, but when she thinks she has ascertained what Dumi sees as he stares at Matilda, Vimbai's gaze is unreliable. Her gaze is disturbed by her own insecurity. Matilda's buttocks are big, round, and bouncy. The implication is that Vimbai's are not. Her body can be mocked only if it does not conform to what "men want." This is the exact cause of Vimbai's insecurity; for Vimbai's body is mocked when she does not acquiesce to the desire of men. In one scene, Vimbai is propositioned by "a man in an oversized suit...I ignored him; being chatted up at the bus stop was nothing new." When she doesn't respond to his advances the man becomes verbally abusive, "'You think you're special, but you're not even beautiful' ...Getting abused was nothing new. 'You'll die without a man'" (24). The abuse continues in another scene. As Vimbai heads home from the Salon, she is once again propositioned and abused: "'You must be a hell of a thief because you stole my heart just by the way you walk' ... 'Girl, talk to me, just for a minute and I will be happy for the rest of my life' ... 'hell baby you are hard to get but let me be your Romeo and I'll treat you like the princess you are.'" Once again when Vimbai rebuff's the man's desire he verbally abuses her: "'You slut, I was just trying to give you a chance, do you really think anyone in their right mind would want to go out with something as ugly as you...'" Vimbai has an emotional breakdown from this exchange. She begins to cry and stares at her face in bank window and laments, "'Seeing my face, I felt ugly. I was a puny ugly insect'" (79– 80).

If the random verbal assaults affect Vimbai's self-esteem and make her feel insecure about her body, they are nothing compared to the devastation that her relationship at nineteen with the good looking affluent thirty-year-old Phillip Mabayo causes (19). At this point in the novel, Vimbai is a poor "township girl" sleeping on the floor of her parent's house with her five siblings (20). Phillip seduces her with gifts: he buys her "...a silver Nokia with a colour screen, ready to use, with a sim-card installed. For the first time in my life, I had my own phone" (20). Phillip takes her out to eat:

We went to Nando's and he asked me what I wanted...he ordered rice and peri-peri chicken for me. The rich spices gave the food more flavor than the bland sadza and veg, which was our daily staple at home. I'd never used a fork and knife, but Phillip wasn't bothered if I used a spoon for my rice and my hands for the meat. I remember thinking to myself, 'This is the highlife' (21).

And Phillip gives Vimbai money: "From his wallet he fished out a wad of cash and handed it to me without even bothering to count it... 'This amount of money could feed my whole family for a month'" (21-22). Eventually, Vimbai has an affair with Phillip, but "When I [Vimbai] became pregnant, he changed like a light that's been flicked off" (41). Phillip begins to verbally abuse Vimbai: "'You weren't even a virgin when I first fucked you. How do I know it's mine?' He knew very well why I wasn't a virgin and to use this in such a callous way really cut me" (41). Further on in the novel, Vimbai tells Dumi, "Phillip raped me... That's how I got pregnant with Chiwoniso... I stayed with him because I loved him despite the fact that he hurt me. I thought maybe it was my fault for not doing what he wanted in the first place" (127). These scenes indicate that Vimbai's self-esteem is under pressure from heterosexual male molestation. Her gaze is unreliable when trying to ascertain Dumi's queerness.

Dumi's response to Vimbai's revelation of her rape exemplifies how he and black gay male identity serve the dominant social genders in the social hierarchy. Dumi's response is to nurture Vimbai: "'It's not your fault. I'm here to protect you now'. I felt him tremble with emotion as he held me close, as if he wanted to take the pain away. He held me the whole night and never let go. I had never felt safer in a man's arms" (127). Dumi nurtures Vimbai by giving her emotional support. Dumi broadens Vimbai's worldview by taking her and her toddler daughter Chiwoniso to the posh side of Harare to watch a rugby match. During the outing, Dumi and Vimbai are greeted not by jeers, but by "young boys in royal purple blazers... [who] doffed their caps and said, 'Good Afternoon sir—ma'am' as we passed" (66). Rather than bring Vimbai to Nando's, he escorts her to his older brother Patrick's wedding, where she is introduced to Auntie Grace, the wife of the President of Zimbabwe (96). It is the way in which Dumi asks her that nurtures Vimbai's self-esteem: "I need someone who knows how to carry themselves amongst people they don't know," she says. "You're classy and good looking. I need a piece of eye candy dangling from the side of my arm" (83). And, true to his word, Dumi protects Vimbai when she is again attacked by Phillip:

'This is my whore, you should all know it!' he shouted at the top of his voice. I started to cry. I had never been so humiliated in my life. Dumi and his brother Luke appeared from nowhere. Dumi set me loose and punched Phillip in the face. The bully landed hard on the marble floor and spat out both front teeth...The two brothers yanked their victim up and bundled him out of the room leaving a trail of blood on the floor behind them. (97)

Dumi's support of Vimbai enables her to reconcile herself with her past and grow beyond it. Her next encounter with Phillip leaves him shocked: "'You've never spoken

to me like this before...Coming to terms with my past was more empowering than I'd ever imagined it could be" (133).

Also, by standing up to Mrs. Khumalo, the owner of the Salon, Dumi teaches Vimbai how to ask for what she deserves:

'How about a pay rise?' ... 'Excuse me?' Mrs. Khumalo replied, putting her bottle down on the table with a bang. 'I said a pay increase would be nice.' He was unfazed... 'I have been here three months and look what has happened. Your clientele has more than quadrupled. Revenues have gone up.' ... 'I think it is only fair that you give us a pay rise or else...' 'Or else what?' Mrs. Khumalo raised an eyebrow. Dumi shrugged his shoulders and headed for the door. 'Wait.' She reached out for him. 'Perhaps you're right. Let no one say the Khumalos are not fair employers. I want you to understand this is not because of any threat you can make. It is because I care about your welfare, all of you...' Dumi looked to the other girls who tried hard to contain their delight and then he looked at me. I was in turmoil, one half of me envious and the other delighted at what he had pulled off for us. (61)

Dumi acts the part of a public health nurse by bringing female condoms into the Salon: "He looked like a high school teacher and no one felt the least embarrassed" (39). The service Dumi provides is empowering. One of the female customers in the Salon says, "I like this. It gives me control because sometimes men don't like to strap on" (39). By the end of the novel, Vimbai owns her own salon. She has grown to become a business woman in her own right.

The final and most crucial lesson she has learned from Dumi deals with constructions of race, gender, and beauty. At the beginning of the novel, Vimbai's philosophy is that:

There is only one secret to being a successful hairdresser, and I've never withheld it from anyone. 'Your client should leave the salon feeling like a white woman.' Not Coloured, not Indian, not Chinese...how d'you make someone feel like a white woman...The answer is simple, 'whiteness is a state of mind.' (3)

However, by the end of the novel, by paying attention to Dumi's style and charm, Vimbai has changed her view: "I knew then that the secret which made him the best hairdresser in Harare was that he knew how to make anyone feel like a woman" (188).

If Dumi serves the black heteronormative hegemony by helping it come to a better understanding of itself, as Rosamond S. King suggests that "trans angels" do in Caribbean literature (25), his actions in the novel are less than angelic. For example, when Vimbai tries to initiate sex with Dumi, instead of coming out to her, as he has done with his family, he lies: "I really like you, but I think we should wait. One day we will get married and I want everything to be perfect. I've never slept with a woman. It's old fashioned I guess but it is the right way to do things" (131–132).

Until this juncture, Dumi has been honest and attentive to Vimbai. The change in the novel's tone prefigures the revelation of the Talking Book, the book that cannot speak: "I opened the first page of the diary and closed it again" (161). And then: "The things I read made me drop the diary as if it were scalding my hand and I covered my mouth as if in prayer" (165). The connection to the rejection that Gronniosaw receives when he puts his ear to the Bible and hears nothing seems applicable. However, in *Hairdresser*, while Vimbai is able to read the book, = she is not able fully to interpret its meaning. The import of Dumi's diary is that it represents the "thoroughly dynamic

development of [the] protagonist's consciousness within the *unspeakable* medium of an epistolary novel comprising letters written but never to be sent," as Gates would have it (*Signifying* 261). Gates is explaining how Celie's voice in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) is a "mimetic voice masking as a diegetic voice, but also a diegetic voice masking as a mimetic one" (*Signifying* 261). By extrapolation, this is a way to explicate the private, confessional medium of Dumi's diary. Gates explains that Celie's letters are visual representations that attempt to tell the fact of showing (*Signifying* 261). Dumi's black gay male identity is revealed in the diary by free indirect discourse. Also, a third-person representation of Dumi's diary, as it attempts to tell the fact of showing, highlights Vimbai's internalized racism: "Her work is superb but she needs to do her styling with soul. She is too mechanical, she thinks making her clients feel like "white women" is the key, but what she actually needs to do is to make them feel like women. (165)

Ultimately, against the backdrop of his country's homophobia, Huchu is only able to give voice to a black gay male identity by masking it within a narrative concerned with the moral growth of a black heterosexual woman. Chitando and Manyonganise, in their article "Saying the Unsaid: Probing Homosexuality in *The Hairdresser of Harare*," cite Huchu's "bravery" in publishing his novel in Zimbabwe's climate of homophobia (560). The novel references the organization Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe negatively to say it "set up secret safe houses all across the city to encourage this sort of satanic behaviour" (167). Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe was barred from exhibiting at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair in 1995 (Chitando and Manyonganise 561). This points to the limitations that black gay men as authors must navigate to produce their writing.

Vimbai's astonishment and rage prevent her from interpreting the diary's import. She cannot interpret the lessons of Dumi's truth as a black gay man. She abandons the text that she cannot interpret. Vimbai confronts Dumi with the journal, but he runs away. Confronted with the absence of the person and a text she cannot interpret, she turns to her brother Fungai and his group of philosopher friends to answer her questions about homosexuality (176). Interestingly, these men, who represent the black male intelligentsia of Zimbabwe, interpret homosexuality as "necessary" for the categories of man and woman to pertain. In other words, black gay male identity exists as a definitional boundary for the categories of man and woman. In Fungai's opinion, there must be acknowledgement of "other ambiguous possibilities" (177). The men also say that "after all ten percent of any population is gay" (177). The men speak not from the perspective of African culture but from the perspective of Plato's example of Socratic debate and American biologist Bruce Raymond Voeller's interpretation in 1977 of Alfred Kinsey's surveys in 1940s America (175–78).⁶¹ Chitando and Manyonganise finds it problematic that the white Canadian, Colin, "helps Dumi to discover his homosexual identity (570). They find that this bolsters the claim that homosexuality is a "Western disease" and that homosexuality is not African (570). But it is startling that Vimbai abandons the black Talking Book yet finds solace in texts from the West.

In a fit of rage, Vimbai gives Dumi's journal to Minister M___, a right-wing minister in Mugabe's cabinet. "She squinted her eyes and then perched her reading glasses on the end of her nose. She sighed as she read through it, muttering 'not again' to herself" (172). Minister M___ explains to Vimbai that her husband, "a hero of the Revolution, sometimes goes gay for excitement" (172). Minister M___ feeds Dumi's journal into a shredder: now the text that could not speak to Vimbai is lost to all other

⁶¹ Bruce Raymond Voeller (May 12, 1934 – February 13, 1994) also founded the National Gay Task force in October 1973.

Africans. The next morning, Vimbai is awakened by her maid who tells her that government agents “came and took all the things in Dumi’s room” (179). Dumi is “found in a ditch along Chinhoyi Road... seriously beaten up... there was extensive trauma to the head... His skull is fractured in three places and there’s a risk that fluid has seeped in...” (180–81).

Miraculously, Dumi survives the beating, and he and Vimbai are reconciled. By so doing, Dumi reaffirms his gay identity:

After a week Dumi regained consciousness and began to speak... ‘Thank you for looking out for me.’ ‘I’m so sorry for everything.’ My voice broke. ‘It’s I who must beg your forgiveness. I should have been upfront with my true intentions for you. There were signals I gave off about us which misled you. You see, for a long time I used to think of my gayness as a cancer for which I needed treatment... Now I realize it is just something I was born with and as long as Zimbabwe can’t accept it, I’d better live somewhere else.’ (183–84)

Dumi is forced to leave the country. Dumi’s lover, who has been coming to visit Dumi in disguise while he is in hospital, explains: “The people who did this to you will come back to finish the job as soon as you leave this place” (185). However, Dumi’s passport has been confiscated by the agents of Minister M__. Vimbai goes to Minister M__ and asks for Dumi’s passport. The minister asks, “Will he keep his mouth shut while he’s there... Are you willing to put your own life down as indemnity?” (187). Vimbai agrees. Minister M__ says, “I always keep my promises” (187). Dumi manages to leave Zimbabwe. His life is threatened, so he is forced into exile. Because his sexile⁶²

⁶² See footnote 1

is the immediate result of his affirmation of his black gay male identity, the character Dumisani Ncube represents a generation of Africans that are being pushed out of Africa.

The first generation of slave narratives written by Africans who survived the Middle Passage spoke of being sold out of Africa. Gronniosaw, Cugoana, and Equiano write of being sold by Africans to white slavers. The narratives of these men are not fictional accounts. In this regard, they differ substantially from the novels chosen for this study. However, to the extent that Dibia, Huchu, Thomas, Scott, and Cliff create fictionalized accounts of homophobia based on reality, their novels draw attention to the fact that past lessons of rupture must be revisited. To the extent that the novels chosen for discussion point to essentialized views of black identity, they represent the parable of Okonkwo and Ikemefuna.⁶³ The moral that Achebe taught was that the center cannot hold, and things fall apart when essentialized versions of masculinity are clung to beyond reason. Fanon created an essentialized masculinity for black men to combat the irrationality of postcolonial racism. However, his construction disabled his vision. It blinded him to the queer other. Homosexuality represented a damaged black male psyche created by racism. He created a lens by which his queer black brother could only be seen in relation to white men, but not in relation to black masculinity. In short, he othered black gay male identity. The fictionalized accounts of homophobia are compelling. They speak to black gay male identity's resilience to survive and speak back to communal heteronormativity. By making black gay men visible and describing them as positive examples in the black community, these novels provide a strong basis on which to challenge essentialized views of masculinity. They speak against rupture

⁶³ Okonkwo and Ikemefuna are characters in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Ikemefuna is the adopted and beloved son of Okonkwo. Yet, Okonkwo joins in the execution of Ikemefuna on the orders of the Umuofia elders. Okonkwo's actions in Ikemefuna's death are representative of his fear of being perceived to be, like his father, feminine and cowardly. It is an example of how Okonkwo's fear leads him to make poor and regrettable decisions.

and othering. They speak against the need for black gay men to be pressured out of their communities.

Conclusion

... Unfortunately, there are very few oral histories and autobiographies which explore the lives of black gay people in diverse black communities. This is a research project that must be carried out if we are to fully understand the complex experience of being black and gay in this white-supremacist, patriarchal, capitalist society. Often we hear more from black gay people who have chosen to live in predominately white communities, whose choices may have been affected by undue harassment in black communities. We hear hardly anything from black gay people who live contentedly in black communities.

—bell hooks⁶⁴

This study matters because it questions racial essentialism and the problem of authority in relation to positive black gay male identity. It is unique because it highlights continuities in black gay male identities in the black diaspora. There are many visions and versions of the black community: those of Du Bois, Fanon, Garvey, Cleaver, Cress Welsing, King, and hooks. Importantly, as hooks correctly points out, one rarely finds public, historical visibility of black gay men in their birth communities. She could just as easily have been talking about novels that include positive representations of black gay men. Her point is important because it shows that black gay men have been left without positive role models. The silencing of the black gay male voice also excludes black gay men from communal discourse. Visions of leadership in black communities rarely include positive manifestations of black gay men. This study searches for a black antiracist discourse that does not need to maintain such exclusions in order to be efficacious.

Conclusions reached at the end of close readings of *No Telephone to Heaven*, *Spirits in the Dark*, *Aelred's Sin*, *Hairdresser of Harare*, and *Walking with Shadows* are: labrish, a Jamaican term for gossip, connects women's and gay black male's folk

⁶⁴ See bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*, p. 122.

history in the black diaspora; representations of black gay male identity are available in black writing as far back as the slave narrative; in the novels, homophobia is a central organizational tool used to construct black masculinity; and, doing this, authors situate black gay male identity in the politics of National and racial identity.

Interestingly, gossip is disparaged as “a devalued dimension of women’s talk” (McKeown 447). Ostensibly, gossip is devalued because it relays information that is not true (448). For example, “The speaker may be lying or merely lack sufficient evidence” (Alfano and Robinson 473). The idea that gossip can be true or false, good or bad, is decentered by the proposal that this form of disinformation is a species of women’s talk. The nature of the claim, that gossip is unreliable women’s talk, reveals a patriarchal understanding of gossip. Research shows that it is fallacious to believe that men gossip less than women (see Alfano and Robinson, Janet McKeowan, Brian Robinson, Chien-Chih Kuo, Bernhard Haeupler, Brandon Vaidyanathan et al.). Therefore, gossip is no more or less a species of men’s talk than women’s.

On the subject of veracity, whether true or false, gossip is a means by the oppressed to contravene the norms and values of their oppressors (McKeown 484; Alfano and Robinson 447). Both Harry/Harriet’s battyman labrish in the novel *No Telephone to Heaven* and Jacobs’s gossiping about Luke in her verified slave narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, inscribe black gay male identity in the lexicon of black literature and of black history. Importantly, both narratives are told by women. Therefore, the first representation of black gay male identity in the slave narrative and the first positive representation of black gay male identity from Jamaica are indebted to women’s voices. Moreover, this alignment of black gay male identity and women’s writing embeds black gay male identity historically and thematically in the African diaspora.

The importance of this incorporation of black gay male identity in the narratives of the black diaspora is that black gay male identity becomes an actor against oppression and victimization. The novels *Spirits in the Dark*, *Aelred's Sin*, and *Walking with Shadows* contravene the construction that of black gay male identity is an unnatural "other" through appeals to colonial-religious dogma that had its origins in slavery. For example, because homosexuality is an abomination of heterosexuality in a colonial-religious text, it circumscribes black sexuality within heterosexual dogma. Thus, black gay male identity is reduced to sinful behavior, and thereby must be punished (e.g., Adrian's whipping in *Walking with Shadows*), excised (e.g., Boy boy's murder in *Spirits in the Dark*), or sexiled (e.g., Dumi in *Hairdresser of Hare*).

The two main arguments against the existence of black gay male identity in the "Black-Atlantic", as represented in the novels, are predicated on colonial-damage, and colonial-religion.⁶⁵ In both cases, black gay male identity is negatively characterized. Both arguments are derived from texts, the Bible and the Koran.⁶⁶ However, characterizations of black gay male Femme and Butch Queens counter anti-homosexual arguments. The Femme Queen Harry/Harriet and the Butch Queens Jerome Quashee, Ted Salter, Jean-Marc de la Borde, Adrian, and Dumi are all cognizant of the terms by which they are oppressed as black gay men in their birth communities. The terms butch and femme are references to each character's performance of masculinity or effeminacy. The most powerful and subversive iteration of their characterizations as Femme Queen or Butch Queen is their will to counter racial, gender, and male injustice in their communities. In other words, individual characterizations of black gay male identity inform on black communal social injustice.

⁶⁵ Harry/Harriet's sexuality is said to be a result of his rape by a colonial officer. However, his femme-queen discourse speaks against this ersatz construction.

⁶⁶ Oulougeum's *Born to Violence* characterizes Islam as a colonizing religion.

However, the struggle for further positive representations of black gay male identity continues. Black Nationalism marginalizes black gay male identity. Moreover, it marginalizes the texts that gay men produce in their birth communities. This study has focused on recent developments in the literature of Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Vincent, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe in which positive representations of the black gay male occupies space. In chapter one, we saw how legislation and communal policing prevents the expression of male homosexuality in the Caribbean and Africa. Jude Dibia's novel is remarkable because Nigeria prevents the printing of material that supports homosexuality. In other words, the government actively prevents positive representations of black gay male identity. It also means that there can be no positive academic commentary on Dibia's text within Nigeria. Because of similar restrictions, Huchu's novel is the first and only such novel to come from Zimbabwe.

By finding positive characterizations of black gay male identity in these five underrepresented novels, this study does not seek to replace a dominant hegemony with another. It does not seek to replace heteronormativity with homonormativity. What this study shows is that there are continuities between the five novels and the slave narrative.

This study builds on scholarship that is posited in a cloaked, illegal, or defective identity. It is important because it acknowledges that there is an emerging body of literature that is positive in its treatment of black gay male identity. By questioning essentialism, this study broadens the range of possibilities of what it means to be a black same-sex desiring male in the African diaspora. To quote Essex Hemphill:

The Black homosexual is hard pressed to gain audience among his heterosexual brothers; even if he is more talented, he is inhibited by his silence or his admissions. This is what the race has depended on in being able to erase homosexuality from our recorded history. The "chosen" history. But the sacred

constructions of silence are futile exercises in denial. We will not go away with our issues of sexuality. We are coming home. It is not enough to tell us that one was a brilliant poet, scientist, educator, or rebel. Whom did he love? It makes a difference. I can't become a whole man simply on what is fed to me: watered-down versions of Black life in America. I need the ass-splitting truth to be told, so I will have something pure to emulate, a reason to remain loyal. (Hemphill, *Ceremonies* 1)

Hemphill correctly points to the fact that black gay men's contributions to projects of Nationalism and black identity have been silenced. Moreover, that the terms of participation for these black men are that they not self-identify as gay and that their sexuality remain hidden from the community. In effect, they must operate on the down-low. Importantly, Hemphill is highlighting the constructed nature of identity and history; these signifiers are chosen.

The positive, overt characterizations of Harry/Harriet, Dumi, Adrian, Jerome, and Ted Salter indicate that black gay men exist in the African diaspora. Their characterizations also indicate that their same-sex, self-identifying authors' support the uplift of black identity. However, these novels and their characterizations of black gay men call for an examination of African diasporic politics and culture; a theorizing of black religious practice; and a critique of black religion that seriously considers the lives, contributions and presence of black gay men.

This black gay male call for recognition is not a call for homosexual supremacy over that of the heterosexual. It is the voice of a marginalized identity demanding equality within the black community. For example, the black community recognizes the contribution of the lives of black women, the black poor, black men, the black middle-class, etc. (see Dwight McBride, "Can the Queen Speak" 365). Any critique of black

gay men in the African diaspora that does not consider the positive life experiences of black gay men, as Dwight McBride so eloquently finds, “denies the complexity of who we are as a representationally whole people,” but denies the very “ass-splitting truth” which Essex Hemphill referred to so eloquently and so very appropriately (*Ceremonies* 1).

Bibliography

- Aidoo, Ama Ata. *Our Sister Killjoy*. London: Longman, 1977.
- Aiyejina, Funso. *Self-Portraits: Interviews with Ten West Indian Writers and Two Critics*. St. Augustine, Trinidad: School of Continuing Studies, UWI, 2003.
- Al-Aswaney, Alaa. *The Yacoubian Building*. Cairo: Cairo Press, 2002.
- Alfano, Mark, and Brian Robinson. "Gossip as a Burden Virtue." *Ethic Theory Moral Practice*. 20:1 (2017): 473-487.
- Ali, Tyrone. "(En)Countering Masculinity in Lawrence Scott's *Aelred's Sin*," *International Journal of Arts and Commerce*. 1.3 (Spring, 2009): 1-12.
- Amory, Deborah P. "Homosexuality in Africa: Issues and Debates." *A Journal of Opinion*. 25.1 (1997): pp. 5-10.
- Andrews, William L. Introduction. *Behind the Scenes, or Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House*. By Elizabeth Keckley. London: Penguin, 2005.
- . Ed. *The Literature of the American South: A Norton Anthology*. New York: Norton, 1997.
- Apolo, Edia. *Lagos Na Waa I Swear*. Lagos: Heritage Books, 1982.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. New York: Oxford UP, 1992.
- Armah, Ayi Kwei. *Two Thousand Seasons*. London: Heinemann, 1979.]
- . *Why Are We So Blest?* London: Heinemann, 1974.
- Asante, Molefi Kete. *Afrocentricity*. Trenton: Africa World, 1992.]

- Aubin, Arthur Flannigan-Saint. "'Black Gay Male' Discourse: Reading Race and Sexuality between the Lines." *Journal of the History of Sexuality*. 3.3 (January, 1993): pp. 468-490.]
- Awoonor, Kofi. *This Earth, My Brother*. London: Heinemann, 1972.
- Bâ, Mariama. *Scarlet Song*. Trans. Dorothy S. Blair. London: Longman, 1985.
- Bahktin, Mikhail M. *The Dialogic Imagination; Four Essays by Mikhail Mikhailovich Bahktin*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin (TX); London: University of Texas, 1981.
- Bailey, Marlon M. *Butch Queens Up in Pumps: Gender, Performance, and Ballroom Culture in Detroit*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013.
- Baldwin, James. "Preservation of Innocence." *OUT/LOOK* 2.2 (Fall 1989): 40-45.
- The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments*. London: Collins, 1963.
- Barker, David and Balfore Spence. "Afro-Caribbean Agriculture: A Jamaican Maroon Community in Transition." *The Geographical Journal*. 154.2 (July, 1988): pp. 198-208.
- Barrett, Lindon. "Black Men in the Mix: Badboys, Heroes, Sequins, and Dennis Rodman." *Callaloo*. 20.1 (Winter, 1997): pp. 106–126.
- Beam, Joseph. *In the Life: A Gay Black Anthology*. Ed. Essex Hemphill Boston: Alyson Press, 1986.
- .Ed. *Brother to Brother: New Writing by Black Gay Men*. Boston: Alyson Press, 1991.
- Bell, Bernard. *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987.
- Bell, Karen B. "Rice, Resistance, and Forced Transatlantic Communities: (Re)Envisioning the African Diaspora in Low Country Georgia, 1750–1800". *Journal of African American History* 95.2 (2010): 157–182.

- Benitez, Rojo Antonio. *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. Trans. James Maraniss. Ed. Stanley Fish and Frederic Jameson. 2nd ed. Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 1996.
- Beti, Mongo. *Remember Ruben*. Trans. Gerald Moore. London: Heinemann, 1980.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Birmingham, David. *Trade and Conquest in Angola*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- Bishir, Catherine W. *North Carolina Architecture*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2005.
- Bokoum, Saidou. *Chaîne*. Paris: Denoel, 1974.
- Bonnefond, Susan Meltzer. "The Sexual Demon of Colonial Power: Pan-African Embodiment and Erotic Schemes of Empire." *Research in African Literatures*. 41.1 (Spring, 2010): pp. 185-188.
- Blassingame, John Wesley. *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- . *Black New Orleans, 1860-1880*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973.
- . *New Perspectives on Black Studies*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1972.
- Blyden, Edward Wilmot. *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1887.
- Borden, Anne. "Heroic Hussies and Brilliant Queers: Genderracial Resistance in the Works of Langston Hughes." *African American Review*. 28.3 (Autumn, 1994): pp. 333-345.
- Bornstein, Kate. *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Boykin, Keith. *One More River to Cross*. New York: Anchor Books, 1996.

- Braziel, Jana Evans. "Trans-American Construction of Black Masculinity: Dany Laferriere, le Negre, and the Late Capitalis American Racial Machine-Desirante." *Callaloo*. 26.3 (2003): pp.867-900.
- Brim, Matt. *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014.
- Brown, Aldith. "Economic Policy and the IMF in Jamaica." *Social and Economic Studies*. 30.4 (December 1981): pp. 1-51.
- Brutus, Dennis. *Letters to Martha*. London: Heinemann, 1969.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble; Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- . *Bodies That Matter; On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- . "Beauvoirs's Philosophical Contribution." eds. Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall. *Women Knowledge, and Reality*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989.
- Campbell, H. *Reclaiming Zimbabwe: The Exhaustion of the Patriarchal Model of Liberation*. Cape Town: David Phillip, 2003.
- Campo, Juan Eduardo. "Amulets and Talismans." *Encyclopedia of Islam*. New York: InfoBase Publishing, 2009.
- Call Me Kuchu*. Dir. Malika Zouhali-Worrall. Cinedigm Entertainment, 2013. Film.
- Caretta, Vincent. *Equiano the African: Biography of a Self-made Man*. London: Penguin, 2005.
- . "Response to Paul Lovejoy's "Autobiography and Memory: Gustavus Vassa alias Olaudah Equiano, the African"," 28:1 (2007): 115-119
- Carter, David. *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004.

- Chin, Timothy S. "Bullers" and "Battymen": Contesting Homophobia in the Black Popular Culture and Contemporary Caribbean Literature," 20.1 (Winter, 1997): pp. 127-141.
- Chitando, Anna and Molly Manyonganise. "Saying the Unsaid: Probing Homosexuality in *The Hairdresser of Harare*," *Journal of Homosexuality*, 63.4, (2016): pp. 559-574.
- Chow, Rey. (1999) "The Politics of Admittance: Female Sexual Agency, Miscegenation, and The Formation of Community in Frantz Fanon." In Anthony C. Alessandrini (Ed.), *Frantz Fanon: Critical Perspectives* (pp. 34-56). New York: Routledge.
- Christian, Shawn Anthony. *Between Black Gay Men*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.
- Clark, J. P. *Three Plays*. London: Oxford UP, 1964.
- Cleaver, Eldridge. *Soul On Ice*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967.
- Cliff, Mitchell. *No Telephone to Heaven*. New York: Plume, 1996.
- . *Abeng*. New York: Plume, 1995.
- . "The Art of History: An Interview with Michelle Cliff." Interview by Judith Raiskin. *Kenyon Review* 15.1 (1993): 15–71.
- Conover, Garrett. *Beyond the Paddle*. Gardiner, Maine: Tilbury House Publishers, 1991.
- Connolly, Brian W. "Mirror of Charity: A Reflection of Aelred's Humane Spirituality." *Mystics Quarterly*. 16.3 (September 1990) pp. 124-134.
- Cooper, Wayne. *Claude McKay: Rebel Sojourner in the Harlem Renaissance*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987.
- Craft, William. *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom: The Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1999.

- Crichlow, Wesley E.A. "History, (Re) Memory, Testimony, and Biomythography: Charting a Buller Man's Trinidadian Past," *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*. Ed. Thomas Glave. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008: 101-131.
- Cugoano, Ottobah. *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*. Ed. Vincent Carretta. New York: Penguin, 1999.
- Dabydeen, David. *Turner: New and Selected Poems*. London: Cape Poetry, 1994.
- Davis, Angela. *Women, Race and Class*. New York: Vintage Books, 1985.
- Dayal, Samir. "Diaspora and Double Consciousness." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*. 29.1 (Spring 1996): pp. 46-62.
- Dayan, Joan. "Paul Gilroy's Slaves, Ships, and Routes: The Middle Passage as Metaphor," *Research in African Literatures*, 27.4 (Winter, 1996): pp. 7-14.
- Dibia, Jude. *Walking with Shadows*. Lagos: BlackSands Books, 2005. iBook.
- Dipoko, Mbella Sonne. *A Few Nights and Days*. London: Heinemann, 1970.
- Dixon, Melvin. *Vanishing Rooms*. New York: Plume Press, 1992.
- . "Into Camp Ground." *Ploughshares*. 15.4 (Winter, 1989/1990): p. 58.
- Donnell, Alison. *Twentieth-Century Caribbean Literature: Critical Moments in Anglophone Literary History*. Routledge, 2006.
- Doukouré, Abdoul. *Le Déboussolé*. Sherbrooke: Editions Naaman, 1978.
- Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass; An American Slave*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.
- Duiker, Kabelo Sello. *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*. Johannesburg: Kwela Books, 2002.

- Dunton, Chris. "Wheyting be Dat? The Treatment of Homosexuality in African Literature." *Research in African Literatures*. 20.3 (Autumn, 1989): pp. 422-448.
- Easmon, R. Sarif. *The Feud*. London: Longman, 1981.
- Easton, Lee and Kelly Hewson. "Returning to Repair: Resolving Dilemmas of the Postcolonial Queer in Lawrence Scott's *Aelred's Sin*," *Ariel* (Summer, 2004): pp.81-97.
- Edmondson, Belinda. *Making Men; Gender, Literary Authority, and Women's Writing in Caribbean Narrative*. London: Duke University Press, 1999.
- Edwards, Paul and Dabydeen, David., Eds., *Black Writers in Britain 1760-1890* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991.
- Epprecht, Marc. "Black Skin, Cowboy Masculinity: A Genealogy of Homophobia in the African Nationalist Movement in Zimbabwe to 1983." *Culture, Health & Sexuality*. 7.3 (May, 2005): pp. 253-266.
- . "The 'Unsayings' of Indigenous Homosexualities in Zimbabwe: Mapping a Blindspot in an African Masculinity." *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 24.4 (December, 1998) pp. 631-651.
- Equiano, Olaudah. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*. London: X Press, 1998.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Press, 1967.
- . *Peau noire, masques blancs*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952.
- Fehrenbacher, Don Edward. *The Dred Scott Case Its Significance in American Law and Politics*. New York: Oxford UP, 2001.
- Field, Douglas. "Looking for Jimmy Baldwin: Sex, Privacy, and Black Nationalist Fervor." *Black Camera*. 27.2 (Summer, 1994): pp. 10-11.

- Fisch, Audrey. Ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*.
 Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2007.
- Foster, Frances. *Witnessing Slavery*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994.
- Foucault, Michel. *Archaeology of Knowledge*. Trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith London:
 Routledge, 1989.
- Fryer, Peter. *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*. London: Pluto
 Press, 1984.
- Gaard, Greta. "Opening Up the Canon: The Importance of Teaching Lesbian and Gay
 Literatures." *Feminist Teacher*. 6.2 (Winter, 1992): pp. 30-33.
- Gaines, Kevin. "Exile and the Private Life," *James Baldwin: America and Beyond*. Cora
 Kapland and Bill Schwarz Eds. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011.
- Garvey, Amy Jaques. *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or Africa for
 the Africans*. Dover: Majority, 1986.
- Gates, Jr. Henry Louis. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary
 Criticism*. New York: Oxford U.P., 1988.
- . "Editor's Introduction: Writing "Race" and the Difference It Makes." *Critical
 Inquiry* 12.1 (1985): p. 1.
- Gevisser, M. and Cameron, E., Eds. *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South
 Africa*. Johannesburg: Ravan, 1994.
- Gilman, Susan Kay., and Alys Eve Weinbaum. *Next to the Color Line: Gender,
 Sexuality, and W.E.B. Du Bois*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007.
- Gilroy, Paul. *Between Camps: Race, Identity and Nationalism at the End of the Colour
 Line*. London: Allen Lane, 2000.
- . *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Verso, 1993.

- Glave, Thomas. "Desire through the Archipelago," *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*. Ed. Thomas Glave. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008: 1-13.
- . "(Re-)Recalling Essex Hemphill: Words to Our Now." *Callaloo*. 23.1 (Winter, 2000): pp. 278-284.
- Glissant, Edouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Trans. Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1997.
- Goeser, Croline. "The Case of Ebony and Topaz: Racial and Sexual Hybridity in Harlem Renaissance Illustrations." *American Periodicals*. 15.1 (2005): pp. 86-111.
- Goldie, Terry. *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's U.P., 1989.
- . "Introduction: Queerly Postcolonial," *Ariel*. 30.2: pp. 9-26
- Goyal, Yogita. "Africa and the Black Atlantic," *Research in African Literatures*, 45.3 (Fall, 2014): pp. 2-25.
- Greif, Martin J. "The Conversion of Robinson Crusoe." *Studies in English Literature, 1500 1900*. 6.3 (Summer, 1966): 551-574.
- Grimes, William. *The Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave, Written by Himself*. Eds. William L. Andrews and Regina E. Mason. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Gronniosaw, James Albert Ukawsaw. *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince, as related by himself*. London: Dugdale, 1790.
- Haeupler, Bernhard. "Simple, Fast and Deterministic Gossip and Rumor Spreading." *ACM Symposium on Discrete Algorithms*. 47.1 (2015): 1-18.

- Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity*. South Carolina: Duke University Press, 1998.
- Hall, Stuart. *Caribbean Reasonings; Culture, Politics, Race and Diaspora: The Thoughts of Stuart Hall*. Ed. Brian Meeks. Kingston: Ian Randle, 2007.
- Hardin, Michael. "Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man: Invisibility, Race, and Homoeroticism from Frederick Douglass to E. Lynn Harris." *The Southern Literary Journal*. 37.1 (Fall, 2004): pp. 96-120.
- Harper, Phillip Brian. "Walk-on Parts and Speaking Subjects: Screen Representations of Black Gay Men." *Callaloo*. 18.2 (Spring, 1995): pp. 390-394.
- Hayford, Casely. *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1911.
- Head, Bessie. *A Question of Power*. London: Heinemann, 1974.
- Hemphill, Essex. Ed. *Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men*. 1st ed. Washington, D.C.: Redbone Press, 2007.
- . *Ceremonies: Prose and Poetry*. New York: Plume, 1992.
- . "Song for Rapunzel." *Callaloo*. 6 (May, 1979): p. 21.
- Holcomb, Gary Edward. "'The Biter Bit': 'Calalu' and Caribbean Colonialism." *Callaloo*. 30.1 (Winter, 2007): 313-314.
- . "Diaspora Cruises: Queer Black Proletarianism in Claude McKay's A Long Way from Home," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*. 49.4 (Winter, 2003): pp. 714-745.
- Home of the Brave*. Directed by Mark Robson. Performances by Douglas Dick, Jeff Corey, Lloyd Bridges, Frank Lovejoy, James Edwards, and Steve Brodie. United Artists, 1949.
- Homel, David. Trans. *How to Make Love to a Negro Without Getting Tired*. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1987.

- hooks, bell. *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery*. Boston: South End Press, 1993.
- . *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. Boston: South End Press, 1989.
- . *Yearning: Race Gender and Cultural Politics*. Boston: South End Press, 1990.
- Hopkins, Gerard Manley. *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. London: Oxford U.P., 1970.
- Hoque, M.F., et al. "Cervical Spinal Cord Injury Due to Fall While Carrying Heavy Load on Head: A Problem in Bangladesh." *Spinal Cord*. 50.(2012): pp. 275-277.
- Hron, Anthony. *Report on the Persecution of Sexual Minorities in Jamaica*. Kingston: Jamaica Forum of Lesbians, All-Sexuals, and Gays, 2003.
- Huchu, Tendai. *The Hairdresser of Harare*. Harare: Weaver Press, 2010.
- Hughes, Langston. *The Big Sea*. New York: Knopf, 1940.
- Ilmonen, Kaisa. *Queer Rebellion in the Novels of Michelle Cliff: Intersectionality and Sexual Modernity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
- Jack, Belinda E. *Negritude and Literary Criticism: The History and Theory of "Negro-African" Literature in French*. Westport (CT); London: Greenwood Press, 1996.
- Jacobs, Harriet Ann. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- James, Cyril Lionel Robert. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. London: Penguin, 2001.
- Jarrett, Gene. "Couldn't Find Them Anywhere: Thomas Glave's *Whose Song?* (Post)Modernist Literary Queerings, and the Trauma of Witnessing, Memory and Testimony." *Callaloo*. 23.4 (Autumn, 2000): pp. 1241 -1258.
- . "A Song to Pass on: An Interview with Thomas Glave." *Callaloo*. 23.4 (Autumn, 2000): pp. 1227-1240.

- Jeater, D. *Marriage, Perversion and Power: The Construction of Moral Discourse in Southern Rhodesia, 1890- 1920*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1993.
- Jones, David C. “‘Something Unspeakable’: James Baldwin and the ‘Closeted-ness’ of American Power,” *James Baldwin Review*. Vol. 3 (2017): 41-64.
- Kaplan, Caren. “Deterritorializations: The Rewriting of Home and Exile in Western Feminist Discourse.” *Cultural Critique*. 6 (Spring, 1987): pp. 187-198.
- Kimmel, Michael. “Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity,” *American Sociological Association*, (Winter, 2001): pp. 280-310.
- King, Adele. *The Writings of Camara Laye*. London: Heinemann, 1980.
- King, Rosamond S. *Island Bodies: Transgressive Sexualities in the Caribbean Imagination*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2014.
- Klinken, Adriaan S. Van. *Transforming Masculinities in African Christianity; Gender Controversies in Times of AIDS*. Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2013.
- Kornegay, E. L. *A Queering of Black Theology: James Baldwin’s Blues Project and Gospel Prose*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Kuo, Chien-Chih. “Gossip in the Workplace and the Implications for HR Management: A Study of Gossip and Its Relationship to Employee Cynicism.” *The International Journal of Human Management*. 26.18 (2015): 2288-2307.
- Kuster, Meagan E. *Unsettling Belongings: Settler Colonialism in the Selected Works of Jean Rhys and Elizabeth Bowen*. Trinity College Dublin, PhD dissertation.
- Lacan, Jacques. *Le complexe, facteur concret de la psychologie familiale*, *Encyclopedie francaise*. Vol. 5. pp. 8-40.
- . *Ecrits: A Selection*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton, 1997.

- Laferriere, Dany. *How to Make Love to a Negro Without Getting Tired*. Trans. David Homel. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1987.
- La Fountain – Stokes, Lawrence M. *Queer Ricans: Cultures and Sexualities in the Diaspora*. Minneapolis: University of Michigan Press, 2009.
- Laye, Camara. *A Dream of Africa*. Trans. James Kirkup. London: Fontana/Collins, 1970.
- Lovejoy, Paul E. "Issues of Motivation – Vassa/Equiano and Carretta's Critique of the Evidence," *Slavery and Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies*. 28:1 (2007): 121-125.
- Lyne, Bill. "God's Black Revolutionary Mouth: James Baldwin's Black Radicalism," *Science and Society*. 74:1 (2010): 12-36.
- McBreen, Ellen. "Biblical Gender Bending in Harlem: The Queer Performance of Nugent's Salome." *Art Journal* 57.3 (Autumn, 1998): pp. 22-28.
- McBride, Dwight A. "Can the Queen Speak? Racial Essentialism, Sexuality and the Problem of Authority." *Callaloo*. 21.2 (Spring, 1998): pp. 363-379.
- McDonald, Robert. "Bound to Violence: A Case of Plagiarism." *Transition* 41 (1972): 64-68.
- McGillis, Ian. "H. Nigel Thomas is on the Verge of a Breakthrough with *No Safeguards*." *Montreal Gazette* 28 October 2015. Web, 20 June 2018.
- McKay, Claude. *Home to Harlem*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1928.
- McKean, Erin. "The Wise Words of Maya Angelou. Or Someone, Anyway," *The New York Times*, 10 April 2015, p. A27.
- McKeown, Janet K.L. "The Hens are Clucking: Women Performing Gossip in Their Leisure Lives." *Leisure Science*. 37:1 (2015): 447-457.
- Macey, David. *Frantz Fanon: A Biography*. New York: Picador, 2000.

- Macharia, Keguro. "Slicing the Hunger: Queering Diaspora in Melvin Dixon's Change of Territory." *Callaloo*. 23.4 (Winter, 2009): pp. 1262 – 1273.
- Maddy, Yulissa Amadu. *Big Berrin*. Leeds: Gbakanda, 1984.
- . *No Past, No Present, No Future*. London: Heinemann, 1973.
- Maes-Jelinek, Hena. "Lawrence Scott's Caribbeaness: A Personal Reading of *Witchbroom and Aelred's Sin*," *European Review*, 13.1 (Spring, 2000): pp. 100-120.
- Makhele, Caya. *L'homme au Landau*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1988.
- Makward, Christiane P. *Mayotte Capecia, ou, l'alienation selon Fanon*. Paris: Editions Karthala, 1999.
- Marechera, Dambudzo. *Mindblast*. Harare: College P, 1984.
- Marriott, Robert. "Batty Boys in Babylon: Can Gay West Indians Survive the "Boom Bye Bye Posses?" *Village Voice*, January 12, 1993, 30.
- Mathabane, Mark. *Kaffir Boy*. London: Pan, 1987.
- Matthews, James. *The Park and Other Stories*. Braamfontein: Ravan, 1983.
- Meijer, Irene Costera and Prins, Baukje. "How Bodies Come to Matter: An Interview with Judith Butler." *Signs*. 23.2 (Winter, 1998): pp. 275-286.
- Mercer, Kobena. "Decolonization and Disappointment," *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*. Ed. Alan Read. Seattle: Bay Press, 1996: 114-130.
- . *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Miller, D. Quentin. "Trends in James Baldwin Criticism 2010-2013." *James Baldwin Review*, Vol. 3, 2017: 186-202.

- Mills, Nathaniel. "Cleaver/Baldwin Revisited: Naturalism and the Gendering of Black Revolution," *Studies in American Naturalism*. 7:1 (2012): 50-79.
- Moodie, T. D. and Ndatshe, V. *Going for Gold: Men's Lives on the Mines*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994.
- Mopeli-Paulus, A. S., and Peter Lanham. *Blanket Boy's Moon*. London: Collins, 1953.
- Moran, Rene. *Un homme pareil aux autres*. Paris : Editions Arc-en-Ciel, 1947.
- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Nanga, Bernard. *La trahison de Marianne*. Dakar, Lome, Abidjan: NEA, 1984.
- Nayak, Anoop and Kehily, Mary Jane. "Gender Undone: Subversion, Regulation and Embodiment in the Work of Judith Butler." *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 27.4 (September, 2006): pp. 459-472.
- Neal, Mark Anthony. Rev. of *Black Gay Man*, ed. Robert Reid-Pharr. *Callaloo*. 26.3 (Summer, 2003): pp. 906-908.
- Needham, Anuradha Dingwaney. *Using The Master's Tools; Resistance and the Literature of the African and South-Asian Diasporas*. London: MacMillan Press, 2000.
- Nelson, Emmanuel. "Critical Deviance: Homophobia and the Reception of James Baldwin's Fiction." *Journal of American Culture*. 14.3 (1991): pp. 91-96.
- Nero, Charles I. "Reading Will Make You Queer: Gender Inversion and Racial Leadership in Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem*," *Palimpsest*, 2:1 (2013): 74-86.
- Nickel, John. "Disabling African American Men: Liberalism and Race Message Films," *Cinema Journal*, 44.1 (Fall, 2004): pp. 25-48.
- Nkrumah, Kwame. *African Personality*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1963.

- Northrup, Solomon. *Twelve Years a Slave*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. New York: Penguin, 2012.
- Nortje, Arthur. *Dead Roots*. London: Heinemann, 1973.
- Nugent, Richard Bruce. *Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance*. Ed. Thomas H. Wirth. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002.
- . "A Dilettante Unto Death: Richard Bruce Nugent's Dilettante Aesthetic and Unambitious Failure," Cody C. St. Clair. *African American Review*, 50.3 (Fall, 2017): pp. 273-289.
- O'Callaghan, Evelyn. "A Conversation with Evelyn O'Callaghan," Sheryl Gifford, Interviewer. *SX Salon*, 8.1 (Winter, 2012): pp. 2-15.
- Odier, Charles. *Anxiety and Magic Thinking*. New York: International Universities Press, 1956.
- Omotoso, Kole. *The Edifice*. London: Heinemann, 1971.
- Ongiri, Amy Abugo. "We Are Family: Black Nationalism, Black Masculinity, and the Black Gay Cultural Imagination." *College Literature*. 24.1 (February, 1997): pp. 280-294.
- Onyeama, Dillibe. *Nigger at Eton*. London: Leslie Frewen, 1972.
- . *Sex Is a Nigger's Game*. London: Satellite Books, 1976.
- Ouologuem, Yambo. *Bound to Violence*. Trans. Ralph Manheim. London: Heinemann, 1971.
- Pabst, Naomi. "An Unexpected Blackness." *Transition*. 100 (2008): pp. 112-132.
- Pace, Claire. *Félibien's Life of Poussin*. London: Zwemmer, 1981.
- Panofsky, Erwin. *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*. New York: Harper & Row, 1960.
- Phillips, Caryl. *A New World Order: Selected Essays*. London: Vintage, 2002.

- Phillips, Ulrich B. *Life and Labor in the Old South*. Boston: Yale University press, 1929.
- Pincheon, Bill Stamford. "Invisible Men Made Visible: Review of Tongues Untied." *Black Camera*. 6.1 (Spring/Summer, 1991): pp. 5-6.
- Pini, Barbara, and Bob Pease , eds. *Men, Masculinities and Methodologies*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013.
- Pinson, Hermine. "Geography and Identity in Melvin Dixon's Change of Territory." *Melus*. 21.1 (Spring, 1996): pp. 99-111.
- Plato. *The Symposium*. Trans. Walter Hamilton. London: Penguin Classics, 1951.
- Potkay, Adam, and Burr, Sandra. "Ukawsaw Gronniosaw", *Black Atlantic Writers of the Eighteenth Century: Living the New Exodus in England and the Americas*. Basingstoke, England: Macmillan, 1995.
- Prince, Mary. *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave*. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2008.
- Rabaka, Reiland. *Forms of Fanonism: Frantz Fanon's Critical Theory and the Dialectics of Decolonization*. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2010.
- Raymond, Janice. *The Transsexual Empire ; the Making of the She-Male*. London : Women's Press, 1980.
- Raiskin, Judith. "The Art of History: An Interview with Michelle Cliff." *Kenyon Review* 15. 1 (1993): 15 -71.
- Reddock, Rhoda. "Contestations Over Culture, Class, Gender and Identity in Trinidad and Tobago: The Little Tradition." *Questioning Creole: Creolisation Discourses in Caribbean Culture*. Ed. Verene A. Shepherd and Glen L. Richards. Kingston: Ian Randle, 2002.
- Reeser, Todd W. *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction*. Chichester, England: Wiley Blackwell, 2010.

- Reid-Pharr, Robert F. "It's Raining Men." *Transition*. 69 (1996): pp. 36-49.
- Reynolds, Daniel. "What Would Marsha P. Johnson Do Today?" *The Advocate*, 09 May 2017. Web, 20 June 2018.
- Rhys, Jean. *Voyage in the Dark*. London: Penguin, 2000.
- Riggs, Marlon T. "Notes of a Signifyin' Snap! Queen." *Art Journal*. 50.3 (Autumn, 1991): pp.60-64.
- Riggs, Marlon T., dir. *Tongues Untied*. Perf. Brian Freeman, Essex Hemphill. Frameline & California Newsreel, 1989. Film.
- . *Black Is, Black Ain't*. Berkeley, CA: Signifyin' Works, 1995.
- Robinson, Brian. "Character, Caricature, and Gossip." *The Monist*. 99.10 (2016): 198-211.
- Romanet, Jerome de. "A Conversation with Melvin Dixon." *Callaloo*. 23.1 (Winter, 2000): 84-109.
- Rowell, Charles Henry. "Calling (out) Our Names." *Callaloo*. 23.1 (Winter, 2000): pp. 1-5.
- Rustin, Bayard. *Strategies for freedom: The Changing Pattern of Black Protest*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1976.
- Saint, Assotto. *Spells of a Voodoo Doll*. New York: Richard Kasak, 1997.
- .Ed. *Milking Black Bull : 11 Gay Black Poets*. Sickerlville, N.J. : Vega, 1995.
- Saint-Aubin, Arthur Flannigan. "Black Gay Male Discourse: Reading Race and Sexuality between the Lines." *Journal of the History of Sexuality*. 3.3 (January, 1993): pp. 468- 490.
- Sanders, Todd. "Reflections on Two Sticks: Gender, Sexuality and Rainmaking ." *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*. 42.166 (2002): pp. 285-313.

- Sassine, Williams. *Wiryamu*. Trans. John Reed and Clive Wake. London: Heinemann, 1980.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics*. Trans. Wade Baskin. Ed. Perry Meisel and Haun Saussy. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.
- Scott, Lawrence. *Aelred's Sin*. London: Allison and Busby Limited, 1998.
- . Tyrone Ali Interviewer. "(En)Countering Masculinity in Lawrence Scott's *Aelred's Sin*," *International Journal of Arts and Commerce*. 1.3 (Spring, 2009): pp. 1-12.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- See, Sam. "Spectacles in Color": The Primitive Drag of Langston Hughes," 124.3 (May, 2009): pp. 798-816.
- Sembène Ousmane. *The Black Docker*. Trans. Ros Schwartz. London: Heinemann, 1987.
- Senghor, Léopold Sédar, "Problématique de la négritude," *Colloque sur la négritude*, 13-28; also P.A., 78 (1971), 3-26; and in *Liberté III*, 268-289.
- . *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française*. Précédée de « Orphée noir » par Jean-Paul Sartre. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1948.
- Sharpley-Whiting, Tracey D. "Anti-Black Femininity and Mixed Race Identity: Engaging Fanon to Reread Capecia." In Lewis R. Gordon, Tracy D. Sharpley-Whiting, and Renee T. White (Eds.), *Fanon: A Critical Reader* Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996.
- Sinanan, Kerry. "The Slave Narrative and the Literature of Abolition." *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*, Ed. Audrey Fisch. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2007.

- Smith, Venture. *A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture, a Native of Africa: But Resident above Sixty Years in the United States of America; Related by Himself*. New London, CT: The Bee-Office, 1798.
- Sobolev, Dennis. "Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Language of Mysticism," *Christianity and Literature*, 53.4 (Summer, 2004): 455-482.
- . "Hopkins's "Bellbright Bodies": The Dialectics of Desire in His Writings," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 45.1 (Spring, 2003): pp.114-140.
- Soyinka, Wole. *The Interpreters*. London: Fontana/Collins, 1972.
- . *Season of Anomy*. London: Rex Collings, 1973.
- Spillers, Hortense. "A Transatlantic Circuit: Baldwin at Mid-Century," *Callaloo*, 35:4 (2012): 929-37.
- Steward, Douglas. "Saint's Progeny: Assotto Saint, Gay Black Poets, and Poetic Agency in the Field of the Queer Symbolic." *African American Review*. 33.3 (Autumn, 1999): pp. 507-5018.
- Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. London: Blackie, 1963.
- Styrker, Susan and Stephen Whittle, eds. "Sappho by Surgery: The Transexually Constructed Lesbian-Feminist." *The Transgender Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Sullivan, Andrew. *Virtually Normal; An Argument about Homosexuality*. London: Picador, 1996.
- Tansi, Sony Labou. *L'etat honteux*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1981.
- Taussig, Michael. *Processes in Pathology and Microbiology*. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 1984.

- Taylor, Douglas. "Three Lean Cats in a Hall of Mirrors: James Baldwin, Norman Mailer, and Eldridge Cleaver on Race and Masculinity," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 52:1 (2010): 70-101.
- Tettenborn, Eva. "Will the Big Boys Finally Love You: The Impossibility of Black Male Homoerotic Desire and the Taboo of Black Homosexual Solidarity in Thomas Glave's *Whose Song?*?" *Callaloo*. 26.3 (Summer, 2003): pp. 855-866.
- Thomas, H. Nigel. "On the Verge," Interview with Ian McGillis. *Montreal Gazette*. 28 October 2015. Web, 20 June 2018.
- . *Return to Arcadia*. Montreal: TSAR Publications, 2007.
- . *No Safeguards*. Ontario: Guernica Editions, 2015.
- . *Spirits in the Dark*. Ontario, Canada: Anansi Press, 1993.
- Thomson, Donald. *Bindibu Country*. Melbourne: Sybers Books, 1975.
- Tillery, Tyrone. *Claude McKay: A Black Poet's Struggle for Identity*. Boston: University of Mass. Press, 1992.
- Tinsley, Omise'eke Natasha. *Thieving Sugar: Eroticism Between Women in Caribbean Literature*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Tóibín, Colm. "Baldwin and "The American Confusion"," *James Baldwin: America and Beyond*. Cora Kapland and Bill Schwarz Eds. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011.
- Toland-Dix, Shirley. "Re-Negotiating Racial Identity: The Challenge of Migration and Return in Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven*." *Studies in the Literary Imagination*. 37.2 (Fall, 2004): pp. 37-51.
- Tongues Untied*. Dir. Marlon Riggs. Perf. Brian Freeman, Essex Hemphill. Frameline & California Newsreel, 1989. Film.

- Toll, Robert C. *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America*.
London: Oxford UP, 1977.
- Tricomi, Albert. "Dialect and Identity in Harriet Jacobs's Autobiography and Other Slave Narratives," *Callaloo*, 29.2 (Spring, 2006): pp. 619-633.
- "Trinidad and Tobago Judge Rules Homophobic Laws Unconstitutional." *The Guardian*, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/13/trinidad-and-tobago-sexual-offences-act-ruled-unconstitutional>.
- Turner, William B. *A Genealogy of Queer Theory*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000.
- Vaidyanathan, Brandon, et al. "Gossip as Social Control: Informal Sanctions on Ethical Violations in Scientific Workplaces." *Social Problems*. 63.1 (2016): 554-572.
- Vambe, Maurice Taonezvi and Zegeye, Abebe. "Notes on Theorizing Black Diaspora From Africa." *African Identities*. 5.1 (2007): pp. 5-32.
- Van Vechten, Carl. *The Splendid Drunken Twenties: Selections from the Daybooks, 1922-30*. Bruce Kellner Ed. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003.
- Vignal, Daniel. "L'homophilie dans le roman négro-africain d'expression anglaise et française," *Peuples Noirs, Peuples Africains*, 33(May-June, 1983): pp. 63-81
- Walcott, Rinaldo. "Fragments of Toronto's Black Queer Community: From a Life Still Being Lived," *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*. Ed. Thomas Glave. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008: 360-368.
- Ward, Elijah G. "Homophobia, hypermasculinity and the U.S. Black Church." *Culture, Health and Society*. Vol. 7, No. 5 (Sept. – Oct., 2005), pp. 493 – 504.
- Washington, Booker T. *The Story of the Negro: The Rise of the Race from Slavery*. Philadelphia, PA:University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.
- . *Up from Slavery* Ed. William L. Andrews. New York; London: Norton, 1996.

- Welsing, Frances Cress. "The Politics Behind Black Male Passivity, Effeminization, Bisexuality and Homosexuality." *The Isis Papers: The Keys to the Colors*. Chicago: Third World, 1991. 81-92.
- West, Cornel. *Race Matters*. New York: Beacon Press, 1993.
- Wheatley, Phillis. *The Collected Works of Phillis Wheatley*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Wilson, Jeremiah Moses. *Alexander Crummell: A Study of Civilization and Discontent*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Wilson, Lucy. "Women Must Have Spunks": Jean Rhys's West Indian Outcasts," *Modern Fiction Studies*. 86.32 (Autumn, 1986): pp. 60-75.
- Woodard, Helena, *African-British Writings in the Eighteenth Century; the Politics of Race and Reason*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999.
- Woodard, Vincent. "Just as Quare as They Want to Be: A Review of the Black Queer Studies in the Millennium." *Callaloo*. 23.4 (Autumn, 2000): pp. 1278-1284.
- Wright, Richard. *White Man Listen!* New York: Anchor Books, 1964.
- Yellin, Jean Fagan. Ed. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself*. Boston: Belknap, 2009.
- Youdell, Deborah. "Subjectivation and Performative Politics: Butler Thinking Althusser and Foucault: Intelligibility, Agency and the Raced-Nationed-Religioned Subjects of Education." *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 27.4 (September, 2006): pp. 511-528.
- Žižek, Slavoj. *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality*. London: Verso, 1989.
- . *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*. London: Profile Books, 2008.