(En)Countering Masculinity in Lawrence Scott's *Aelred's Sin*

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Abstract

The history of the West Indies is one of violation and trauma, consequent upon colonization and its attendant economic and political agendas. Juxtaposed to the fiscal rationale for slavery were a corresponding degradation, emasculation and identity-stripping of the Caribbean man. But West Indian authors have applied their creative genius in constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing literary works that reflect a multiplicity of masculine identities nurtured by attitudes of sex and gender. A major tool employed to this end has been an interrogation of love, intimacy and sexuality in the lives of men in Anglophone Caribbean prose. This paper interrogates such indices of masculinity in Lawrence Scott's *Aelred's Sin* with a view to ascertaining the sex and gender identities of Scott's French Creole Caribbean protagonist transplanted in the metropole.

Keywords: love, intimacy, sexuality, masculinity, sex identity, gender identity.

Essay

West Indian literature is undoubtedly replete with the behaviours, attitudes and orientations of male characters whose masculinities hinge on the indices of love, intimacy and sexuality to varying degrees. Over time, literary constructions of Caribbean masculinities have come to reflect the gamut of male identities ranging from a subdued, passive sexuality to a brutal and openly displayed violent sexuality. Historically, authors' works reflect a strong allegiance to characters underscored by heterosexuality. Contemporary texts, however, as well as historical narratives written from a contemporary ideological base, reflect a shift to alternative sexualities and men's quests to identify with such. Whether presented in muted or more obvious fashion, sex and sexuality have become important themes in literary writing in the Caribbean. King (2002) takes umbrage, however, in the manner in which these themes are explored:

> Caribbean novels by men published in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s also share the disturbing trend of portraying the use and abuse of women for sexual pleasure and refusing to condemn, or even comment on, that behavior. That the narrators do not explicitly condone abusive and predatory behavior is of little comfort and, in effect, these authors' portrayals of more liberal sexual relationships are at the expense of women's bodies and personhoods. (28-29)

Interrogation of sex and gender identities along ethnic frames of the White plantation owner, the Afro-Saxon male, the dominant lower strata Afro-Creole man, and the Indo-Caribbean male signifies the indisputable notion that sexual ideology is dynamic among men and has the capacity to be dynamic within any one man, at various points in time. The gamut of resultant identities, from the heteronormative to the alternative, is historically bound with roots in power relations among men (Rubin, 1984). It is a renegotiation of homoerotic life that creates much tension in Lawrence Scott's fictional enquiry *Aelred's Sin* as a historical novel, whose plot spans the late 1950s to the late 1980s, and is written from a contemporary ideological frame. The author claims that, "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."[1]

Offering intersections of race, colour, class and religion, the story is narrated by Robert de La Borde, brother of the protagonist, Jean Marc de la Borde, who comes to be known as Aelred and is referred to as JM in the novel. The novel reflects an alternating first person narrative voice with a third person narrative voice. In the case of the former, Robert painstakingly reflects on the life of his dead, homosexual French Creole brother[2] who has left Les Deux islands in the Caribbean in search of a safe space where he can come to terms with his homosexual nature. In the second case, the reader is plunged into the early life of JM in the Caribbean, his home life, his schooling, and his traumatic rape by male classmates that forced his migration to a European monastery. Robert re-tells this story using a repertoire of embedded and epistolary narratives as he extracts from JM's journals, letters, 'book of dreams', anecdotes, interviews as well as memories of stories told by the black servant, Toinette, on the plantation in which the brothers grew up. Scott supplements these techniques with the duality of naming, intertextuality, parallels between past and present characters and literary foils. The narrative creates a network of connections between the West Indies and England and Africa, thereby re-creating the history of the slave trade and the subsequent plurality and merging of ethnic legacies that have come to characterize the West Indies. Catalysing this (re)formulation of the historical migration characteristic of Empire – which becomes crucial to JM's attainment of resolution to his internal conflict regarding his sexual identity – is the painting of the white aristocrat and the African slave-boy that JM discovers on the walls of the monastery in England.

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[1] Scott responds to a question about the prime focus of his novel. Group interview, 24 March, 2004.

[2] There are numerous pieces of evidence to suggest this ethnic frame of the novel's protagonist and the narrator-brother, which lends credibility to this chapter's focus on the French Creole male in the West Indies. Firstly, the author confirms this as he describes both his and the novel's French Creole social background as one marked by wealth, social standing and a politically-minded ideology, attitudes to race characterized by West Indian colonial sensibilities, belonging to the Roman Catholic faith, and having at least one family member pursue a vocation as a nun or a priest. Personal interview conducted on 4 June, 2009.
Secondly, then novel's episode in which JM gazes into the portrait unleashes a flood of memories of his youth in the Caribbean, including that of his black friends accusing him with: "all you French Creole".
Thirdly, it becomes obvious in Funso Aiyejina's interview with Scott when the author speaks of his French Creole background (173) and the protagonist's brother as a "Trinidadian 1980 French Creole" (197). See Aiyejina, 163-200.
Finally, in her assertion that 'French Creoles' signify "an amalgam of descendants of Europeans who still dominate the local economy", Reddock (114) allows a parallel to be drawn between the JM of *Aelred's Sin* and his ascendant white plantation owner figure in the person of Dabydeen's *Turner*. This parallel sets the stage for exploring similarities between the past and the present, which afford a repetition of a historical account of sexuality complete with alternative sexualities and the rape of young, male Africans who come to idolise their rapists, as represented by Jordan in the famous painting at the monastery.

Canadian postcolonial critics Lee Easton and Kelly Hewson (2004) suggest that Robert is attempting to adopt a depressive position – where a loved object is reassembled through one's own resources – as brother attempts to find brother, in his target of a reparative reading and appreciation of JM's life story.

> In psychoanalytic words, Robert is taking an absence, his brother, and converting it into a loss, which he then hopes to repair. Robert's remembering suggests to us Sedgwick's proposition that queer theory should emphasize how the depressive position enables us to reassemble an object that "once assembled, the more satisfying object is then available both to be identified with and to offer one nourishment and comfort...." (8)

But what exactly is JM's life story? It is a story of homoerotic desire and love, anchored in the fictional Caribbean Les Deux Isles, and within a Benedictine English monastery. Kimmel (1996) claims 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 (18). This understanding catapults Scott's novel into the realm of writing that gives voice to marginalized masculinities that have come to characterize homosexuals operating in a hegemonic, heteronormative frame. In doing so, binary notions of rigid gender identities are questioned and this is manifested in JM's search for a sexual identity. 'Aelred' is the 12th Century Saint, Aelred of Rievaulx, whose work *Spiritual Friendship*[3], captures the essence of 'the quest for God and homoerotic love,' is first made known to JM by Dom Placid of Les Deux, and paints the possibility of a kind of friendship between men that impacts on the 'dangerous chastity' of priests in the Catholic Church. 'Aelred' is also the name given to JM upon his entry into the monastic order, creating a foreshadowing of JM's search for sexual identity with roots in homosexuality, as discerned through Scott's foil device. According to Welsh (2000), the trope of double names is deployed as it allows Scott to explore the complexities of (re)naming as symbolic of spiritual rebirth but also as loss, in Aelred's case, the loss of his Caribbean cultural heritage. Indeed this transition, continues Welsh, from 'Jean-Marc' to 'Aelred' needs to be read as part of a specifically Caribbean history of naming, renaming, and the loss of names. Just as African slaves were given European or classical appellations by plantation owners in the Caribbean, so Jordan (of the portrait hanging on the Ashton Park monastery wall, is an imposed name for the 18th Century slave boy whose story Aelred/JM becomes fascinated by. (220)

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[3] *Spiritual Friendship* is one of many texts explored by Scott in his novel. Others include *The Mirror of Chastity* by Saint Aelred, *The Song of Songs* and *Pied Beauty* by Gerard Manley Hopkins. These, always present alongside the contemporary story, become further examples of Scott's device of intertextuality that serves to create an expansive panorama of the prominence of love, intimacy and sexuality that may be attributable to same-sex relations.

The novel shifts across time and space from JM's boyhood and adolescence in the Caribbean to his early adulthood in the Ashton Park monastery of North England where the search for his identity finally, albeit painfully, comes to fruition. Easton and Hewson (2004) state that *Aelred's Sin* is seen as "a novel that tackles the question of sexual identity from a non-heterosexual, non-Western, non-white perspective and whose complexities intrigue[d] us." (1-2)

JM's early life in the West Indies was fraught with a nagging realization that his sexual orientation was one that labelled him 'the other'. Nixon (1997) claims the interventions of sexologists and medical men, in categorizing the 'Other' as sexually perverse - especially homosexuality toward the end of the 19th Century - were part and parcel of the general tightening of definitions and norms of masculinities during the Victorian period. In the process, any signs of homosexuality in men were assumed to preclude the full acquisition of a 'true' masculinity. Homosexuality placed its subject in apposition of inversion and effeminacy or, at least, of belonging to a 'third sex.' (227) His early sexual attraction is to Ted, a school captain and a head dormitory boy, resulting in an affair marked by homosexual[4] relations as related by Robert:

> They must've been twelve, thirteen. I was seven or eight. I knelt and peeped. They were in a bathroom…JM was kneeling in front of Ted. They had their merino jerseys on, but their shorts were curled around their ankles. JM was sucking Ted's prick. I remember Ted's face. He had perspiration above his lips and he was licking it with his tongue…He was lost, his eyes soft and half closed, and he had JM's head in his hands rubbing his hair…I watched till Ted then knelt and sucked JM. Then I was looking at JM's bottom and Ted's hands were pulling JM towards him. His fingers were finding the crack of his arse." (148-149)

Both JM and Ted reflect a subordinate masculinity as the dominant hegemonic masculinity in Les Deux islands – and the wider Caribbean – was one that deemed heteronormativity supreme, having been the endorsed marker of masculinity since the days of the white colonizer. Alternative sexualities were considered taboo and any sexual orientation other than heterosexuality was met with a strict policing of masculinity that was swift, profound and immediate. Revelation of JM and Ted's affair in the school community, immediately transforms them into targets of intense harassment, verbal assaults and subsequent rape by their male schoolmates all in the process of the latter maintaining a strict heterosexual masculine identity as the only option for males. Easton and Hewson (2004) proclaim that the school space, formerly an innocuous zone for boyhood sexual plays, outs itself as homophobic and lethal. Ted's transgression is perceived as more atrocious among the males of the school because, as head boy, he was meant to be everyone's hero, embodying a heteronormative ideology and a heterosexist[5] psyche. According to Robert, "if it was said about JM alone it would peter out, last for a day or two. Linked with the name of Ted, that was dynamite." (127) They are subsequently labelled "bullers"[6] and they become marked; their identity is fixed and Scott details the harassment, the on-going assaults and the ostracized life to which JM and Ted are subjected upon discovery of their clandestine love. The culmination of the communal violence exercised on them is gang rape. Homosexuality becomes so unsettling to masculinity, claims Lewis (2005), that

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[4] The Hungarian physician, Karoly Maria Benkert, who changed his name to Kertbeny in 1848, first coined the term 'homosexual', in 1869. He wrote: "In addition to the normal sexual urge in men and women, Nature in her sovereign mood had endowed at birth certain male and female individuals with the homosexual urge, thus placing them in a sexual bondage which renders them physically and psychically incapable…". Sourced from Colin *Spencer's Homosexuality in History.* (New York, Harcourt Brace and Co., 1995) 290. Homosexuality is seen here as a biological determinant, not a social construct. Perhaps it is for this reason Spencer historicizes the privileged place of homosexuality in ancient Greece (although it would not have been termed such then) and says that from the ancient world to the Renaissance long thereafter, the love of one's sex was given equal place to the love of the opposite sex. According to Spencer, it was not until the sixth century that all sexual acts between men were made illegal. Subsequently, notions of homosexuality being a malady, an abnormality, an aberration, a perversion, an inversion, a third sex, and a conscious decision fed by one's socio-cultural construct, have been proposed.

> it results in attempts to try to deny its existence, to remove it from society through force, that is to say, to beat up individuals who are gay or believed to be gay, or to ridicule, publicly harass or otherwise ostracize people of different sexual orientations. (19)

This rape by other boys is not itself perceived as any homosexual activity; rather, it simply is a question of maintaining power and control of dominant men over subordinate men, evoking memories of the white slave trader's own immersion in sexual depravity through rape of both male and female African slaves in their show of supremacy. Reddock (2004) avers that male sexuality is indeed privileged but the sexuality that is privileged is heterosexual and also penetrative. The idea of the penetrating penis is so powerful than even in some same-sex encounters, the 'penetrator' is gendered masculine, and by extension, dominant. (xxiv) In this scenario, JM and Ted's rapists are all heterosexual who boast of their rape and penetration of them as just recompense for the breaking of an unspoken masculine code of behaviour. It is a premeditated attack as a note is passed from desk to desk in the study hall that night that said: 'MEET THE BULLERS BEHIND THE LAVATORIES TONIGHT. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO TO THEM? Responses ranged from 'KICK, HIT, SMASH, CUT OFF THEIR PRICKS, FUCK THEIR ARSEHOLES WITH A KNIFE, KILL THE BULLERS.' (244-245) As seen in this account, the language of male sexuality is one of action – men do something as an active participant in the sex act. Subordinate men - like the Western's notion of women - have something done to them. According to Bailey et al (1998), "the school culture demands physical responses from boys and makes toughness the mark of a real male." (8) Jamaican education researcher Odette Parry (2004) declares that, "West Indian boys have a real macho image to live up to. If a boy acts in an effeminate way, he will be targeted and teased by the other students." (176) The brutal treatment meted out to the fictional JM and Ted is in keeping with these real sociological findings about Caribbean schools in which the policing of masculinity is strictly adhered to. Scott's fictional evocation also relates to the findings of Australian sociologist David Plummer (2005, 2007) whose research in Caribbean masculinities and the school system proffer that "schools are idealized as safe havens that care for and educate children. Yet, surveys repeatedly reveal significant levels of homophobic[7] harassment at school" (5) and "far from being isolated acts of disturbed individuals, homophobic assaults emerge as surprisingly common, highly-patterned, and mainly committed by young males in groups." (6)[8]

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[5] *Heterosexist* refers to characteristics of an ideological system that denies, denigrates and stigmatizes non-heterosexual forms of behaviour, identity, relationship or community. The end result of this dynamic is oppression, intolerance and daily acts of violence. Wesley E.A. Crichlow's History, (Re)Memory, Testimony and Biomythography: Charting a Buller Man's Trinidadian Past" in Ed. Rhoda Reddock *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities: Theoretical and Empirical Analyses* (Mona, UWI Press, 2004) 217.

[6] A *buller* is an indigenous derogatory epithet used to refer to men who have sex with other men. Crichlow, 217.

JM migrates from Les Deux to the Ashton Park Monastery and is there advised by Dom Benedict, the monk who is assigned as his 'guardian angel' and whom he is sexually attracted to. Dom Benedict reciprocates an intimate desire for homoerotic love[9], but later counsels JM to consider the controversial *Spiritual Friendship* penned by Aelred of Rieveulx[10] as a means of resolving his identity confusion. This work creates for Aelred/JM an understanding that the Catholic Church does not despise homosexuality, acknowledges it as a natural phenomenon, and permits men to freely express their love for each other. But Aelred/JM is prone to misinterpret the older Aelred's words as an endorsement for male homosexual coition, instead of the implied spiritual friendship underpinned by Platonic dialogues, on the author's part as being the pinnacle of *emotional* relations men can have with men in the monastery. Consequently, rather than earn a clarification of doubts about his sexuality, he becomes further confused as he remembers the young men he had grown up with and their reaction toward his sexual orientation as unnatural and perverse. His attraction for Benedict flourishes, and ultimately has a sexual encounter, devoid of coition, with him. They admit their love for each other but whereas the 12th Century Aelred of Rieveulx sees homosexual tendencies as natural and therefore tempting, the 20th Century Roman Catholic doctrine proclaims acting on it is categorically sinful[11] and Benedict confesses his sins as he advises young Aelred to do as well.

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[7] Kimmel describes homophobia as a central organizing principle for our cultural definition of 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 sissy, untough, uncool. Kimmel surmises that it is the fear that other males will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men. And we are afraid to let other men see that fear. Kimmel, 19.

[8] In a personal interview with Plummer, it was learnt that schools was one of the institutions where victimization was very common. Moreover, the fact that homophobic assaults are typically committed in groups of young males raises the question of whether their experiences at school in some way influence or even incite homophobia. It is not surprising, Plummer declares, that the entrenched homophobic conditioning that most boys experience in the school ground may well empower same-sex sexual assault. Personal interview. 21 Mar. 2007.

[9] Freudian's psychoanalytic hypothesis becomes relevant in this instance Freud thought that, in circumstances where there were no opportunities for sexual relationships with the opposite sex, most individuals would make what he calls a homosexual choice of love-object. See Rachel Alsop, Annette Fitzsimons and Kathleen Lennon's Theorizing Gender. (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2002) 48.

[10] In his interview with Aiyejina, Scott states Rievaulx is a place in Yorkshire, England and there was a Cistercian monastery, and Aelred of Rievaulx was the Abbot of that monastery. His *Spiritual Friendship*, says Scott, deal with the integration of male love with the quest for God in the monastic life. Aiyejina, 195-196.

[11] This assertion was confirmed by Fr. Dr. Eddy Birmingham, Dean of the Regional Seminary at Mount St. Benedict, St. Augustine in a personal interview on 25 May, 2009.

But Benedict wrestles with his overwhelming feelings of intimacy for the young Aelred and flagellates himself in a quest for self-purification. His denial of the life-giving force of love and the full expression of his sexuality are the factors that become ultimately responsible for his death at age fifty. Ironically, Benedict, like other monks, would have made a conscious decision to enter monastic life as a way of sublimating sin. Benedict sees homosexual relations as a sin and his Roman Catholicism causes him to interrogate this gender identity until he perceives *that*, too, as sinful. Aelred of Rievaulx would have experienced such travails in searching for a gender identity that can be reconciled with the Roman Catholic's Church dictum on homosexuality, which led to his *Spiritual Friendship*. The older monks, Basil and Sebastien, no doubt had also experienced homoerotic desires in their youth but they (re)negotiated their gender identities with their vocation and emerged successful. The parallel of Ivo and Gratian is incorporated by Scott to point to the prominence of homosexual orientations in the Church over time and space, as these two were young novices in the 12th Century Church of Aelred of Rievaulx, who internalised their Abbot's notions of a spiritual friendship in confronting their identity and developed after this stage. But for Benedict, religion proves impotent in offering him salvation. Benedict denies himself love, religion fails to offer an anxiety-free substitute, and he dies a necessary death.

Aelred, on the other hand, continues to accept his gender identity and acts on it. Rather than deny himself the love that he felt as innate, as Benedict did, he denies himself the religion that Benedict embraced and begins a sexual relationship that surpasses all others with the incoming young novice, Edward. The nature of Aelred's masculinity remains unchanged over time. What changes is his awareness that the capacity of religion as a driving force in one's life is incapable of altering his sexual orientation, which becomes pivotal in determining his masculine identity.

Easton and Hewson (2004) surmise that the utopian impulse is an attractive option, offering the hope of imagining communities where differences might exist without harm, hence JM's move to the European monastery, as the attainment of a safe space to exist in given his sexual identity. Canadian post-colonialist Heather Smyth claims that utopianism is used "to explore what it might mean to imagine a space for lesbians and gay men in the Caribbean." (156) In this case, "Scott's character searches for that space in the European Catholic Church[12]. This is an understandable move since in the 1960's, when JM leaves Deux Isles, there is no identifiable Queer Nation with which to identify" (Easton and Hewson, 9). There still is no such nation in the Caribbean but there is increased awareness of alternative sexualities in today's *comparatively* less-pronounced homophobic Caribbean society. And there certainly has been a growth in the focus of West Indian authors in their choice of protagonists with alternative sexualities compared with fictional works of yesteryear, reflective of a regional mirroring of society's diverse gender constructions.

The famous painting, *Black Atlantic*, is featured in the novel as part of the décor of the English monastery but becomes more than simply well-produced art. It is of *central* importance in transcending national and ethnic signifiers. In the foreground is white nobility and leaning towards the right and back of the landscape are his black servant and black dog. As JM views the painting, there is the encapsulation of the triangular slave trade bridging nationalities, ethnicities and sexualities. There is the presence of Dabydeen's generic ship captain, Turner*,* that white colonizer of the Caribbean, with the base African who Turner considers to be more beast than man, hence the presence of the black dog, and the French Creole, JM, born many years after colonization occurred. As JM cleans the picture, memories of his childhood with his black friends and nurse in the Caribbean flood his mind as he considers the slave trade and the legacy it has left in the Caribbean and its diaspora.[13] Easton and Hewson (2004) suggest that the shared histories and movements which emerge from the picture, and are triggered in JM, all comprise strands of a complex postcolonial narrative among whose tropes include those of racial difference, violence, cruelty, displacement, subjugation, and abjection (12). Interestingly, these reflect JM's experiences not simply as a French Creole who has been transplanted from the West Indies into the metropole, but rather as a *homosexual* West Indian, that Other man, in search of a safe space to be himself. JM 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 Conquistador figure, who dominated Empire centuries ago, and who exerts his hegemonic ideal in the control of the Church, today, in his attempts to police the gay experience. Achieved through its rituals and surveillance techniques: "Always in threes, never in twos", it has become the anthem of the presiding monks in their aim of controlling male sexual experience in the monastery.

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[12] This proves profoundly ironic on two levels. Firstly, it is the European Catholic Church that fails to provide such a space for Benedict resulting in his death. Secondly, rather than create such a harbour for Aelred, the Church paints a picture of prohibition of acting out sexual relations based on such an orientation.

JM's identification with the black boy rather than with the white duke creates a challenge to the almost post-colonial assumption that homosexuality is a specifically white problem (Terry Goldie, 1999, openly gay proponent of Queer Theory)[14]. Indeed, from this point in time, JM's path is outward – *out* of the monastery, *out* of the proverbial gay closet, and - like Selvon's Tiger - *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. It is this dawning that allows JM to eventually return to the Caribbean, confront his personal monsters, and return to England to nurse a dying Edward until his ultimate demise.

Scott's tale is more than a love story that explores the possibilities of male relationships, as the author contends. It becomes an enlightening journey into the mind and soul of a brother who confronts the life and death of his elder sibling, and so comes to terms with his own notion of self and sexuality, all processes underpinned by issues of race, ethnicities, nationalities, class and culture. The author's capacity to engage the human mind in such a process of self-discovery and proclamation serves as testimony to the value of representation as it reflects life.

But who really is Aelred in the novel's title "Aelred's Sin"? The oxymoronic construction is obvious in the pitting of a Saint with sin. Was Aelred of Rivaulx the one with sin for the penning of his controversial *Spiritual Friendship*? Or is it the French Creole, Aelred, of the Caribbean who engages in homosexual coition and disfellowships himself from the Church? Scott is brilliant in creating this problematique for the reader, especially in light of homosexuality being interrogated by many characters in the imaginary, although the fiction itself does not point to it as sinful. At the novel's end, the reader celebrates the fact that Aelred, the younger, was successful in resolving his issues of gender identity as it leads to a fulfilment of self. This is certainly no mean feat for the transplanted Caribbean French Creole who *is expected* by all of society to reflect a hegemonic ideal of heterosexuality - by virtue of that centuries-old yardstick introduced by *his* forefathers in measuring masculinity - but who fights for the opportunity to openly practise a sexuality underpinned by the subordinate homosexual construction. Against the backdrop of Aelred's search for answers regarding his gender identity, Gender theorist Olga Silverstein's assertion may well offer the closing remark on his accomplishment: "establishing a relationship with a same-sex partner helps one to feel "chosen," to resolve issues of sexual identity, and to feel more complete." (as cited in Savin-Williams, 1981, 384).

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[13] Sarah Welsh claims that the novel also has some interesting points to make about the intersecting marginalities of race and sexuality. JM's reconstruction of the life of the slave-boy, a 'Great House' in the 18th Century, and the discussions between the narrator and JM's friends in the 20th Century frame of the novel invoke multiple horrors (the Holocaust, the Slave Trade) and encourage us to think about the interface between racial and sexual oppression in both. 215.

[14] This in itself is ironic considering the notion of white hegemony having as one of its central traits a *heterosexual* male.

Indeed, Aelred is epitomized in these words. For many, in and out of the Roman Catholic Church, homosexuality is no sin; for many others, it is. Perversion and rape with the resultant emasculation of manhood for many men, however, is truly a moral atrocity. And this is the sin playfully 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. It is not difficult to fathom, then, the sins of the father visiting the children, as his French Creole descendant inadvertently becomes captive to the very benchmark created by him. Emerging is a resultant 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 is beheld.

There is a realization that sexual behaviour 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 if 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, in a manner that leaves acceptance of such in the developing West Indies far behind. The reality is that there appears to be a need to migrate or at least come into contact with the metropole before one can give articulation to an alternative masculine construction. Such an assertion is evidenced in the figures Scott's JM/Aelred. The impact of this metropole-colony divide in confronting and interrogating such constructions of male sexualities is well-understood as a result. King (2002) declares 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 marked by an almost insatiable need to write transcripts of alternative sexualities reflective of homosexuality. The critics, too, seem incapable of avoiding being drawn to these texts, welling up like springs after the familiar deserts of traditional heterosexual interrogations of sex and sexuality in canonical works. King (2002) 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. (36)

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