

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: ROGER MAIS'S PROTEST NOVELS:
A REVOLT AND SELF-AFFIRMATION
MANDATE FOR MARGINALIZED BLACKS

Denise A. Rose, Doctor of Philosophy,
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Dissertation Chaired by: Karl Henzy, Ph.D.
Department of English and Language Arts

The problem of this study was to examine how Black marginalized individuals in the Caribbean use hybrid cultural practices—religion, family life, and creative arts—to protest societal dictates and simultaneously affirm their identity. Specifically, the marginalized use hybrid practices to cope with and simultaneously challenge the status quo that relates to their social, economic, and political climate. Mais adjoins his artistic sensibilities and skills to his writing, illustrating his intertwined overt and covert agenda of passive aggression—to effect desired change. Thus, in seeking to understand the mentality of the downtrodden population in Jamaica and their coping mechanisms, the researcher evaluated the problem identified in this study by critically examining Mais's three multi-faceted novels: *The Hills Were Joyful Together* (1953), *Brother Man* (1954), and *Black Lightning* (1955). Mais's three novels

illustrate overlapping reasons why deviating from traditional religious practices, family structures, and creative arts necessitate the fundamental changes that the marginalized, in their seeming defenseless and naïve state, demands. Mais unmistakably demeaned societal values through the subtlety of his craft, which was predominantly apparent in this discourse. To establish the premise for this exposition, the researcher delved into historical facts that pre-date Mais's affirmation and protest mechanisms. Additionally, the researcher employed theoretical works on colonialism, postcolonialism, cultural, socio-economic, and religious theories to advance the scope of the discussion. Although Mais's novels evidence postcolonial readings, a lingering colonial mode pervades, particularly illustrated through the projection of the social institution of marriage as the standard for decent family decorum and traditional religious practices as the preferred or acceptable norm. Likewise, Mais examines Jamaican cultural norms in the form of creative arts—traditional dances, folk music, and crafts—which were derived from African and other historical experiences that the indigent used as coping and revolting tools. Mais's novels also discuss the correlation between poverty and rebellion. Notable is that these selected novels structurally raise a thorough awareness of the strategies that poor people use to protest the system and simultaneously affirm themselves. In addition, Mais uniquely magnifies and celebrates his characters, despite the eventualities that he realistically inserts into their everyday existence, while he deliberately undermines any possibility of dignifying the actions or inactions of the colonizers and their oppressive “Babylon” system.

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AFFIRMATION MANDATE FOR MARGINALIZED BLACKS

by

Denise A. Rose

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Denise A. Rose

has been approved

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DISSERTATION COMMITTEE APPROVAL:

_____, Chair
Karl Henzy, Ph.D.

Leiza Brown, Ph.D.

M'bare N'gom, Ph.D.

DEDICATION

I would be remiss not to first thank the Omnipotent for faithfully navigating my endeavors, and it is because of the aspects of my life that I have come to recognize as inexplicable, even with recognizing and experiencing a Supreme Deity, that I wholeheartedly dedicate this exposition to honor life. Specifically, I elect to recount the life that Saint Merdina Rose-Hyde, a woman extraordinaire, led. She exhibited strength of character, respect for humanity, allegiance to God, and unwavering love for her children, especially me—we were best friends, and what an honor to be the recipient of her strength, wisdom, courage, and faith!

Having experienced life in different proportions with her, the level of knowledge, the process of adaptation, the effect of growth, and the application of parity is stounding. The didactic experiences, though often disconcerting, necessitated the procuring of the life that she wanted me to have—the life that I have only just began to live. undoubtedly, my mother—my friend is invaluable to the structured, predestined process of my timely, humble, purposeful, and powerful evolution!

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Finally and most importantly, in light of the didactic, I must emphasize that persistence is significant to achieving optimal scholastic aptitude.

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Chapter 1: The Problem and the Solution

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is to examine how Black marginalized individuals in the Caribbean use hybrid cultural practices—religion, family life, and creative arts—to protest societal dictates and at the same time assert their identity; these hybrid practices are used to challenge and undermine colonial sanctions that encroach their social, economic, and political conditions. In an effort to determine and understand the mentality of the downtrodden population in Jamaica and their coping mechanisms, the writer will evaluate the problem identified in this study by critically examining Mais's three multi-faceted novels: *The Hills Were Joyful Together* (1953), *Brother Man* (1954), and *Black Lightning* (1955).

Before Mais's novelized insights take precedence, lucidity on the hybridity of religion, family life, and creative arts becomes important. Thus, in raising an argument to understand the intensity and propensity of the use of religion as a combative force, Rastafarianism, a religion that has gained momentum, becomes imperative. The article, "Rastafari in the Promised Land: The Spread of a Jamaican Socioreligious Movement Among the Youth of West Africa," by Neil J. Savishinsky offers a thought-provoking perspective:

If Rastafarianism functions as an ideological corrective to the suffering, exploitation and alienation experienced by young people of color the world over, it holds an especially heightened resonance and appeal for

Africans and those of African descent. And while the messages expounded by the Rastafari promote love and respect for all living things and emphasize the paramount importance of human dignity and self-respect, above all else, they speak of freedom from spiritual, psychological as well as physical slavery and oppression. (n.p.)

Evidently, Savishinsky places the concept of Rastafarianism in a context that suggests the movement's responsibility for establishing the level of change that impoverished people need in order to subvert the trappings or remnants of subjugation and repressive forces.

In further expanding Savishinsky's argument, one way in which Rastafarians "speak of freedom from spiritual, psychological as well as physical oppression" is by ignoring colonial dictates. William Claypole and John Robottom in *Caribbean Stories* sum up this perspective when they confirm that one mode of resistance that the oppressed Blacks undertake is that they "would simply not hear when they were given an order" (134). Hence, ignoring authority was an effective tool that the marginalized used to revolt, which is an advancement from the mid-1800s.

Additionally, Noel Leo Erskine in "The Roots of Rebellion and Rasta Theology in Jamaica" notes a perspective from a missionary on the combative religious mind-set of Black marginalized: "All Negroes in Jamaica now call themselves "Christians"—generally "Baptists," though their religion differs little from their old African superstitions. The bulk of them are enrolled in classes under some Black Teacher as

ignorant as themselves” (110). In revolting, the Black “Christian Baptist” practiced a hybrid religion, which deceived the colonizers into thinking that they had converted to the colonial religion. The passing of time, however, fosters changes, and as it relates to the matter of religion in the 21st century, Eurocentric Christianity, for example, the concept of a White God is lauded, but it is ignored and rejected by Rastafarians. Jamaican Rastafarianism makes it possible, interestingly, to apply and link religion as a major protest yet affirmation stratagem, without any consideration for the European suggestion, if not instruction, that Christianity is the general course that people should follow. As a standard procedure, Rastafarians embrace a Black God, Emperor Haile Selassie, not Jesus as the Christian dogma teaches. In advancing the religious scope of rebellion that opposes White colonial rule in Jamaica, Rastafarianism further provides credence for the religio-cultural doctrine.

Furthermore, while its disciples inherently adopt most aspects of the Rastafarian religion globally, strict attention as a direct result of the advent of “The Back to Africa” movement, initiated by Marcus Garvey, is given to the repatriation of Rastafarians to Africa, their homeland. A declaration in “The Roots of Rebellion and Rasta Theology in Jamaica” by Garvey magnifies the supposed seriousness of repatriation: “As children of captivity, we look forward to a new, yet ever old, land of our fathers. We shall gather together our children, our treasures and our loved ones . . . so in time we shall also stretch forth our hands and bless our country” (qtd. in Erskine 115-116). Erskine appears to concur with Garvey when he remarks, “Garvey articulates his vision for African Jamaica and people of African descent everywhere by advocating racial pride, race

consciousness, material and educational attainments . . . [.] He had a special mission for the disenfranchised of the race and the needy” (qtd. in Erskine 117). Ostensibly then, repatriation to the Promised Land, Africa is a medium to free Blacks from oppression.

Lennox Olivier, in “Racial Oppression and the Political Language of Rastafari in Stellenbosch,” discusses “intrusive European forms of oppression” (23), which is applicable to Rastafarians, and one such form is in the use of language. Rastafarians, like the slaves of yesteryears, developed and maintained a unique lingua that gives rise to their identity and equally discounts the oppressive system in which they are involuntarily placed. Within the Jamaican Rastafarian tradition, Rastafarians “fiah bun” (fire burn), which is an expression of utmost disdain that they utter or chant to openly reject the oppressors—the system—Babylon, a terminology that Rastafarians equally use to identify their oppressors and the oppressive system.

To a lesser extent, Mais also addresses the role of traditional African religion that is in its hybrid form in the Jamaican society. Afro-Jamaicans’ religious practices that seem to be Christianity but is a hybrid version of European tenets and African practices as mentioned in Erskine and presented by Mais. A classic example is Pocomania, a hybrid religious practice in Jamaica, now regarded as a Christian religion. At first, the colonialists who thought African religions were evil hated Pocomania; however, Pocomania evolved from Myalism, a haunting and disjointed type of African religion. Pocomania is described as

an African form of religion with elements of other religious traditions [that] [e]nslaved Africans brought. . . to the Caribbean region . . . [.] Pocomania is

viewed by many as a form of rebellion and protest against European religions and the political status quo . . . [.] Pocomania is a Jamaican spiritist religion whose worship services are characterized by singing, dancing, spirit possession, speaking in tongues, and healing rituals. Pocomania worship revolves around music and spirit possession. In addition, the worship service combines moral teaching, singing, and movements invoking the spirits to enter the ceremony. (“Pocomania”.n.p.)

Pocomania takes deep root in how Blacks unreservedly express themselves in worship; it is further described as a religion,

teaching values and morals, and the singing of hymns and choruses, a large part of the worship is devoted to tramping or trumping. As an essential part of the Pocomania meeting or worship, “tramping” is an African inspired dance that is accompanied by the playing of cymbals or tambourines. Typically, members of the Pocomania meeting are dressed in white robes, heads wrapped in blue, red, white, or green colors, as they chant and move to the rhythm of drums and tambourines. The music is hypnotic, inducing hips to gyrate to its steady beat. This is an individual form of self-expression, where the participants’ minds are attuned to sounds only they can hear. (“Pocomania”.n.p.)

Evidently, Pocomania is extensive in its tenets; and in prominently presenting Pocomania in his novels, Mais does so to revolt against colonial regimes.

The African religion that the colonizers feared most during slavery was Obeah. Eric Doumerc mentions Obeah which is a traditional African religion; he asserts that “[i]n

Jamaica slave insurrections were often linked with slave religion or with Obeah. The Maroons were famous for their potency of their herbal medicines and their Obeahman” (33). Likewise, Leonard Barrett contends that “Obeah as a belief-complex works on the mind, and can sometimes be fatal” (77). Afro-Jamaicans had their personal religions, including Obeah, with their renowned leader, the Obeah man, who was consulted for his healing and magical powers (Claypole and Robottom 135-36).

As it relates to the practice of family life to decry the system, David Lowenthal in “Race and Color in the West Indies” observes a reality that a random Jamaican publicly expressed, “The black man eats the least, wears the least, owns the least, prays the most, works the most, suffers the most, and dies the most” (582). The quote expresses the realities of the marginalized Jamaican, which Mais also projects in his novels. Furthermore, in stating his view, Lowenthal writes, “[t]here is no doubting the views of these prepositions. Jamaica can still be summed up in the familiar lines, “If you white, you are alright; if you brown, stick around; if you black, stand back” (582). Black marginalized people have to find ways to survive in an oppressive society, and one way is that they maintain family structures that are conducive to their condition. Lowenthal further reinforces a mind-set that is prevalent in Jamaica when he confirms the notion that “[t]here are still upper-class whites who talk and think about dammed niggers” (582) because these Afro-Jamaicans do not accept colonial ideals since they do not fit into their family lifestyles. Noteworthy is that Franz Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Mask*, asserts that Blacks understand that “there are close connections between the structure of the family and the structure of the nation” (241) and that “[t]he white family is the agent of a

certain system in which one is shaped and trained for life in society” (148-49). Mais, however, looks at the Afro-Jamaican families who are in dire poverty and who do not fit perfectly in the family conundrum in the colonial society. The article, “Parenting and Family Structure in Jamaica and the Wider Caribbean” offers a perspective:

In Jamaica and the wider Caribbean, however, the nuclear family is often the exception rather than the rule. A large proportion of families in the region still consist of only one parent, usually the mother, with fathers adopting a marginal role in child-care and nurturance . . . Such family structures are generally accepted as the norm in the Caribbean, and are often viewed as functional responses to the problems faced by people living in the region. (n.p.)

Thus, the idea proposed is that while the nuclear family is the norm in developed countries, Jamaica and other Caribbean regions deviate from that norm. Michele Small Bartley in “How Socioeconomic Status, Exposure to Violence and Family Structure Influence Depressive Symptoms in Children” also agrees that “[t]he Jamaican society has throughout time shown a pattern of matrifocal households . . . that is, households headed by females . . . [.] These female headed households were spread across all social boundaries, indicative of the normative practices through the society” (n.p.).

Several other family types are also present in Jamaica including extended families and even covert same sex families; however, In “The Impact of Poverty and Stress on the Interaction of Jamaican Caregivers with Young Children,” Heather Ricketts and Patricia Anderson argue that “the Jamaican family has also been shown to be vulnerable to the pressures resulting from economic insecurity and deprivation, the

contraction of external support related to family breakdown” (n.p.). The oppressed Jamaican family is also affected by other socio-economic and political factors such as “the high levels of crime and violence and other forms of antisocial behavior exhibited in the Jamaican society [that] increase the challenges faced by families” (Ricketts and Anderson n.p.). Families, especially in urban and rural poor areas experience societal pressures as they try to meet their economic, social, and psychological needs. Thus, sometimes the family becomes fragile and the support system is no longer able to keep the family together. However, *Mais* presents families in revolt against the colonial nuclear family as he places other less accepted family structures at the forefront.

The colonial society advocates that families should have a structure: marriage—one man to one woman. If the union produces children, they should leave the home and fend for themselves when they are grown. *Mais*, interestingly, creates an alternate structure because several of his characters, adults and children, live in a close yard space, and they often inconvenience each other because they share basic amenities. Although these characters are impoverished and are often susceptible to a less than desirable lifestyle, *Mais* still presents close knitted families in an effort to mock the supposed normal and decent family structure of marriage. Additionally, even though poor families suffer, society still expects them to live in a civil manner. However, *Mais* proves through satire that the poor will live as they please; they will construct and maintain their own “prestigious” society without intrusion or imposition from conventional society; thus, *Mais* deliberately puts into perspective the ambiance of the marginalized:

The yard counted among its ramshackle structures an old shaking-down nog

building with the termite-ridden wood frame eating away until only a crustacean shell under the dirty white cracked and blistering paint remained. This building stood on the south side. A row of barrack-like shacks to the north, with the crazily-leaning fence out front, enclosed what was once a brick-paved courtyard in the middle of which there was an ancient circular cement cistern and above it a standpipe with a cock leaning all to one side and leaking continually with a weary trickle of water that was sometimes stronger than at others, depending on the pressure from then main outside. (*The 3 Novels* Mais 9)

Mais clearly delineates a communal family structure that provides insight into the normalcy of the poor. He further provides a more extensive description of the family structure of these individuals:

Immediately across the street from the yard [where the residents live in a cluster] was a row of little, dowdy, huddled-together shops shut in on one side by a two-story building that was a bar with rooms above, and on the other was a ironmongery-dry goods-and-provision store that carried a small notions department and a soft drink counter. (*The 3 Novels* Mais 9)

Evidently, the poor people create their own type of shopping amenity and simultaneous residency. Moreover, according to Chevannes, Harry Belafonte's mother insists, "[p]overty is no excuse for lack of class" (qtd. in Chevannes *Jamaican Diasporic Identity* 132); therefore, although the odds are against the poor, they still develop their own sense of "class."

Additionally, creative arts, specifically music soothes the soul, yet it serves as a tool for rebellion. In *Caribbean Cultural Identity: The Case of Jamaica*, Rex Nettleford, makes a case that aptly describes Jamaican music:

There is a *music* for example, the tremendously rich output since the late 1950's of original genres in the popular mode, which has given to a wide cross-section of the Jamaican people and especially the general masses a sense of positive achievements and identity through indigenous creative action. The international attention that the 'Jamaican sound' has attracted, has only served to buttress this newfound confidence. (22)

Many Jamaican artists, however, use enigmatic music to convey messages to challenge a society that they consider oppressive. Jamaicans are notoriously known to use music to "murderize" (thwart) opposing factions. World renowned reggae super star, the late, great Honorable Robert Nesta Marley, Order of Jamaica (OJ), deliberately used one of his "hit" songs, "I Shot the Sheriff" to evoke controversy and announce his displeasure and that of countless Jamaicans who were and still are the victims of a divisive, oppressive system. The fearless Marley equally meant to use "I shot the Sheriff" to warn the perpetrators of oppression that judgement would, at some point, be forthcoming. It is important to point out that Marley was a Rastafarian. Furthermore, Marley's lyrical message confirms Nettleford's claim that "many a reggae tune is the raw stuff of protest" (23), and in "Africa and the Caribbean the Legacies of a Link Margaret E. Crahan and Franklin W. Knight" by L. T. Semaj proposes the argument that

“in Jamaica, contemporary popular music sometimes speaks threateningly of confrontation” (114).

Mais’s approach to the creative arts goes beyond reggae music as he incorporates folk songs that predate reggae. Olive Senior, former leader of the Jamaican Folk Singers, refers to the repertoire of Jamaican folk music as “music relating to Kumina, Revivals, Death Ceremonies, Rastafarians, seasonal celebrations and community festivals” (qtd. in Lewin 18). Noteworthy is that many Jamaican folk songs are slave songs, which originated from an oral tradition. In its description of Jamaican folk songs collection, the Smithsonian records that “[a]mongst these songs are parables, cautionary tales and opportunities for poking fun, all for having fun” (Jamaican Folk Songs n. p.). However, numerous Jamaican folk songs are highly accepted as intense expressions of lingering, devastating, and mystifying encounters; hence, the songs still resonate and are still sung in this era. Therefore, the folk songs appear to be far more meaningful than just “all for having fun.” To be clear, the poor and the oppressed still perform these songs to lighten their burden as seen in the work songs, which originated in slavery and sung by the slaves during their tedious tasks. The slaves often sung songs criticizing the colonizers; they equally sung songs that expressed their disgust about their conditions. Because the songs were not in the colonizer’s “English,” the colonizers did not recognize their bluntness in criticizing them and the cruel colonial system (Wilson 2). There are also slave spirituals, which gave the slaves hope in God; the slaves were confident that God would reward their suffering in the afterlife. Senior also speaks about these songs, which include songs from “Kumina, Revivals, [and] Death Ceremonies” (Lewin 18). In

addition, the oppressed used the *Bible* for comfort and reassurance. A passage that resonates with the oppressed is Mathew 5: 3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Hence, spirituals and other folk songs affirm the position of colonized people, yet they resist the system. Slave songs were strategic in active resistance because “the enslaved used religious meetings and their own encoded songs to provide secret messages of how to run away” (“Plantation Life” n. p.).

Creative arts, as presented by Mais in the novels, also come in the form of sounds. During slavery, the masters identified musical sounds as problematic because slaves used sounds to communicate various messages. The most common sounds that were adopted from Africa came from drums and horns, but many slave masters ignored the sounds that were made from the mouth; the slave masters did not understand these sounds, but the slaves understood them. They were classified as musical sounds whistling and guttural sounds, which were meaningful to the slaves. Wilson explains drumming as “an important part of gatherings and religious ceremonies for West Indian slaves” (2). Drums were used to communicate messages to each other (Wilson 2). Mais does not use the drum as the instrument of protest; instead, he introduces the accordion with its hybrid use and sounds from the colonized. Moreover, slaves used the horn in the same manner. The maroons in Jamaica used horns to communicate if the Spanish or the British were attacking them; horns were also used to send messages in general. In Alfred Wright’s *Spirit of the Jamaican Maroons*, he notes the importance of the horn for the maroons. A young maroon explains, “[a]ll you have to do is to blow this cow horn, and

blow it into three short bursts then pause and repeat that cycle two more times This is our communication instrument, it's called an abeng" (n.p.).

The creative works of artisans or intuitive artists are used to protest the destitute conditions of the oppressed. The marginalized Jamaicans started as artisans during slavery and were called skilled laborers on the plantation: "The plantations depended on skilled slaves – masons, joiners, coopers, metalworkers – to keep factories, fields, and equipment and transport prepared and functioning. The needs of the wider slave community were served by other vital workers: cooks, nurses and seamstresses" ("Plantation Life" n.p.). The former slaves also used these skills as agency when they had no economic help post emancipation. The freed slaves in Jamaica formed Free Villages where the artisans were the economic backbone of these communities because they garnered the most money, and they provided services for people in the community and the wealthier members outside their communities. Free Villages offered its members economic assistance because cooperatives were formed. Free Villages thrived in Jamaica, and by 1859, more than 50,000 ex-slaves were landowners who depended on the artisans to develop their communities and personal spaces (Paget 38-51). In the 1930s to post independence, many rural dwellers migrated to Kingston with the hope of finding a better economic life; however, they became misplaced in the poorer parts of the city, which developed into ghettos—home of the big yards. The artisans were among those who migrated to the city, but some remained in rural communities, in which they took root after slavery. Mais addresses the role of the artists in the revolution against their oppressors.

The use of creative arts by the oppressed in helping to shape and decry the social, political and cultural climate in the early to late 1900s is a significant and realistic reminder of colonial Jamaica and the state of the urban and rural poor. Evident in Mais's writings are tenets of protest and affirmation, which according to Renate Zahar in *Colonialism and Alienation* occurs because "[t]he colonial world is a bipartite world in which colonizer and colonized face each other without any chance of reconciliation" (81). In the Introduction of Mais's *The 3 Novels of Roger Mais*, the late Michael Manley, former Jamaican Prime Minister and leader of the People's National Party (PNP) in the 1970s, states, "we are the product of a very old and enduring colonial era . . . and colonial governments paid little regard to matters of that sort. Aside from that, colonial systems are not renowned for stimulating creative activity or for stimulating the sort of awareness of the social scene which is one element in the making of books and in all the creative arts" (V).

Overview and Need for the Project

The campaign finally to position Roger Mais on the platform as a major Caribbean literary rebel requires urgency. Mais's unmistakable views on the structured and varied oppressive forces that the indigent face and their unorthodox coping strategies to both oppose the system and affirm their identity indicates his merit. Thus, the impetus to highlight Mais gains momentum and is largely influenced by the fact that Mais and his works have been noticeably and significantly minimized, if not dismissed. Moreover, in comparison to many of his counterparts, Mais's works have inadequate reviews, critiques, and discussions; his works have not taken center-stage; instead, his works have

garnered restricted attention and authorship. Hence, Mais's prime time works need redemption; they are sparsely examined from a critical perspective, which devalues their importance, and even though Mais is not as recognized as his other counterparts are, he deserves to be, since his works are transformational. Research is, therefore, undoubtedly needed to initiate the discourse that Mais's works are of paramount importance to the study of Caribbean literature, addressing how Black marginalized and oppressed Jamaicans in their confusion during the early to mid-1900s—on the verge of the turn from colonialism to postcolonialism—use religion, family life, and creative arts to protest their oppressors and equally affirm their identity. Additionally, Mais's novels are not mere protest novels because they transcend the parameters of protest, and in this twenty-first century, they still prove to be relevant though shelved. Hence, in-depth microscoping is needed because, interestingly, the factions that Mais targeted—the structured systems during the 1950s—are still active and alive through the prevalence of racism, terrorism, and fascism in many parts of the world. Noteworthy then, since the oppressive forces that Mais targets still exist, the need to address them in order to decry injustice is of the essence. Mais's novels are meant to be timeless, relevant, and applicable to what the downtrodden experiences, what they embrace, and what they simultaneously reject. In short, Mais's work mirrors a guide book—a *Bible* for understanding and addressing the travails of Blacks as they seek to cognize and resolve their unsolicited pilgrimage in Babylon. Mais's work does not sacrifice the victims (Blacks) and glorify the villains (the colonizers).

In light of the novelty of “Mais’s Protest Fiction with a Difference,” (a term coined by this writer), it becomes imperative to examine James Baldwin’s, essay, “Everybody’s Protest Novel.” Baldwin, the seeming standard for heavily critiquing protest fiction dissects Harriett Beecher Stowe’s quintessential protest fiction, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Baldwin uses Stowe’s novel to bring to the fore what he considers the futility of protest works:

Uncle Tom’s Cabin is a very bad novel, having, in its self-righteous, virtuous sentimentality [...] Sentimentality, the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotion is the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel; the wet eyes of the sentimentalist betray his aversion to experience, his fear of life, his arid heart; and it is always, therefore, the signal of secret and violent inhumanity, the mask of cruelty. (14).

Further, Baldwin asserts, “in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, we may find the formula created by the necessity to find a lie more palatable than the truth has been handed down and memorized and persists yet with a terrible power” (16). Hence, Baldwin’s evaluation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* discounts the novel’s importance as revolutionary in the expansion of racial equality and growth. Baldwin claims that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is a “pamphlet,” not a “novel” (15) because it does not seriously take into account human conditions that can be understood and related to in a realistic way. Baldwin contends that in order for “truth” to be the foundation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, humanity should take precedence over “cause.” Thus, in diminishing the normal complexities to which humans are prone,

the novel, in essence, reduces and devalues them. In addition, Baldwin is quick to note that Stowe's characters are mainly Whites and the Blacks that she presents are presented in a stereotypical manner. Uncle Tom, however, Baldwin notes, becomes somewhat of an exception simply because Stowe assigns him a degree of extensive humility, which redeems Uncle Tom's Blackness (most of Stowe's characters are White—a symbol of good; her Black characters are symbols of evil). By Baldwin's standard then, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and protest fictions, by extension, are works of denial of the truth, overly sentimental, and clearly non-beneficial to advancing racial progress. However, when Richard Wright's *Native Son*, largely embraced as a protest novel, categorically chronicles the dire experiences of the novel's protagonist, Bigger Thomas, Wright appears to be addressing a greater truth—a greater issue—poor Black people's plight and their coping devices. Baldwin, in his assessment of Wright's novel, describes Bigger Thomas, the novel's protagonist, as a “descendant” of Stowe's Uncle Tom. Baldwin contends that Bigger's demise resides in his embracing racial dogmas, which ultimately works against him as he “battle[s] for his humanity according to those brutal criteria” (23). A perspective on Blacks highlighted by Lola Jones Amis in “Richard Wright's *Native Son*: Notes” strengthens Baldwin's perspective: “all niggers are shiftless and lazy” (240) and they are a “little lower than the brutal beasts” (240). Amis points out that Wright “implies, suggests, and even says that Bigger Thomas is an embodiment of the black revolt against the injustices of the white caste society and that this revolt often takes the form of crime against this same white society” (240). In addition, Wright's “*Invisible Native Son*” by Donald B. Gibson makes prominent the commonality of

stereotypes in protest fiction:

When we see a man in muddy work clothes, we are likely to see him only as a laborer and to have aroused in us whatever ideas we have towards laborers. We rarely look at a man so dressed (assuming he is unknown to us) and see a father, a churchgoer, taxpayer or fisherman, although the man underneath the clothing may theoretically be all these things. If we think about him, we automatically assume certain things about his life style—about his values, his economic and social position, and even his occupation. To the extent that the clothes determine what we see, the person beneath them is invisible to us. (728)

To summarize the attitude towards protest work, Baldwin is clearly antagonistic toward protest literature; he is also cynical as to the likelihood that protest work can be the catalyst for social reform at any meaningful level. Baldwin, although he does not necessarily blame protest fiction for the demise of Blacks, has a gloomy perspective that indicates that protest literature has, despite its best intentions, discounted the core of what (White) racial power purports and instead emphasizes and makes unending victims out of a race (Blacks). Moreover, inferred from Baldwin's "gospel" is that Blacks should know how structurally to empower themselves and benefit from oppression or oppressive forces. Baldwin appears to be an advocate for both collective and individual cognitive release from the mental captivity or slavery that has been initiated and enforced both overtly and covertly by the system and possibly influenced by the supposed good will or intent of protest work:

[T]he avowed aim of the American protest novel is to bring greater freedom to

the oppressed. They are forgiven, on the strength of these good intentions, whatever violence they do to language, whatever excessive demands they make to credibility. It is, indeed, considered the sign of a frivolity so intense as to approach decadence to suggest that these books are both badly written and wildly improbable The “protest” novel, so far from being disturbing, is an accepted and comforting aspect of the American scene ramifying that framework we believe to be so necessary. (18)

Baldwin is fervent about the fundamental damages that protest work perpetuates; it has damaging effects. Protest literatures socially help to misplace Blacks who are written into the works to mimic certain attitudes and behaviors. Protest work creates a strain—an imbalance which renders them as conjured with perhaps no meaningful end result: “The failure of the protest novel lies in its rejection of life, the human being, the denial of his beauty, dread, power in its insistence that it is his categorization alone which is real and which cannot be transcended” (Baldwin 23). Hence, protest novels are not effective because they do not adequately take into account the full spectrum of the realities of human existence and survival. Protest novels tend to oversimplify human experiences, resulting in a displacement of people whether by default or design. In short, protest work, although arguable, can be viewed as damaging instead of helpful; it is often not clear if protest work creates victims or victors. Not to be overlooked is that in a critique of protest novels, Kevin Birmingham in “No Name in the South, James Baldwin and the Monuments of Identity,” is adamant in his view:

Part of what makes [Baldwin's] essay so notoriously combative is that its genre critique of the protest novel is ultimately a social critique of the mechanically and interlocking society that would prefer it. That is, categorization infiltrates the novel from a rationalized society dedicated to avoiding the unsettling private depths where literature is made. (222-223).

To make a distinction between other protest work and Mais's, the core of Mais's literary appeal is to effect change—change that does not demand, require, or is contingent upon minimizing the humanity of the underclass at their expense while magnifying the turfs of their oppressors. It becomes of utmost importance that Mais's works are thoroughly examined and that the emerging perspectives (implicit or explicit) become known, recognized, appreciated, and credited as real and not hypothetical.

Karina Williamson, in attesting that Mais has been underrated as a prolific Caribbean novelist, in her review of Jean D'Costa's Roger Mais: *The Hills and Brother Man*, makes an explicit declaration:

[Mais's] novels of protest have had a damaging effect on his reputation in the long run by focusing attention too much on the documentary and polemical elements in his work at the expense of its more durable qualities that is probably why, in spite of the reissue of his three novels in 1966, Mais is the least known of the major West Indian writers outside of the Caribbean. (245)

Although arguable, Mais's authoritative and ethical stances, which unconditionally expose the perpetrators who contribute to the demise of Jamaica's less fortunate, make credible a suggestion made by George Lamming and documented by W.I. Carr in "Roger Mais: Design from a Legend:" "In Jamaica, they murdered Roger Mais, and they know it" (3); hence, Mais may have been tactically quieted. Furthermore, in analyzing Mais's demise, Lamming's supposition is that Mais's controversial, political elucidations made him threatening to his targets; therefore, he was unpopular. Additionally, Carr indicates that Mais made it his forte to emphasize the negative and not the positive aspects of Jamaica and Jamaican lifestyle, particularly his references to the poor. Carr claims that Mais depicted, in *The Hills* and *Brother Man*, a "[m]assive and sinful poverty of [Jamaica's capital] Kingston" (4), resulting in an undesirable opinion of Jamaica and its populace. Mais's writings, however, can be viewed as compensatory and informative Jamaican works that detail the realistic happenings in Jamaica, which would substantiate why Carr highlights Derrick Walcott's claim that

Jamaica, with its complex of mountain spines, is uniquely and personally the Roger Mais country. And at the same time that somber pessimism which is a taproot of Jamaican thinking and feeling is an essential presence in Mais's work. His best writing gives it utterance as tragic art. (4).

Furthermore, Carr claims that Mais's "presentation remain[s] unassimilated into the particular experience of his characters. They tend to go for rather awkwardly self-conscious discussions: the tone becomes overt and insistent (5). Carr further stresses

that “[r]espectable Jamaica was shaken by the account of the society presented in *The Hills Were Joyful Together* and *Brother Man* (it was felt that he had either let the [People’s National Party (PNP)] down or that he had betrayed some arcane middle class confidence” (4). Mais, then, it can be assumed, through vivid illustrations, made public the inevitable situations that the poor endure and the effects that are likely as a result of those situations.

Additionally, another need for a thorough, unbiased revival of Mais’s work is that Mais’s experiential illustration of life in the Jamaican setting is not studied to show how that lifestyle creates hybrid cultures which are used to both protest and affirm the identities of those individuals, which helps to promote the concept that they, too, are an integral part of the African Diaspora and not necessarily mimics of their oppressors. It is startling to note that even the “yard” critics (people from Mais’s own country) are still unaccepting of his works, which further suggests that it is essential that this writer critically explores Mais’s novels in terms of the hardships that the underclass in Jamaica faces and poor people in general because of their oppressive conditions, hopefully bring to the fore uncharted avenues of Mais’s work.

Critical Framework and Methodology

In an effort to critically determine Mais’s literary obstinacy and how he influenced the growth and development of Caribbean literature, the researcher will examine Mais’s personal and scholastic endeavors by consulting biographies, newspaper and magazine entries; critical works on the author will also prove useful. A perspective on colonialism and postcolonialism will be included. Additionally, an incorporation of

cultural, family, and religious theories will advance the scope of the discussion.

Biographies

Biographical notations on Mais reveal that he had an interest in painting, journalism, and writing. His strong passion for writing, however, became evident because of his seeming practical revelations. Known as a radical writer, Mais's often enigmatic works were controversial, leading to both political and social tension. In his capacity as a journalist, his explicit depiction of social injustice became evident as documented in *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-century Literature in English* edited by Jenny Stringer: "Sharp social criticism in an article he wrote for the People's National Party Newspaper Public Opinion in 1944 earned him a six-month jail sentence, where he experienced the appalling conditions in Jamaican prisons during British colonial rule" ("Roger Mais")

Further, Mais, having experienced prison, was literarily fueled; hence, as *The Oxford* further notes,

[the] conditions are vividly portrayed in his first novel, *The Hills Were Joyful Together* (1953), which consists of loosely assembled episodes giving a stark portrait of denizens of a slum in Kingston, Jamaica; but this bleakness is relieved by ribald humor and self-mockery. Similar themes are treated in *Brother Man* (1954), his best-known work [,]" and "*Black Lightning* (1955) explores the spiritual failure of a blacksmith carving a life-size statue of Samson; like Samson, he is destroyed

by pride. The strong biblical language and references in Mais' writings suggest that he was as much concerned with spiritual regeneration as with political ideology and patriotism. (“Roger Mais”)

Thus, Mais’s inclination for social justice was present in his works; his strong religious penchant equally becomes obvious. Furthermore, following his social injustice critique article and arrest, Mais published *The Hills* in 1954, which earned him the accolade as “one of the first Jamaican authors to present a realistic picture of the urban slum-dweller” (239), suggesting that he significantly contributed to the study of Caribbean literature.

Additionally, *The Oxford* presents Mais as someone with “a lively social conscience that inspired lifelong interest in the poorer classes of his black countrymen” (“Roger Mais”). Also, in ascribing social status to Mais, in “Roger Mais,” Daphne Morris in *Fifty Caribbean Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*, edited by Daryl Cumber Dance claims that Mais “belonged to the materially comfortable, educated, colored middle class of colonial Jamaica” (303) and that Mais’s inclination for social justice, social activism was extensively triggered because of the inequality in remuneration and living conditions for the working class people in Kingston, Jamaica. Thus, Mais’s empathy for the underprivileged becomes evident in his writings as he presents himself as a literary activist for the poor; his preoccupation with poor people’s predicament positions him as a public-spirited individual, despite his privileged rank as a

middle-class person. Moreover, Morris emphasizes that Mais's initiation as an author (rebel with a cause) coincides with the labor rebellion that occurred in 1936 (303-304).

In the introduction to *Brother Man*, Edward Braithwaite refers to Mais as a "socialist" (vi) and "an intellectual committed to the cause of social justice" (vi), and in the article, "His Way of Life," Winston G. Wright, like Braithwaite, claims that Mais presents social injustices because he was regarded as a "Marxist Socialist" (4). However, in recalling Mais's life as it relates to honing a particular discipline, Braithwaite says, "this jack of-all-trades did [him] no good in that he never settled solidly into any one thing to attain the fullest achievement" (vi). Braithwaite suggests that Mais might be viewed in a negative light because he was involved in too many vocations simultaneously; a further suggestion is that Mais's efforts were counterproductive, rendering him ineffective.

Newspapers and Magazines

Mais's propensity for making the public aware of the disadvantaged position in which the poor have been relegated attracts media attention; hence, newspapers are prone to illuminate his views. Wright, in "His Way of Life," likens *The Hills Were Joyful Together* to *Poor People* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. He indicates that both novels expound the dreadful conditions of the poor, and they equally stress the need for social equality. (4). In addition, in "Songs and Music in the Work of Roger Mais," Wright expresses, in reference to *Black Lightning*, that "a serious problem . . . which, apparently, human volition cannot control, and the supernatural forces of destiny seem to take over eventually" (4) is directly linked to the precarious conditions of the poor.

Furthermore, in “Major Elements of Roger Mais’s Work,” Wright classifies *Brother Man* as Mais’s premier work; he contends that Mais uses the central character, Brother Man, to illustrate the principle, decency, and dignity that poor people have: The novel, *Brother Man*, Wright asserts, “is an unmistakable statement of doctrine, expressed with clarity and conviction” (4).

In addition, in recognition of Mais’s literary artistry, Colin Richards, in “A Most Original Talent,” claims that Mais’s three major novels, *The Hills*, *Brother Man*, and *Back Lighting* qualify Mais as a socially and politically aware author whose astuteness should not be minimized. Richards further asserts that Mais’s work prominently defines the attributes of the deprived (4). Similarly, in “Roger Mais’s Work as: Social Protest and Commentary,” Roger Lewis postulates that Mais’s literature reveals characters who are structurally secluded and disadvantaged because of their limited placement socially and economically within the society (4). Interestingly, Mais, a Rastaman, was a proponent of Rastafarianism; he would no doubt concur with Annie Paul’s perspectives on the evolution of Rastafarians in “Rastaman Vibration: Roger Mais.”

It’s interesting to read *Brother Man* today, when Rastas and things Rastafarian have acquired have such cultural charisma that their image, carried abroad by stars such as Bob Marley and other dreadlocked musicians, is now routinely used to advertise Jamaica as a tourist destination. *Brother Man* — recently reissued by Macmillan (the original publishers of many of Mais’s books) to mark its 50th anniversary — was the first Jamaican novel to portray a Rastafarian protagonist in positive terms. (n.p.)

It is evident that Rastafarians were relegated members of the society. Often and mistakenly considered subservient, these individuals were treated like outcasts; they were viewed as sub-humans, unintelligent, and inferior; they were thought to be characters who needed close governance or monitoring. In brief, Rastafarians were regarded as social rejects. Being cognizant of the stereotypical views to which Rastafarians were prone, Paul notes an alternative perception:

In contemporary Jamaica, on the other hand, Rastas have come to represent an odd kind of respectability. Rasta values, bolstered by ital cuisine and a certain fastidious refusal of the latest trends and crazes, are perceived to be wholesome, old-fashioned, and desirable in the world of bling we live in today. Their music, once considered noisy and objectionable, now appears melodic and mellifluous, in comparison with the cacophony of dancehall — today's reggae. (n.p.)

As Paul indicates, Rastafarians have gained respect and acceptance; their claim to fame can be attributed, in part, to Mais's reversal of order mandate when he structurally positions Brother Man in *Brother Man* as a respected, talented, decent, literate, and upstanding character, which significantly advanced the overall image of Rastafarians.

Critical Works on the Author

This section demonstrates the different perspectives on Mais's work, though limited, since Mais's works have not been popularized. However, the views on Mais's work have provided an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the underprivileged and their problems. Kenneth Ramchand, in "The Achievement of Roger Mais,"

postulates that Mais's works are "a stark and realistic picture of impoverished people trapped in a squalid slum that is identifiably Jamaican" (179). Ramchand contends that Mais, in his deliberations in *The Hills*, tried "to give the world a true picture of the real Jamaica and the dreadful conditions of the working class" (179). Ramchand further claims that Mais's literary artistry gained momentum in his publication of *The Hills* and *Brother Man*. He is adamant, however, that Mais's last novel, *Black Lightning*, aptly illustrates Mais's tenacity as a writer, his sensitivity for the poor, his purpose as an activist, and his influential aptitude (179).

Evelyn Hawthorne in *The Writer in Transition: Roger Mais and the Decolonization of Caribbean Culture* is adamant that *The Hills* encapsulates the calamitous living conditions of the poor; the habitation of the deprived is described as "yards of Kingston's slum," (15). In an analysis of *The Hills* and *Brother Man*, Hawthorne posits that they "are powerful statements of protest, because they gave startling and brutally realistic pictures of the suffering poor" (15). Hawthorne further claims that "[m]ost critics of Mais have insisted upon his works' usefulness as social protest and propaganda" (xiii). In alluding to Mais' influential declarations of dissent, resulting in his significant impact and contribution to Caribbean Literature, Hawthorne notes a pronouncement by John Hearn. "[Mais's writings were] brought to fruition by that ineluctable surge of desire and hope to which we call the struggle for political independence and which is, ultimately, the implacable need of a nation of people to dignify the whole human race with the fact of their freedom" (qtd. in Hawthorne 16). Hawthorne also notes a statement made by N. O. Linton's on Mais's *The Hills*: "[a] non-

Jamaican must needs wonder whether life in Jamaica is as hopeless as [Mais] depict[s]” (qtd. in Hawthorne 27). Since Mais’s unearthing of poor people’s condition is unsettling, Linton is suggesting that Mais is possibly embellishing the inhumane conditions of the poor; nevertheless, Hawthorne makes (somewhat) credible Linton’s subtle criticism by highlighting Mais’s defense in relation to his work. “My idea in publishing this book . . . is to put on records certain aspects of local life which I think the short story is the ideal vehicle for expressing. . . I want my work to be that of a hundred per cent Jamaican writing about hundred per cent Jamaicans” (32). Mais, therefore, justifies his motive for the production of *The Hills*, which he explicitly delineates as a realistic portrayal of the lifestyle of the underclass in Kingston, Jamaica.

Jean D’Costa, in analyzing *The Hills* and *Brother Man*, in *Critical Studies of Caribbean Writers* posits,

[t]he world of the two novels provides a haunting picture of slum life in Kingston in the last decades of the colonial period. Character and situation are blended delicately, mysteriously, as Mais unfolds the human panorama of broken families, rootless men, women, and children imprisoned in common insecurity” and that “[t]hese two books together established Roger Mais’s reputation as a novelist fiercely dedicated to the exposure of social ills in contemporary Jamaica. (2)

D’Costa’s perspective on *The Hills* and *Brother Man* can be regarded as supplemental to what Mais proposes as his intent in the presentation of his work, which is to present authentic information on the relegated in Jamaica. Furthermore, D’Costa claims, “[d]eath and madness haunt [t]hese individuals. The forces of life exist, but in a posture of defeat”

(4). In the introduction of *Black Lightning*, D'Costa indicates that Mais is relentless with his dissent agenda; his deliberations create an awareness of the social problems that the poor face, and he brings to the fore the challenges that they face as they seek resolutions

(7). In determining the significance of Mais's final novel, *Black Lightning*, D'Costa calls it "the flawed experiment of an artist who takes great risks in order to question the role of the creative man in society" (7). Moreover, D'Costa compares Mais's artistic ability (painting) to his literary prowess (writing); she posits that because of his multiple skills, his creative sensibilities were evident in his work as the "painter-writer" used his sensibilities to present a "painting" of the dismal conditions of the poor in *Black Lightning*. In making *Black Lightning* and *The Hills* parallel, D'Costa argues that both novels are common in their projection of unsettled problems that the poor endure (7-8), and Williamson in "Roger Mais: *The Hills* and *Brother Man*," regards D'Costa's examination of Mais's literature as recognizing and giving attention to the common issues of human beings (245).

In "Re-inventing Jamaican History: Roger Mais and George William Gordon," Williamson proposes that Mais's novels supersede his other writings because they illustrate his literary inclination: "[Mais'] three novels were all published in London after he left Jamaica in 1952, deeply disillusioned with the society" (10). Considering that Mais's narratives recount poverty-driven conditions, it can be assumed that Mais intensifies the effects of poverty as it relates to what the poor experience. Michael Kuekler, in an analysis of *Brother Man*, contends that Brother Man, the novel's protagonist, accurately depicts a poor but dignified, ambitious, and exemplary

Rastafarian. Mais presents Brother Man as someone who absconds the stereotypical expectations that are ascribed to the improvised: laziness, wrathfulness, and incivility. He also reveals that a study conducted by the University of the West Indies (UWI) revealed “things which took great time for the society to absorb, including the fact that Rastafarians were a complex and heterogeneous community, not just the stereotypes of ghetto thugs the bourgeoisie feared them to be” (n. p.).

In a bid to offer a personal perspective, Oscar Dathorne in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* adamantly states that *Brother Man*, is exaggerated and dramatic; he cites Mais to substantiate his claim: “the vengeance nature exacts from [the poor is responsible for their plight]” (245). Kenneth Ramchand in “Literature and Society: The Case of Roger Mais,” details his opinion on *The Hills*. Ramchand reveals that Mais’s impetus for the contentious atmosphere that he presents in *The Hills* is to create a sincere and worldwide consciousness of the dilemma of the subjugated in Jamaica. Hence, Mais makes universal the lives of “working class” (23) and the “impoverished people trapped in a squalid slum” (23). In “Design from a Legend, Carr postulates that Mais’s writings name Mais “West Indian possession” (4), and Michael Gilkes, in *The West Indian Novel* argues that Mais’s portrayal of *The Hills* condemns the demoralizing conditions of the impoverished populace; Gilkes suggests that Mais, employs intense descriptions to illustrate the desperateness that penurious people endure (35). In addition, Gilkes adamantly claims, “Mais is the spokesman for the disadvantaged black community, the folk, rather than the private individual” (Gilkes 35). In commenting on *The Hills*, Jean Creary, in *A Prophet Armed*, claims that in 1953, *The Hills* was not acknowledged by the

affluent who were not interested in the well-being of the underprivileged. Creary emphasizes that “[t]he reader was thrown straight into a world everyone in Jamaica knew existed and yet which the middle class were united in a conspiracy of silence to ignore and reject” (52), and that “. . . Mais was writing the most sympathetic and illuminating account of the dispossessed slum-dwellers yet written” (51-52).

A Perspective on Colonialism and Postcolonialism

Colonialism and Postcolonialism works significantly put into perspective the mind-set of the marginalized; hence, colonial and postcolonial insights are important to this discourse, particularly how they relate to the characters in Mais’s work and, by extension, how they relate to the treatment of the underclass. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon contextualizes, despite gaining independence, the effects of colonization on the oppressed population; his theories are applicable to the marginalized in Jamaica. Thus, for the poor, vulnerability to exploitation and a retention of the mores of their colonizers is highly probable.

Fanon posits, “[h]istory teaches us clearly that the battle against colonialism does not run straight away along the lines of nationalism” (148). Fanon extends his argument when he emphasizes that “for a very long time the native devotes his energies to ending certain definite abuses: forced labor, corporal punishment, inequality of salaries, limitation of political rights” (148). Fanon’s suggestion is that “the native” people, are faced with the difficult responsibility, willingly or unwillingly, to find, understand, and maintain their sense of self and identity in an oppressive society that significantly limits them, and still seeks, despite their independence, to entrap and control them. Fanon,

identifying and understanding the challenge that these individuals face because of the mental residue of colonialism, since they have gained physical independence, claims that “[t]he national middle class, which takes over power at the end of the colonial regime is an underdeveloped middle class” (149), suggesting that these individuals lack the level of exposure, experience, and expertise to optimally function in a society that controls their development. He further notes that “[they have] practically no economic powers” (149). This lack of financial strength is derived from the limitations that they have experienced over a period; also, a lack of assertion significantly impedes their ability to mobilize themselves; however, resocialization and deprogramming are helpful tools, which when enforced would negate Fanon’s concept that “... negro[es] subjectively adopts a white man’s attitude” (147). The pronouncement that Fanon makes suggests that underprivileged individuals are susceptible to becoming or remaining subservient; hence, they are likely to be controlled and overpowered because of their inadequate experience and knowledge socially, economically. They, therefore, will become easy targets for the perpetrators of violence, exploitation, and abuse that is reserved for the subjugated; colonial states and individuals who are insensitive to the economically challenged specifically orchestrate such acts.

To an extent, Fanon’s delineation exemplifies Mais’s characters who reflect the effects of the colonized underclass by way of their vulnerability in manner, mindset. Equally, Mais’s narratives help to reshape his berated characters, resulting in repositioning them; therefore, Mais aptly adopts Fanon’s stance; their works correspond

with the changing yet mammoth needs that the poor have to secure their overall rights as human beings.

Delimitation and Project Outline

In examining the ideas proposed, this study will focus exclusively on Mais's three novels, *The Hills Were Joyful Together*, *Brother Man*, and *Black Lightening*, without necessarily considering Mais's other works and related novels from the Caribbean region. The study will be limited by the discussion on socio-economic issues in Mais's novels and how these issues affect the characters' identities, while they declare "judgment" on their oppressors using religion, family life, and creative arts to cope with those issues while simultaneously challenging the status quo. In addition, in studying identity development, while coping with and resisting societal strains in colonial Caribbean literature, the writer has narrowed the problem to one former Anglophone colony, Jamaica, based on history, including Jamaica's gaining independence from Britain in 1962. Thus, since Mais is a colonial writer, the setting becomes essential to the selection of the novels, since the society was still colonized by Britain and the people of African descent were oppressed. To be noted, also, is that although there are other writers from regions who have written protest novels, their works are not overly significant to this study; hence, they will not be the focus of this problem. Additionally, this research will not provide discussions of novels that focus on European, Jewish, Chinese, or Indian Caribbean writers or characters from these races because the discourse primarily focuses on people of African descent, and the selected novels for this study represent a predominantly Afro-Caribbean populace.

To evaluate and add credence to the defiant coping strategies and the self-affirmation tendencies that are represented in Mais's protest work, Chapter 2 will exclusively focus on how religion, used in times past as a pacifier, is instead used as a major form of protest and self-pronouncement in Mais' novels. The emphasis then will be on Rastafarianism and traditional African and other hybrid religions with Afrocentric overtones, and their passive-aggressive tenets as methods of revolts, which unfold throughout the novels. As it relates to using an unlikely device to both protest and affirm, Chapter 3 will explore how Mais uses his novels to illustrate the importance of the different types of families, while using the common law structure to discredit the colonial marriage. Mais novels represent the different family structures in Jamaica ranging from the legal marriage to same sex union to show revolt. Chapter 4 will advance the argument that creative arts equally represents self-affirmation and system revolt mechanisms. Thus, Mais's novels will be thoroughly examined to confirm how creative arts—such as music, sounds, instruments, and crafts—help to steer the indigent into developing common codes and tools to protest the system and affirm themselves.

Chapter 2: The Efficacy of Religion

Religion: An Overview

Multiple insights have been formulated and presented, overtime, on religion—its value, its purpose, and its constituents, and although arguable, the perspective that religious undertakings can have affective repercussions is cultural and historical. Religious traditions can motivate, influence, and transform history, society, and individuals. The text, *Sociology for Caribbean Students* states Henry Tischler's perspective on religion as the “philosophical values shared by a group of people; it defines the sacred, helps explain life, and offers salvation from the problems of human existence” (qtd. in Mustapha 380). Religion does inform social and political considerations, and because religion has been a known pacifier, a revolt tool, and a cultural outlet, a religious mindset proves to be a key mechanism that the underclass adopts in order to address their social and political concerns. Moreover, from ancient time to the present, religion represents a major device that supposedly offers or guarantees redemptive properties. Those who subscribe to religious tenets embrace the idea that religion, more often than not, involves sacred and ritualistic observances, which consider ethical and moral codes intended to govern the conduct and practices of human undertakings. Thus, religion delineates a belief system that stands on the foundation and purpose of the creation, particularly when viewed as the formation of a superior deity.

Religion in Jamaica

In Jamaica, religion significantly influences and shapes the moral, intellectual, social and political mindset of people. Religion, therefore, becomes important to the

values and attitudes that people adopt and maintain. In particular, the framing of religion within the context of social change for the marginalized in Jamaica, and by extension, the marginalized worldwide, provides an outlet for exploration and adaptation. Hence, several religions are practiced in Jamaica. Ivor Morrish in his book, *Obeah, Christ, and Rastaman: Jamaica and Its Religion*, describes religion in Jamaica:

There are few countries, of whatever size, which present the individual interested in religion with such a wealth of historical, psychological, sociological, and theological material as the island of Jamaica. It is a veritable treasure house of religious ideas, groups, sects, cults and movements, which derive from both the Old World and the New. (1)

Jamaica's history will give credence to its religious practices. Jamaica's first known inhabitants were two tribes of Indians—the Arawaks, the larger population, and Caribs. Both were organized groups with their own governments, laws, and religions. The religious beliefs of both groups were similar. They practiced animism and were polytheistic in nature. However, the Caribs' belief in an afterlife was in tune with their warring socialization, as they were perceived as savage warriors. Caribs believed that when their bravest warriors were killed, they went to paradise where Arawaks would cater to them, but if they were weak, the Arawaks would enslave them (Morrish 4). After the Europeans arrived, Catholicism was the first Christian religion for the people of the land, and Spain was the first colonizer. When the English drove out the Spanish, Jamaica changed religious affiliation and the Church of England, a protestant entity, became the major religion. Under colonization, a myriad of other races was introduced to Jamaica,

and each race and/or tribe took their religious practices with them. In *Three Eyes for the Journey: African Dimensions of the Jamaican Religious Experience*, Dianne M. Stewart explains that “when the Europeans came, they had the *Bible* and the Africans/Asians/Amerindians/Islanders had the land; now the Africans/Asians/Amerindians/Islanders have the *Bible* and the Europeans have the land” (3).

Religion continues to be an important part of life for Jamaicans. Over 80 percent are Christians. The most common practices include Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism, Methodists, Presbyterians, Moravians, Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, Church of God, and Pentecostals. Also, included are Christian cults such as Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. Other religions include the Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Bahia faiths (Barrett 7). Few of these religions are practiced only in small fractions in Jamaica, but even the major religions are hybridized to meet the needs of the Jamaican people. Many hybridized religions are mergers of African religious practices with Eurocentric religions, which subvert Eurocentric power structure through their African infusions. According to Nasser Mustapha:

[t]he heterogeneous nature of Caribbean societies and the inevitable interactions among the constituent groups have resulted in many instances of syncretism. Religion in the Caribbean therefore changed and adopted to allow various groups to survive under what was described as ‘acculturative conditions.’ Borrowing from other religions and other instances of interculturalization seem to indicate that relationships among religions were sometimes cordial. (171)

African practices are represented in the Christian churches and other religions in Jamaica. Africanization of worship is seen in the Catholic churches in Jamaica, and the most prominent example of this is seen in Father Richard Ho Lung's creative type of worship where he includes Jamaican tradition music, Reggae, and the Jamaican creole in his songs. Oregon Catholic Press describes Ho Lung's music as having "a distinct Caribbean sound, but its appeal transcends all cultural and ethnic boundaries." Furthermore, the most prominent religions in Jamaica that "combine elements of both Christianity and West African traditions" are: Pukumina with its spirit possession; Kumina with its rituals "drumming, dancing, and spirit possession"; Obeah (Obia) and Etu with their recalling of the cosmology of Africa; and Revival Zion with its elements of both Christian and African religions" ("Jamaica: Religious Affiliation"). Rastafarianism is also affected by African traditions, but in contrast, its origin is accredited to Jamaica (Barrett 25).

Religion as Resistance in Jamaica

Jamaicans have always sought to find a medium that they can use to channel their frustration, which stems from a colonial/exploitative society. According to Patterson, in "Introducing the Native Religions of Jamaica," Jamaica with over 2.5 million people, "where the Rastafari movement began, is credited with one of the highest rates of slave revolts and conspiracies in the history of any slave society" (qtd. in Chevannes 1). Therefore, religion is an active agent in Jamaica, despite the view by Diane J. Austin-Broos in "Jamaica Genesis: Religion and the Politics of Moral Orders" who argues that Europeans are

[d]riven by their feelings of racial and cultural superiority and by their ignorance of African cosmology, Europeans dismissed African spirituality as repulsive superstitions or dangerous sorcery. . . in the moral discourse of the European establishment, Africans and their descendants were not only relegated to an inferior social and racial status but also to an inferior place in the moral order. (919)

It is this “inferior place” that led to the deception and the idea that slaves who were converted to European religions followed their masters blindly. However, these converted slaves successfully led slave revolts in Jamaica. One such religious revolt is the Christmas Rebellion or the Sam Sharpe Rebellion in 1831, which frightened many abolitionists in persuading Britain to end slavery (Hart 251-2). Additionally, Chevannes reemphasizes the importance of religion and rebellion when he asserts that

[t]he most central institution to the tradition of resistance in Jamaica has been religion. Whether resistance by force, or resistance through symbolic forms such as language, folktales and proverbs, or resistance through the creation of alternative institutions, religion was the main driving force among the Jamaican peasants. Even in those areas of socio-cultural life where resistance has lost meaning, having successfully brought colonial domination to an end, religion still flourishes as the guardian of public and private morality. (“Introducing” 10)

Religious revolts continued after emancipation in Jamaica. Post-emancipation did not solve the plights of the oppressed in Jamaica, who suffered more because of reprisals

from the former masters or colonialists in power. “Consequently, the present-day situation still reflects a struggle by the peasantry to break through an institutional setting biased toward its stagnation” (Beckford 23).

The Morant Bay Rebellion in 1866 was another outstanding religious revolt that led to the end of representative government and the beginning of Crown colony government in Jamaica (Brown). The revolt leaders Paul Bogle (Black) and George William Gordon (Mulatto) were Baptist preachers who decided to fight for the rights of the peasants who were being unjustly arrested and punished. Often referred to as a racially charged protest because it is believed that the white planters who, were still discontent with blacks who had abandoned their plantations years earlier, sought assistance from the government in the form of policing to curtail stealing from their properties. These White planters were also members of the Anglican Church (Church of England) who also had a grudge against the Baptists who had fought for emancipation and continued to fight for the oppressed blacks. However, Bogle and Gordon belonged to the newly formed Black Baptists who were even more distant from Europeans forms of worship and beliefs (Barrett 19-21). This ended in hundreds of Blacks and even sympathetic Whites being killed (Brown). Therefore, although society perhaps disregards the indigent’s mind-set to use religion to combat oppressive forces, which contribute to the increasing difficulty for them to have a voice, they still use religion to challenge the status quo.

The Rise of Rastafarianism in Jamaica

Rastafarianism is a protest to colonial forces. Chevannes postulates that Jamaica “has a long tradition of resistance, nurtured in the deep isolated recesses of its rugged interior” (“Introducing” 1). Hence, Rastafarianism is seen as the newest indigenous religious protest action in Jamaica, which is the

expression of a people who have experienced a bitter history of exploitation and oppression. Its emergence is a reaction not only to the native religion, which they see as unreal in the presence of formidable socio-political forces, but also against the missionary religions, which they view as the religious arm of neocolonialism. (Barrett 25-26)

Rastafarianism, an initially socially rejected religion, gained momentum from the proliferation of Ethiopian and Pan-African concepts. Rastafarianism is based on a religious sect (Black Nationalist) that formed its roots in Jamaica in the 1930s; the first prominent branch of Rastafari was established in 1935 by Leonard P. Howell; hence, Howell is known as the first Rasta preacher (Chevannes, *Rastafari: Roots* 121). Interestingly, Barrett in the article, “African Roots in Jamaica Indigenous Religion” mentions that many occupants of Jamaica view religion as “the strongest motivating force” (Barrett 7), and of value to the Rastafarian mind-set is that “Rastas have been at the forefront of groups that have challenged certain aspects of capitalism, racism, colonialism, and imperialism throughout Jamaican society” (Parker 498). Additionally, in a review *From Garvey to Marley: Rastafari Theology* by Noel Leo Erskine in *The Journal of African American History*, Jason Parker explains that

Rastafarianism grew out of a peculiarly Jamaican fusion: an insular religious history, marked especially by the Myal, Obeah, and revivalist traditions; poverty and economic dislocation, difficult even before the Great Depression; racial and cultural marginalization in an imperial society dominated by whites and lighter-skinned “browns”; connection with the intellectual ferment of interwar Harlem, most of all the Garveyite movement; and a localized interpretation of events in Africa, especially the 1930 accession of Haile Selassie I to the imperial throne of Ethiopia. (498)

In contributing his views on factors that Jamaica needs to self-revitalize, structurally connect, and utilize the resources that will aid in social and political advancement, Norman Washington Manley (former prime minister of Jamaica) in the introduction of *The 3 Novels of Roger Mais* agrees that

Jamaica belongs to an area that has a long and bitter history of battle and conflict between European powers and a long and ugly history of colonialism and slavery. That history has made the Caribbean as remarkable a meeting ground of cultures as can be found anywhere in the world, but in the end has left Jamaica with two main streams, one coming from Europe and the other from Africa; and the process of mixing these cultures and shaking them together to form some sort of unified whole is far from being complete. Indeed, the problem is just beginning to be properly understood. (v)

Explicit in Manley's discourse is that the Jamaican economy has been socially structured, over the years, to embattle powerful societal forces that render the country almost powerless and dependent on stronger, more secure entities. Implicit in Manley's statement is that a resolution is needed to address Jamaica's dire social and political issues.

Rastafarianism is heavily influenced by renowned Black nationalist leader, Marcus Garvey who expressed the view that "[i]f the white man has the idea of a white God, let him worship his God, if the yellow man's God is of his race, let him worship his God as he sees fit . . . We Negroes believe in the God of Ethiopia . . . We shall worship him through the spectacles of Ethiopia" (Chevannes 44). With the call to worship an African God, Rastafarians turned to Halle Selassie, a former Emperor of Ethiopia as their God. According to Chevannes, Garvey's ideology was sufficient to allow recognition of this new religious group using "Ras, the Ethiopian for Prince, and Tafari the Emperor's personal name" (Chevannes 26). In *The First Rasta: Leonard Howell and the Rise of Rastafarian*, Helene Lee claims that the "crux of the Rasta ideal" (39) is to ensure that "social redemption" (39) becomes the experience of "the black race" (39). Lee also asserts, "black people must wash their hands against the slothful and fruitless life of the past" (39). Thus, the growth, development, and longevity of the Rasta movement center on the distinctiveness of its supporters; their mantra is "peace and love," but they equally exhibit a "fire and brimstone" attitude as they serve "Jah" their God (Lee 36). Additionally, the teachings and ideologies of Garvey significantly advanced the Rastafarian mindset. Through his teachings on Black self-empowerment, the return of all

Black people to Africa, their legitimate homeland, he significantly motivated Blacks to bond together in order to be self-sufficient and evolve from a peasantry state to a state of nobility.

Other influences of Garvey on Rastafarianism served as powerful protest, but they were often inciting yet uplifting thoughts. It is because of one of Garvey's call for repatriation and his assurance that one day, dispersed Africans will take possession of Africa, the Promised Land that Rastafarians turned to Africa as their only hope. The ruling European supremacies took many Africans as slaves, resulting in separation and division of the people of Africa as they were sent into exile as captives throughout many regions of the world, and where ever they landed (regions of captivity), was called Babylon, a place that is strongly rejected by Rastafarians. Placement into exile was viewed as the suppression of the culture of Africans by whites, and Rastafarians strongly believe that the overpowering of Blacks by the Babylonians (White oppressors) will ultimately come to an end, and the poor, oppressed will return to the Promised Land, Africa, particularly Ethiopia (Erskine 115-123). Thus, E. E. Cashmore who is quoted on BBC's website in the article "Rastafarian History" states that Rasta theology evolved as Rastafarians "in their own ways, added pieces to the jigsaw, and the whole picture came together in the mid-1950s when a series of congregations of rastas appeared at various departure points on Jamaica's shores, awaiting ships bound for Africa." Therefore, the physical unification of Rastafarians was initiated by their coming together to go to Africa, signaling repatriation and freedom for poor and oppressed Rastafarians. Notable, however, is that in "The Many faces of Rasta: Doctrinal Diversity within the Rastafari

Movement,” Michael Barnett asserts, “the Rastafari movement is a multi-faceted one, and not the uniform, homogeneous movement many people conceive it to be.” The different sects of Rastafarians amount to three major groups: Twelve Tribes of Israel (Edmonds 37), Bobo Shanti (Bobo Ashanti) (Edmonds 66), and Nyabinghi (Edmonds 60). “Because of the polycephalous, decentralized, and multi-dimensional structure of the movement, there is little consensus on many things, but there does remain a common core, that of Haile Selassie I and Ethiopia as an important place on the globe” (Barnett 67). Although there are different groups, an obvious driving factor for Rastafarians that effectually binds the movement together, is the need to relink with Africa and its essence.

Similar to Christians’ universal religious text—*The Holy Bible*, the symbol of the Rastafari movement is the “*Holy Piby* or the *Black Bible*” (Lee 39), which was compiled by Anguillan-born Robert Athlyi Rogers in 1924. *The Piby* gives information on both temporal and spiritual matters; it indicates that God’s chosen people are Ethiopians. An example of a cautionary note from *The Piby* reads, “Woe unto a *people*, a race who seeks not their own foundations. . . . Woe be unto a race of people who forsake their own and adhere to the doctrine of another. They shall be slaves to the people thereof” (Lee 40). Because Rastafarianism is a hybrid religion, *The Holy Bible* is also used, especially the Old Testament. Initially, the Rastas in Jamaica called for the Maccabee version of *The Bible*, which they perceive to be pure from European corruptions, unlike the King James Version. They also assume that it had hidden truths about Blacks that White men held from them (Chevannes *Rastafari: Roots* 117). Thus, Rastafarianism, as a protest religion

becomes critical in uplifting the poor and simultaneously exposing the misdeeds of the society.

Rastafarianism, Protest, and Brother Man

As a Rastafarian, Mais highlights the treatment of Rastafarianism during a period when the movement was scorned, ostracized, downgraded, and misunderstood by the Jamaican society and other countries of the world. Chevannes describes how Rastas were perceived, which “was given impetus through public perceptions linking Rastas to criminality. Dreadlocks were the official pariahs of Jamaican society. They were targets for police harassment and were scorned by the majority of society” (133). In *Brother Man*, Mais focuses on a Rasta man, John Power (affectionately called Brother Man or Bra’ Man) who lives in the slums of Western Kingston, Jamaica. The degrading descriptions of Rastas are very satirical as their physical appearance comes from Samson’s and John the Baptist’s depiction in the *Bible*. However, Mais reveals that some Rasta opponents wrote in the newspaper “[a]ll bearded men should be placed behind barbed-wire. They should be publicly washed . . . and shaved! They should be banished to Africa. They should be sterilized. They should be publicly flogged” (173), which includes Brother Man. Mais, however, depicts Brother Man as subverting the rejection of Rastafarians’ physical appearance when Brother Man responds to the boy whom he rescues the crabs from and who asks, ‘Bra’ Man, why you wear beard on you face?’ (74). Brother Man replies, ‘Son, it is de Bible way. It is the way of John de Baptist, an’ Sampson who killed a thousand Philistines, an’ a lion with his naked han’s.’ (74). Mais even becomes more didactic as he affirms Black people as “God’s chosen people” (74).

He explains: “But the spirit of the Lawd passed over into Ethiopia, after the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon and learned all his wisdom, an’ pass over back to her own land. Then so it was black men out of Africa who became God’s chosen people, for they had learnt de Way” (74). As a form of protest, Mais negates the belief that the Jews are the chosen people when he places a Black man in a coveted position and Africa as the Promised Land.

Mais also makes a salient point when he subverts the common, negative stereotypes expressed about Rastas by characterizing the Rasta man, Brother Man, as a powerful and pious man.

The star of Brother Man was in its ascendancy, and his fame was to run like wildfire through the lane; and not the lane alone, for the rumor of it reached to the limits of the city, and people came to him from far to be healed and blessed. And through him blessing came to the people in the lane, even to those who did not go out to receive it. (109)

When Mais ascribes special qualities to Brother Man by presenting his mystic ability as a healer, Mais changes the perspective of how Rastas were viewed in the early 1950s. His characterization of Brother Man mocks how white society sees Rastas as lowly people when he gives Brother Man supernatural strength that the colonizers do not have. The description of Brother Man’s healing power is apparent as “[p]eople came up to him in the crowd, and touched their handkerchiefs against his clothes, and came away again, and laid the handkerchiefs on their sick, and they became well. And Bra’Man didn’t even know it was done” (109). Mais draws on the strength of Africans with their

power to heal that Whites feared, as it is this same power that Blacks used on plantations to combat and protest White domination; thus, he presents Brother as a powerful spiritual healer.

However, Mais would strongly refute the view on religion that sociologist, Emile Durkheim asserts in *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work, a Historical and Critical Study* by Steven Lukes,

Simply collective ideals that have fixed themselves on material objects. . . are only collective forces hypostatized, that is to say, moral forces; they are made up of the ideas and sentiments awakened in us by the spectacle of society, and not of sensations coming from the physical world. (Lukes 80)

Undoubtedly, Mais would agree with another of Durkheim's perspective, "Religion gave birth to all that is essential in the society" (Allen 114). Religion is intricately woven in social, public, and private discourses; social integration by way of culture is also an important but a complex aspect of religion. Additionally, Martin D. Stringer in *Contemporary Western Ethnography and the Definition of Religion* argues, "Religion is meant to change either the individual or society" (10). Furthermore, Martin D. Stringer, drawing from Durkheim and by using several stimulating ethnographic research on the lives of ordinary people, contends that religious life "by implication in many other societies around the world, is situational, mundane, and concerned with helping people cope with the ordinary problems of day-to-day living" ("About Contemporary"). Thus, religion acts as a catalyst for individuals who are seeking to protest societal dictates and equally find inner peace due to the turmoil that society deliberately places upon them.

To exasperate Whites and colonizers, Mais illustrates that Brother Man is a Christ-like figure as chronicled in *Biblical* stories in the New Testament gospels, where just one touch from Jesus or His presence would heal. Mais, at this point, is debunking the image of the white Jesus; thus, he presents Brother Man as a Christ-like. Like Jesus, Brother Man has a large crowd following him and “[h]e spoke to them in simple, down-to-earth language, telling them that were to turn away from evil and to follow after righteousness” (109). Unlike the idea that Rastas were supposed to be social derelicts, Brother Man embodies a messiah who came to embrace mankind by giving them hope for a more peaceful and good life. Hence, Faith Smith claims that “Rastafari profoundly shaped the social and racial identities of Jamaicans across all echelons of the society, so that by the 1970s, if Blackness was available as an important element of national identification, this can be attributed at least in part to its influence” (11). As Smith believes, Mais’s positive depiction of Rastas, in the early days, shaped a more positive outlook for them (13).

In further advancing the Rastafarian mind-set to both protest and affirm, Mais continues to parallel Brother Man to the (supposed) Messiah, Jesus Christ; however, the messiah that Mais juxtaposes Brother man to is Haile Selassie—the honoree of Rastafarians, the one Garvey describes through prophecy as the redeemer and not Jesus Christ. In *The First Rasta*, Helene Lee resounds Mais’s theology, “What was needed was a new messiah, preferably [B]lack, and a king in *this* world (37). It can be assumed, given Mais’s propensity for the didactic, that making a saint, a deity, and a “king” out of a “commoner” is to establish parity at the highest level. Thus, Mais disrupts the status

quo by the canonizing of a Black, bearded supposed peasant, Brother Man, upsetting the structured colonial system and a society that embraces a White God, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Mais uses the same method to rebel as well as affirm Blacks by elevating Brother Man to a position that is assumed to belong to a White individual. In a communal recognition of Brother Man's religious superiority, his followers are adamant in their belief.

God woulda spare Sodom sake o' one righteous man. Bra' Man a righteous man,
Bra' Man know de gospel way.

Bra' Man a good man, praise God fo' him, me gal.

No him mek miss Martha pickney walk? T'row 'wey him crutch, run up de
street, an' jump de neighbor wall! (107)

The followers continue with affirmations of Brother Man's superiority: "Praise God, me child, praise God fo' Bra' man" and "Massa God wi' spare de wicked generation, sake o' one righteous man" (Mais 107). Without prodding, Brother Man's followers are motivated to talk about him based on his pure and simple "goodness," describing his actions that can be equated to the actions of the White Jesus. Accordingly, Mais is deliberate when he highlights that Brother Man's followers call Brother Man "Master" (109), which denotes superiority. However, the term "master" also denotes tropes that place Blacks in an oppressive position. First, Blacks were told during slavery that the White God, their religious master, commands them to obey their earthly master, the White man, a guideline that is stated in Ephesians 6:5: "Servants, be obedient to them

that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ.”

To advance the argument of Brother Man’s higher order status, Mais shows how a woman tempts Brother Man, which suggests how, perhaps unintentionally, Rastafarians elevate one sex above the other, and which is also a common critique of *The Holy Bible* as Eve, mother of the earth, is credited for the fall of mankind (Genesis 2-3).

At first, Brother Man is beyond reproach when Minette, whom he rescues and takes to live in his house, tempts him. Because she is a homeless seventeen-year old from the country who prostitutes her body to survive (Mais 98-103), Brother Man takes her in much like child shifting in Jamaica where an adult takes in a child to care for him or her because of poverty. “The practice of shifting the responsibilities of childrearing from the biological mother or parents to relatives, close friends, [strangers], or neighbors is an established pattern of family life in the Caribbean and is known as child-shifting (“Caribbean Families”). Minette’s intent does not change, and even when she is in Brother Man’s care, she provokes him sexually, but because of Brother Man’s, righteous attitude, he uses *The Holy Bible* to combat her sexual advances:

The nightdress fell open in front, disclosing her firm breast. She felt suddenly naked before him; she couldn’t do anything about it, this mad, mad racing of her blood. So he rested the candle on the table, drew up a stool beside her cot and sat down. She saw that he had the *Bible* in his hand. He opened it and read aloud.

(99)

Despite further attempts to seduce Brother Man, he walks away from her. Mais uses the archetypal seducing woman, Eve, to tempt the godly man. Mais could also have a twofold message in his presentation of Brother Man and Minette's relationship by using their interaction as a protest about the negative sexual stereotype of the Black man. As a Black man, Brother Man could have lost self-control and sleep with Minette from their initial encounter as would be expected from a Black man since according to the colonizers, the Black man has no control over his sexual drive. Franz Fanon states that the colonizer's stereotype of the Black man is that he "is turned into a penis" (*Black Skin* 170) and "one is no longer aware of the [Black man] but only of a penis; the [Black man] is eclipsed. He is turned into a penis" (*Black Skin* 170). If it were not for the righteousness of Brother Man, he would have been condemned from the very beginning. Kwame Dawes explains that "what Mais has preserved for us is the purer version of Rasta—Rasta as devotional force, Rasta as the voice of peace and love, Rasta as the force that makes Jamaicans see Africa with hope, Rasta as Christ-like, Rasta as something deeply rooted in the Jamaican capacity for survival" (qtd. in Kuelker 9-10).

Another factor that exemplifies how religion—Rastafarianism in particular, is used as a protest tool and a tool that equally serves to affirm Blacks is the treatment of the people that Brother Man serves and how they ultimately turn against him, Mais's portrayal of Brother Man's response to their treatment solidifies the idea that Brother Man is in fact a stark representation of the "messiah." Thus, Mais's well thought out characterization of Brother Man as subverting colonial religious and power ideal, as he is presented as a Black messiah, is credible. Initially, the crowd respects and congregates

around Brother Man, and he speaks to them in simple, down-to-earth language, telling them that they are “to turn away from evil and to follow after righteousness” (109). The crowd’s reaction to Brother Man’s message is the same reaction that, originally, Jesus, the White Messiah received. However, while Brother Man is given the qualities of a messiah to show how Mais has placed a Black man in a position that was supposedly White, he also uses this position to affirm that despite the Black man’s elevation, the colonized society still finds ways to degrade him to the point where he is rejected. Thus, Brother Man is accused of murder, and his followers turn against him bitterly.

Others joined the little knot of people who followed him; jeering, jibing, they moved in closer on him. He would stop and speak with them, try and reason with them. He turned and faced them, lifted up his hands, said, in salutation: “Peace an’ love.” The eyes of the men right out in front, wavered, their gaze fell to the ground before them. A woman at the back of the crowd shouted: ‘Oonu ‘fraid o’him?’ Another laughed. Those at the back of the crowd pressed forward a little, those in front shifted uneasily on their feet. “Down de ole Ras Tafariite! Murderers dem. (185)

The mob that turns on Brother Man may well be intended by Mais to affirm the society’s maltreatment towards Blacks or the marginalized. However, to protest, the inhumane, disrespectful treatment, Mais uses Brother Man to defy his oppressors by adopting a peaceful, rational disposition. Furthermore, it can be assumed that the expectation from the group (society) is for Brother Man to become as vile and volatile as they have become, but he, instead, maintains his composure, dignity, and pride with “peace and

love” as his greeting to his adversaries. In that sense, Mais uses a laid-back Brother Man to illustrate that protest can be achieved by a non-reactive disposition, leading to the ultimate procuring of the self. Keeping the peace renders Brother Man a proponent of the teachings of Selassie who preaches that

[t]he hungry may be fed, the naked clothed, the ignorant instructed, this must be seized on and exploited for the flower of peace is not sustained by poverty and want. To achieve this requires courage and confidence. The courage, I believe, we possess. The confidence must be created, and to create confidence we must act courageously. (qtd. in Jaide)

Later in 1975, Haile Selassie was overthrown in Ethiopia by communist regimes from Italy (Edmonds 36). Hence, Mais’s Brother Man foreshadows another messiah figure who would be prosecuted.

Mais does not reject the traditional African presence as he gives credibility to the use of spirits that denote affirmation or protest in a person’s life. In Jamaica, it is customary for people to say that spirits visited them. Usually, these visitations and spirits are taken seriously because they serve as guides. Hence, these spirits are like orishas who are “independent personal spiritual beings who empower all life” (Murphy 85). Orishas belong to an African religion from the Yoruba peoples; they embrace orishas as emissaries of their God, Olodumare. While this religion is not practiced in Jamaica, Mais introduces a duppy (spirit or ghost) who appears to Brother Man to sanction his holy walk. Brother Man describes the encounter.

As he was crossing the next intersecting street that ran east to west, he passed a bent-over old woman, but hardly noticed her. She stopped and gave him goodnight, and shouted a blessing after him down the street. It was not until he had gone some twenty paces further that Brother Man suddenly realized that the old woman had given him words of blessings and of peace, and he had passed on giving her no salutation at all. (69)

The old woman is recognized as a spirit because Brother Man could not find any trace of her, and on enquiring, he was told that it is “Miss Maggie Jefferies, dead las’ year” (70). It is evident that she is an orisha because according to the people in the lane, “[m]any people had seen her duppy, and if she stops and gave anyone curses or blessings, he was cursed or blessed” (Mais 70). Although Rastafarians profess that they do not “mix with the dead,” Mais creates the African presence to affirm the people’s Africanness.

Obeah as Protest in *Brother Man*

Obeah has been used since slavery as a tool of resistance and an affirmation of the African presence in Jamaica. Alexander Giraldo in “Obeah the Ultimate Resistance” contends, “[a]lthough African slaves usually practiced Obeah for ‘evil’ or rather self-interested, instrumental purposes, this faith also aided them as a source of strength and clandestine resistance.” Both Blacks and Whites feared obeah during slavery; Obeah is said to originate from the Ashanti and Koromantin tribes of Africa on the Gold Coast when they were taken captives and became slaves in Jamaica (Giraldo). While it is a legitimate religion, the leaders are perceived as having power to cure illnesses by using herbs, ward off evil, and remove spells that potentially could lead to death (Giraldo).

Obeah became the scapegoat for plots against slavery, “specifically slave rebellions and the other forms of resistance in Jamaica” (Giraldo). The Obeah man was accused of enticing a large group of his followers to join in resistance and rebellions. One main form of resistance by Obeah men was to use herbs to poison their masters without suspicion (Giraldo). Kofi Boukman Barima further explains that the Jamaican media, “juxtaposes Satanism and other western occult practices with Obeah and suggesting Satanic associations with Obeah, in a *The Holy Bible* driven country, achieves the goal to further alienate Afro-Jamaicans from their heritage” (166) and led to its illegal status. However, this did not stop the Obeah religious practice.

To show the contrast between the “good” Brother Man, Mais also creates the antagonist, Bra’ Ambro who is the “evil” Obeah Man. Mais, like all other Rastas, is known to have an incompatible relationship with Obeah Men as Rastas do not condone evil; similarly, Rastas do not tolerate deception which is how they view Obeah (Barima 164). Nevertheless, Giraldo contends that

this faith also aided them as a source of strength and clandestine resistance. The practice of Obeah is the belief that one can use certain spirits or supernatural agents to work harm to the living, or to call them off from such mischief.

Generally, the British used the term Obeah to describe all slave acts and practices that were considered supernatural or evil in nature, such as rituals and fetishes.

(n.p.).

The Obeah man, however, is a healer. Giraldo also explains that the Obeah man could “miraculously, cure or poison (Obeah) a person to death.” In *Brother Man*, Bra’ Ambro

is presented as evil, but he is still protesting the same oppression that Brother Man is protesting. *The Holy Bible* is also used to shun Obeah men as they are referred to as “evildoers” in Psalms 119: 115: “Depart from me, you evildoers.” They are described as “workers of iniquity” in Psalms 6:8: “Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity.

Bra’ Ambro’s prowess as an Obeah man is seen when he uses Cordelia to discredit Brother Man because of anger. The fall out becomes evident when Bra' Ambro, a known Obeah man, tries to convince Brother Man to mask unlawful items used for Bra’ Ambro’s trade that the police would have found in the Obeah man’s home. When Brother Man refuses, Bra’ Ambo seeks vengeance (17). Cordelia respects Brother Man because he heals her physical ailment and is the only one that helps her manic state. Man also tries to heal her son but, instead, gives her money to take the child to the hospital. It is at this point when she feels hopeless, she turns to Bra’ Ambro for his help (116). However, her sick mind causes her to blame Brother Man for not helping to heal her sick son. Cordelia’s refusal to go to the mainstream medical personnel to get help for her sick son shows what Chevannes explains—the people of African descent in Jamaica trust and prefer traditional African medicines (17). The manipulation and control of the mind is what Bra’ Ambro does in his Obeah practice. Rastafarians oppose Obeah, which is still a common practice of resistance that the oppressors fear. Moreover, Obeah is an authentic African religion that affirms an African identity for displaced Africans in Jamaica.

Religious Declaration in *Black Lightning*

While *Brother Man* deals directly with Rastafarianism and Obeah, and even a traditional African belief, three African based religions that Mais also introduces a

prophetess, Mother Coby, who is described as mad because of her religious gift. Her religious affiliation is not named, but it is more likely that she is not from a Eurocentric denomination. Mais does not affiliate Mother Coby with any religious group, but her prophetic gift and her speaking in tongues are evidence that she could have been a “warner woman” who is connected to the revivalist movement or the pocomania sect. Shalman Scott in “The Rise of Revivalism in Jamaica” describes revivalism as a “Neo-African religious movement [promoting] Christian revivalism plus oral confessions, trances, dreams, prophecies, spirit seizures, and frenzied dancing. It became the strongest of the native Jamaican religions until the emergence of Rastafarianism in the 1930s.” Prophecy and speaking in tongues are paramount to this religion along with the possession of spirits, which allows the practitioner to perform divine healing or have divine inspiration (Lamount 36). Mais’s character, Mother Coby, is similarly described as mad when she warns about impending danger as in Kei Miller’s modern Jamaican story (2010), *The Last Warner Woman* whose prophecies of approaching disaster are greeted with fear and skepticism, as she is believed to be mad, so Miller’s character is confined in a mental hospital.

Mais presents Mother Coby as someone who warns Jake about impending danger because of his idolatry. Thus, Mother Coby calls Jake to repent because he is making graven images which goes against the second of the Ten Commandments: Exodus 20: 4 that says, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.” Mother Coby speaks directly to Jake; “‘You Jake,’ she says, ‘Do not tempt the

Lord thy God. For God is not mocked! Repent! Turn away from your evil ways, before the wrath of God fall upon you. Repent!” (75). Despite this warning, Jake does not heed, so he is struck by lightning, leaving him blind. Although people speculate about what could have caused him to be blind, Mother Coby reminds them about what she told Jake. “She said. ‘The Lord set it down and that’s the very thing Jake done. I warned him. And now you see what happen. He been making them images a long time, and it’s all contrary to the word of God” (116). Like Brother Man, Mais characterizes Jake as a blameless person, but Jake’s craft leads him to produce graven images. It is ironic that Jake is carving a statue of Samson; Mais seems to be obsessed with the strength of Samson and Samson’s physical appearance because Rastas, like Mais, have taken on Samson’s persona. The graven image, Samson, is Jake’s masterpiece, so he coaxes his friend, Amos, to go and see the image despite Amos’s fear of lightning and thunder. However, Jake is struck as “the lightning seemed to make sword-play around him . . . a long and terrifying crash and roll of thunder . . . lightning again . . . He seemed poised there, waiting an anxious interval. . . nothing” (112). It was when Jake boasts about his graven image, which he tries to show off to Amos, he was struck and blinded by lightning.

Revivalists have confidence that the earth will be destroyed by “brimstone and fire,” which is a reference to the destructive nature of lightning. This idea is from *The Holy Bible* as recorded in Genesis 19:24. “Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah [a sinful city] brimstone and fire.” Before the lightning strikes, Jake playfully talks about the destructive nature of lightning as if he was foreseeing its impending

danger: ‘It would mean the lightning had struck you, cold . . . blotted you out’ (108) and ‘it would mean its bolt had entered into you . . . and you would be lying their dead and cold’ (108). *The Holy Bible* is clear in Exodus that God uses thunder and lightning as destructive forces that His people fear. Exodus 19:16 states, “there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.” God sent lightning as the “consuming fire” to destroy the Israelites (a term used by both Rastafarians and Revivalists to describe Blacks). The Revivalists and the Rastafarians tend to pronounce judgment on those who sin by calling down “fire and brimstone” from heaven. Jake does not fathom that he, too, has the gift of prophecy, and, ironically, he was jokingly speaking about his own demise.

Mother Coby’s place in society is mocked because her behavior reflects African traditional practices where women are given insights into the future to act as a buffer to prevent tragedy. However, in matrifocal and colonial societies, women are not taken seriously, and in particular, the African-based religion is seen as heathen, so the people in the society call Mother Coby “half-crazy” (116) because of lack of understanding and the non-acceptance of African cultures even in a predominantly Afrocentric society. Nevertheless, Mais uses Jake’s fall to affirm that warner women are significant in the society and that they are authentic carriers of impending doom because no one else is able to give a plausible explanation about Jake’s demise. Mais’s description of the people who listen to Mother Coby’s explanation as to why Jake was struck by lightning

somehow “went home satisfied in their minds with the knowledge that justice had been served” (116), which shows that they accept the powerful force of the African God.

Chapter Summary

Mais presents characters who are down-trodden but use religion as a buffer to ease their pain and suffering. By extension, religion is used to subvert colonialism and to protest the conditions of the oppressed, yet religion is simultaneously used to affirm an African identity, which is of paramount importance to Blacks. Through Mais’s diverse presentations of Afrocentric religions that are practiced in Jamaica, he ensures that his characters emphasize how colonization has actively tried to render these religions void. Mais equally demonstrates how because of perseverance, Jamaicans forge a sense of importance in their demonstration of these religions as they retain the mind-set that a better day awaits when their African identity will not be minimized.

In *Bother Man*, Mais’s portrayal of Brother Man, the central character, evidences Mais’s mandate to affirm Blacks and ridicule an oppressive system. Mais deliberately creates and equally validates the existence of a Black Christ (savior for Blacks) in his portrayal of Brother Man. Thus, in his mind-set a Black Christ replaces the White God who society embraces. Mais also presents the three major Afrocentric religions as still active years after slavery was abolished. Although perhaps categorized as the subjugated, the scum of the earth, the indigent, the social misfit, the economically and socially underrated, most if not all of Mais’s characters, are radicals on a mission; they are rich in spirit, although structured social and economic constraints significantly hinder their ability to make significant strides. These characters, however, use their adverse

circumstances to examine their personal and religious capabilities in order to advance beyond their limitations as they await their entrance to their homeland, Africa and the rule of an African God.

Chapter 3: The Dynamics of Family

Family: An Overview

The family is one of the world's largest social institutions. In addition to other agents of socialization, it is varied, diverse, and flexible based on different societies. Noted in *Sociology for Caribbean Students* is Mustapha's description of George Peter Murdock's traditional definition of family: "[a]social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction" (128). Mustapha further notes Murdock's concept of family to "include adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, their own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults" (128). Overtime, sociologists recognize the need to understand the dynamics of the family by the way it "is constructed through the social practices of individuals" (Kirby et al. 50); thus, it becomes relevant to interpret the family as individuals being involved at some stage in shared activities in a shared household that may or may not change.

Furthermore, a contemporary explanation of family has altered the idea that a family must contain "adults of both sexes," so "[t]he term 'family' and 'household' have been used interchangeably to cater for the increasing variety of living arrangements that do not fit the traditional picture of the family" (Steel et al. 15).

The definition of family has evolved and places at its fore two common variables: relationships via kinship and relationships via household (Steel et al. 15). Therefore, instead of being fixated on the traditional definition of a family, the different communities and the different family constructions are considered; hence, there are myriads of

family types in various countries and cultures. Some common types of families in the western world include nuclear, step parent, blended, extended, empty nest, single parent, adoptive, foster, and same-sex (Андриенко and Медведева 5). Through their function, families allow humans to understand if not embrace complex cultures. The function of the family is almost consistent in all societies as they perform similar duties “for individual family members and for society as a whole,” and “the family [also] serves as the basic institution for bearing children, caring for them during their early years, and preparing them to function effectively in society. Families around the world must also provide food and clothing to their members” (Андриенко and Медведева 6). Additionally, families help the members to meet vital psychological needs, including love, support, and companionship (Андриенко and Медведева 6). Evident in most if not all societies worldwide is a family structure, and generally, family structures are established to unite individuals through either biological, marital, kinship, or even friendship as a structured group within a household.

The Structure of the Marginalized Jamaican Family

While protesting colonial expectations in order to uphold their identities as a unit that can stand as a family, Caribbean marginalized peoples have created family structures to affirm themselves, which give them a sense of belonging and identity, despite the fact that these structures are rejected by their colonizers and ultimately, conventional society. Jamaican families, as in other parts of the world, are diverse and often characterized according to social class where the upper and middle-class families are more a mimic of

the nuclear colonial family structure. In contrast, however, identified through a variety of patterns and characterized according to jargons used in the society, are the lower class or marginalized families. Dianne Cooney Miner in “Jamaican Families” explains that “Jamaican families find adaptive ways to meet the essential family functions based on relationships and affinities but not necessarily confined to a household” (29). L.N. Solien also proposes, “the notion of the non-localized family structure found within the Caribbean, meets its essential needs and functions but does not reside together under one roof” (qtd. in Miner 29). The view of those family patterns, more often than not, is that they are disorganized. People who are unfamiliar with the origins of those family structures are prone to having a negative view. In addition, those family patterns can be interpreted as a form of protest in order to confuse an oppressive society. Tony L. Whitehead in “Family and Kinship as Mechanisms of Survival in a Changing Society: A Jamaican Example” explains the Caribbean family structure that mainly relates to the marginalized:

West Indian family organization has been observed to exhibit relatively greater instances of brittle common law unions, out-of-wedlock births, and female-headed households than is the case with other New World populations. Three primary perceptions have been given to explain the presence of these patterns: the retention or reinterpretation of African sociocultural patterns; the effects of slavery; and the adaption to economic marginality. (1)

Additionally, protests through marginalized family structures are both powerful and

effective; thus, Miner, in an effort to confirm that a correlation exists between the Jamaican economy and marginalized Jamaican families is adamant that the

[f]amily structure was identified as the root cause of the pervasive poverty and lack of progress in Caribbean societies, rather than the oppressions colonialism, and punitive economic policies that have complicated the lives and commerce of Caribbean peoples for centuries. (27)

However, a strong argument is that these primary explanations for marginalized families relate to Jamaica's history.

An Overview of the Marginalized Family in Jamaica

The remnants of slavery, colonialism, neocolonialism, and retaliatory capitalist schemes, which are major oppressive forces, evidently affects marginalized families. The Black marginalized family dates back to the colonial era when their masters controlled slaves. According to Roberts and Sinclair, “[d]espite sociopolitical and economic changes, Jamaican family structural arrangements have remained relatively unchanged over the past 150 years” (qtd. in Roopnaire et al. 36), which dates back to slavery. Slavery is a common factor that accounts for the retention of the most common forms of Jamaican families. According to Dave Hazle, “[m]any of the conditions of slavery militated against the consistent formation of family among the slaves” (191). Thus, Black marginalized families in Jamaica have not maintained family structures found in the mainstream Western hemisphere. Since slaves were believed to be their masters' property, they were not able to create families as they were separated and/or sold, breaking any ties that would hold families together. Additionally, slave marriages were not recognized, so

slaves cohabiting did not form many of the slave unions that produced children (Hazle 191). The marginalized Jamaican family structures are reflective of the roles slave masters projected on to male and female slaves, which created visiting relationships, since they were forced into “promiscuous sexual activity, prostitution, and polygamy” (Hazle 191) that benefited the slave masters’ stock, thus, making the slave masters wealthy and more controlling. Inadvertently, the Black marginalized people in Jamaica created hybrid family patterns based on the roles their masters forced on them, which, ironically, the masters could not readily recognize as solid family structures for Black marginalized Jamaicans. The creation of Black marginalized family as a form of protest reflects Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity, which he proposes as a counter-narrative and offers as a medium by which the oppressed can regain shared rights of a culture that depends on the people for meaning and which forms dichotomous identities. According to Bhabha, cultural interactions between colonizers and the colonized occur; hence, there is a mutual dependency in colonized spaces to construct culture (38). In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha explains that there is a “third space of enunciation” which allows the construction of cultural systems (38). Therefore, Black marginalized families in Jamaica form patterns that fit in neither the colonized nor the colonizer’s traditional spaces. Likewise, by way of Bhabha’s explanation, the hybrid space suggests that “adding ‘to’ need not ‘add up’ but may disturb the calculation” (155). These hybrid families formed by the marginalized do not represent colonial family patterns, yet for the marginalized, they upset the “calculation” of what the colonizers consider as a family.

Marginalized Family Patterns in Jamaica in the 1950s-Present

Family structures still exist in Jamaica today that are replicas of structures formed during slavery. Caribbean and Jamaican sociologists best classify these traditional and hybrid structures, which are used as protests. Miner claims that

[h]istorically, the study of the family and the poor in the Caribbean originated with European scholars who assumed the universality of the patriarchal nuclear family and the primacy of this structure to the healthy functioning of society. Based on these theoretical assumptions, matrifocal Caribbean families were seen as chaotic, disorganized, and inadequate in the performance of the essential tasks of the social system. (27)

However, in order to function optimally, finding and maintaining a workable mode takes precedence for marginalized Jamaicans; hence, various family patterns are explored and adopted as deemed necessary. *The Jamaican Family: Continuity and Change* by Elsa Leorhynie stresses three systems by George W. Roberts and Sonja A. Sinclair that describe consistent Jamaica family patterns in Jamaica.

First, is the visiting relationship, where a man and a woman are not married and do not cohabit but share a sexual relationship, which is the most practiced family pattern in Jamaica (qtd. in Miner 29). Visiting families form when the man and woman, in many cases, cannot afford to rent or buy their own accommodation, so they live at different places, usually with other family members or close friends. The man or woman would visit each other in one of the accommodations. When children become involved, the children usually live with the mother, but the father still supports the child/children

if he is working (Miner 29). Additionally, Benjamin Schlesinger in “Family Patterns in Jamaica: Review and Commentary” in *Journal of Marriage and Family* offers another view on the visiting union, which he calls “The Disintegrate Family.” He views it from a Christian’s perspective, resulting in a negative tone; he claims that “no pattern of conduct [is] being established” (137) in the visiting relationship because many couples, men in particular, embrace a single lifestyle as they are often irresponsible; they usually have many children by several women (Schlesinger 137). These two perspectives on the visiting family pattern hold true in Jamaica, but due to economic restraints, men and women who love and care for each other remain in these unions.

Second, is the common-law relationship, also called concubinage. In this relationship, a man and a woman, though unmarried, share residence and share a sexual relationship (qtd. in Miner 29). Further, in adding to the description of common-law unions and restating Olive Senior’s perspective in *Working Miracles: Women’s Lives in the English-Speaking Caribbean*, Roopnarine et al. support the claim that common-law “relationships are seen as more binding because couples cohabit, and women assume the domestic role of tending to the home and family, whereas men are expected to provide economic support” (37). The disadvantage, however, of this type of union is that if a couple separates, the woman will not get any of the man’s assets (Roopnarine et al. 37). In a display of respecting the common-law union, former Prime Minister of Jamaica, the late Michael Manley, gave credence to these unions in 1976 when he made into law the Bastardy Act. The law gave impetus to children in these relationships as they gained right as heirs to their fathers’ property (Burke), and according to the Jamaica Information Service (JIS) in 2004, the

then Prime Minister, Portia Simpson-Miller, made into law the Rights of Spouses Act, which entitled common-law couples spousal benefits in separations.

Third and least practiced by the marginalized in Jamaica is the married family also known as the nuclear family (Miner 29). Jamaica is known as a Christian country, and in addition to the colonial trappings that deem visiting relationships and concubinage or common-law families' outcasts in society, this family pattern is rooted in religion and colonialist practices. Hence, "married men and women who are legally united and living under one roof" (Miner 29) are the most acceptable family pattern in Jamaica. While marriage is very costly because there is a need for an expensive ceremony, permanent home, and other ongoing expenses (Schlesinger 138), it is "still regarded as an ideal state and is a status symbol in the Jamaican lower class" (Schlesinger 138). Roberts and Sinclair also posit that marriage can be a result of the first two family patterns. He explains that as couples get more economically stable or older, they want to be viewed as respectable; therefore, "Jamaican families move from a visiting to a common-law to a marriage relationship as partners age, economic resources stabilize, and the desire for the respectability conferred by marriage becomes more important" (qtd. Miner 29).

Fourth is the unspoken same sex family structure that exists in Jamaica. Suzanne LaFont in "Very Straight Sex: The Development of Sexual Morés in Jamaica" explains that "[s]ame-sex sexual acts and heterosexual sodomy are illegal and publicly condemned in Jamaica," and "[t]olerance of sodomy is seen not [as] only morally reprehensible but also as un-Jamaican—tarnishing the national image. Anti-sodomism, on the other hand, is regarded as a virtue that Jamaicans willingly share." The same sex family is a covert act and

is never discussed openly in Jamaica when Mais penned his novels in the 1950s. “The contemporary sexual intolerance of Jamaicans has its roots in the ‘Christianization,’ of Jamaicans during slavery” (LaFont), which presents homosexuality as a colonial constraint. In “Representations of Homosexuality in Jamaica,” Christopher A.D. Charles writes about the reception of homosexuality in Jamaican literary works in the early years as having the same disdain as in Jamaican music where homosexuals, particularly males, face ridicule. Charles uses Claude McKay as an example; he states, “[t]he negative representation of homosexuality is evident in the works of the celebrated Jamaican poet and novelist Claude McKay. In his writing, McKay stigmatizes homosexuality as part of the sexual policing he derived from the shared cultural understanding of homosexuality in Jamaica” (14). Hence, it is surreptitious that Mais, a Rastafarian, who condemns “batty man” (Jamaican term for homosexuals) to hell to burn, presents a same-sex couple as functional to revolt against the legal marriage system long-established by the colonizers.

Marginalized Tenement Yard Families: *The Hills* and *Brother Man*

Mais presents families that fit into three major categories of the families discussed; however, the common-law family pattern supersedes. The consistency of these family patterns is almost analogous to the findings that the marriage unions are least represented, and the visiting unions are the most prominent; but for Mais, the most represented or practiced is the common-law union. Additionally, Mais uses a tenement yard setting in the slums of Kingston, Jamaica to put into perspective the common-law family and other family structures in *The Hills Were Joyful Together* and *Brother Man*. Colin Clarke reiterates Mais’s concept of the development of slums, ghettos, or tenement yards in

Kingston, Jamaica. “There were signs of the formation of a massive zone of social deprivation in Kingston, Jamaica-notably in West Kingston - dating from the West India Royal Commission Report of 1938-39 (1945) and the Denham Town re-development project of the late 1930s” (185). Clarke makes further reference to the development of ghettos that house tenement yards.

More precisely, the ghetto had its origins in the recognized slum areas of West Kingston of 1935 . . . in the housing areas in poor condition in 1947, the zones of third-class housing in 1952, the areas of poor housing in 1960, and the overcrowded areas of 1960. Clearly, the slum/ghetto is associated with deprivation and with high population density in relation to low social class and poor-quality (usually rented) accommodation. (185)

Mais tends to agree with Clark as Mais, throughout his protest novels, details the lives of Jamaicans in tenement yard. To clarify, the tenement yard denotes “[a] multi-family housing arrangement consisting of many substandard dwellings packed closely on a single plot of land. Dwellings often share resources such as running water and toilets” (“Tenement Yard”). Another name for tenement yard is “big yard” (“Big Yard”). It is as if the tenement or big yard contains an extended family by blood and/or association because there are so many shared amenities and sometimes even food is shared from a communal cooking often referred to as a “boat.” Accordingly, “[a] yard in Jamaica refers to the physical living space of a home(s). In some inner city and garrison communities, several families share one yard” (Blake 57). In addition, Whitehead notes that “[f]lexibility in West Indian domestic patterns promotes greater survival” (1), a concept that Mais further depicts throughout his novels.

It is, therefore, plausible that in objecting societal oppressive dictates in order to assert their distinctiveness, Black marginalized individuals use a more unconventional family life structure to affect both dissent and liberation.

Furthermore, because of the lopsided and biased structure of the society, including class status, extensive power, control of consumerist or capitalist groups, expected family constructs, among countless other systems, which the colonizers maintained, marginalized people formed common-law unions because they felt subservient and faced dire economic conditions in the midst of maintaining their sense of self. The greatest drive to form common-law families is due to economic lack. The tenement yard becomes home for the people in Mais's novels because they are economically deprived, and this type of abode is affordable for families. The tenement yard, therefore, becomes a symbol of revolt for oppressed families because it holds families together that would not normally find it feasible to live in single households.

The Hills: Constructing and Deconstructing Families in Protest

Mais's premier novel, *The Hills Were Joyful Together* is a major protest work. Mais uses his creative sensibilities to make his characters blatantly obstruct the status quo with their indifference towards the so-called moral family structure. Since society unquestionably accepts the marital union as the standard family construct, Mais convincingly sets out to disprove Schlesinger's view that "[m]arriage is still regarded as an ideal state and is a status symbol in Jamaican lower class" (138). Thus, Mais, through select characters, deliberately ensures that couples in *The Hills* illustrate a distinctive family structure—common-law union—that does not conform to societal acceptable

form. In fact, their lifestyle describes what is termed “shacking up” (where a man and a woman live together without being married) in many other countries. This same family pattern was formally called “Faithful Concubinage” and was “based on a patriarchal order, possessing no legal status, but well-established for at least three years” (Schlesinger 137). The common law family structure, therefore, devalues Mustapha’s claim that “[m]onogamous marriages are often regarded as the ‘norm’ in modern Industrial society” (129). Without compromising or considering the vices that eventually caused their demise, Mais structurally uses Ras and Cassie to epitomize the normalcy of the common-law union in order to ridicule society’s stance on marriage:

Inside his room, the bearded man, Ras, was stirring among the bundle of rags on the floor that was his bed. Cassie, his woman, had been up with the sun; she was roasting his breakfast now on a borrowed coal pot outside the door. Breakfast consisted of five fingers of plantain, peeled, and laid on the glowing charcoal embers around a chipped enamel pot of galloping bush tea; the pot had carried a fringed over in the days of its glory when it had come off the ironmonger’s shelf from among a row of prim-looking blue-banded enamelware; that was before the war. (11)

Clearly described in the foregoing narrative is a poor family; however, the “wife” gets up to make her “husband’s” breakfast in the morning, displaying the advent of a normal family situation without the insertion of a legal marriage, despite their humble abode and meager diet.

Additionally, Llewellyn G. Watson in “Patterns of Black Protest in Jamaica: The Case of the Ras-Tafarians” argues that Rastafarians “view Christianity as nothing more than an arm of white racism” (331). This view that is held by Rastafarians fuels their opposition of traditional marriages since Christianity sanctions legal marriages. In addition, because of the dominant patriarchal structure in common-law unions, the Rastafarian community, based on Brother Man and Minette’s union, respects the common-law family pattern. Moreover, the article, “Race and Women in Rastafari” confirms how the common-law Rastafarian structure adds value to their accepted way of living. The women in Rastafari are normally referred to as queens. Many of the Rastafarian marriages are informal (common-law). Even though things are changing, originally a woman’s role in the Rastafarian sect is regulated to housekeeping, childrearing and to pleasing her King. A Rastafarian woman is a queen and must keep different standards than the women in “Babylonial” society or Western culture. Women play a secondary role in the sect and are to stand by their King (n.p.).

It is, therefore, understandable that Mais illustrates through Ras and Cassie Watson’s views; Ras takes Cassie as his “queen” because there are no legal considerations in choosing a wife, and although Cassie does not call Ras “king,” the name Ras literally means king, leader, or head. To impose on the Rastafarians’ philosophy, the name Ras is sacred to them as it is considered as a title in Ethiopia, and the name is synonymous to emperor, king, or chief (Cardillo), so Mais structurally delineates the idea of Ras (king) taking onto himself a woman (queen) to form a stable union to function in the same ways that legal marriages do. To add a new trajectory, Maureen Rowe in “The Woman in Rastafari” notes a perspective

from Nettleford and Kitzinger: “Rastafari males do not consider females to be integral to the movement . . . leadership, status, prophecy, and healing rests with the male. . . Rastafari social structure is male dominated” (qtd. in Rowe 13). Hence, Rastafarian women in common-law unions are aware of the protocol or culture of their union but find the assumption that legal “[m]ariage is expected to bring the woman a change of life and transform her ‘from a common woman to a lady’” (qtd in Schlesinger 138) as distasteful and offensive.

While Mais supports couples who live as “man and wife,” to exert normalcy in their union, despite societal contempt, he does not support the idea of frivolous, inconsequential common-law unions. Therefore, to strengthen his rejection of the idea that Blacks were animals and not humans during slavery, a notion that was normalized by the colonizers who accepted polygamy among the slaves, Mais highlights the zoological application of polygamy where animals, not humans, have several mates, a concept he applies to oppressed humans in *The Hills* to counteract the audacity of the slave masters. Goodie’s daughter, Ditty is polygamous; she has sex with her mother’s common-law husband—her stepfather—Puss-Jook, claiming that he is not her father (164). Since she is polygamous, Ditty does not want to settle with one man in a union, so she also has sexual relationships with Manny and his friend Wilfie. Mais deliberately ascribes names to her sex partners to symbolize the sexual overtone that exposes animal-like promiscuity. In the Jamaican context, nicknames or pet names—informal names describe a person’s behavior; hence, the name Puss-Jook connotes a man who is obsessed with the thrill that a vagina gives. The name Manny, a subset of an

adult “man,” suggests youthful and naive tendencies with a fixation on personal penis power, and Wilfie mirrors a man who is “wild” and confused but will have sex with any woman who is willing to be with him. While these males have names that boost their sexual prowess, the name Ditty suggests a seemingly innocent girl who is sexually appealing; Mais characterizes Ditty as manipulating her sexual prowess; hence, he illustrates how she uses her feminine wiles to entrap men. However, to reject polygamy as acceptable animalistic human behavior, Mais shows the consequences by focusing on a common-law union since all three cohabit: Ditty, Goodie, and Puss-Jook. Thus, he effectively sanctions Goodie’s stance on executing discipline once she becomes aware of her “husband” and daughter’s sexual affiliation:

Lawd God! Do! Do! Ditty begged. . . . Ditty screamed again, and it went up high, and tailed off to a low moan. Then there was the sound of a dish shattering against the wall, and suddenly the door opened, and Puss-Jook staggered out. His hands were up to his face, and his face was bleeding, and there was bright blood all down his merino front, and he was dressed only in his merino and drawers. (163)

Although Mais may concur with Clark that “concubinage is an institution for the poor” (qtd in Schilesinger 139), he still affixes importance and sanctity to common-law unions. Thus, he permits Goodie to shame her daughter, whom she feels has diminished, by her frivolous conduct, the seriousness and validity of the common-law creed, since Puss-Jook and Goodie are a common-law couple. Mais magnifies the consequences of Ditty’s immoral conduct as her mother beats her until “what she had on was dragged up about clear up to

her waist, and Goodie was standing over her beating her unmercifully with something that looked like a broken bed lathe. Ditty dragged herself to the doorstep and tumbled out into the yard. She lay there on her belly, moaning” (162). Though brutal, since there are no set consequences or penalties imposed for infidelity in a common-law union, Mais uses Ditty and her casual sexual encounters to illustrate his disgust at the tarnishing of what should be a sacred institution—the common-law family—which is meant to upset society’s adamancy on legal marriages. Ditty’s grossly immoral behavior, therefore, serves to explain that the common-law union is not merely for sexual pleasure; instead, it is valuable and garners respect based on the same principles that a legally binding union signifies.

To further highlight the significance of the common-law union, and that deviation from its protocol is unacceptable, Mais inserts Zephyr, who “did most of her business at night” (10) and is not associated with any family structure. When Lennie, who “was always plaguing her” (11), sees her body exposed through a window, he lusts after her and gives her all of his wages, a daring way to initiate sex with her (11). Mais, however, causes Lennie to repulse her, despite her profession. Zephyr assures herself that “she didn’t want to sleep with Lennie . . . just couldn’t see herself doing it” (11). Hence, Zephyr declines both his money and his sexual advances since, as evidenced by Ditty’s escapades, physical contact that occurs only for sexual gain instead of advancing the moral code of love, faithfulness, and commitment, grounds on which the common-law union, like the marital union, is sanctioned is disallowed. Although Mais does not give details of Zephyr’s craft,

he deliberately mentions her lifestyle to indicate that while relationships are outside of a committed structure, they are not ideal, preferred, or acceptable. Thus, Mais makes a strong case against casual sexual relationships; instead, he supports a non- legally binding family structure where positive regard for participating individuals is highly considered even if economic constraints do not afford them legal status. Mais meticulously garners attention and affixes serious status to common-law unions.

Furthermore, Mais positions Surjue and Rema to exemplify the secure and committed relationship that forms a major part of a common-law family structure; Mais practically aligns the common-law union with the colonial legal union (marriage). The common-law union was a response to slaves who wanted a family but could not have a legal union because the law did not permit slave marriages (Hazle 191). According to Bhabha, “colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (“Of Mimicry” 266). The common law union is a hybrid form of marriage, which mimics the legal union. For the slaves and oppressed Caribbean peoples, this relationship has the same commitment ascribed to the legally binding marriage. Therefore, when Ditty, already proven to be a loose young woman who is “crazy for a man” (28), taunts Surjue, although she knows he is in a committed common-law relationship, by coming towards him, “smiling like that a little sullen, a little saucy, wetting her lips slightly with the red tip of her tongue, her eyes dewy, the tight tits jerking under her dress, the tight flesh on her hips jerking the same under her short dress making him think of a bitch-dog in heat” (27), Mais, understanding the solemnity of the common-law union, uses Surjue’s disdain and rejection of Ditty to make a salient point.

Mais constructs Surjue to represent an exemplary product of the common-law culture, so Surjue effortlessly rejects Ditty's advances, and in a conversation with Fritters, his partner in crime, Surjue plainly states that she is "not for me . . . I hate a woman who starts chucking it in my face" (28). So concerned is Surjue about his reputation and perhaps that Rema, his "wife," would be terribly disappointed if he were to be unfaithful with Ditty that he further expresses to Fritters, "a gal like that wouldn't care if the world was to know you was stroppin' her. No sir, not for me" (28).

Evidently, Surjue is committed to "Rema, a pretty sambo girl" (29). Their close connection is observed when she "stood in the room in panties and brassiere and decided it was too hot to put on anymore clothes; she sat down on the side of the big wooden bed, kicked off her shoes, and wriggled in beside Surjue who sprawled in the middle" (29). Furthermore, Surjue assures Rema that he is committed to her when light-heartedly she responds to his going out, telling him, "I don't mind so long as you're not going to give it to some woman" (30). Surjue, knowing that he is in a secure relationship tells his "wife," "Awe, honey, you know me better'n that" (30). Surjue, though not legally joined to Rema, understands the importance of loyalty and dedication, and in addition to respecting his union, he gambles with the hope of winning big to secure their financial future (29). Mais, therefore, artfully allows Surjue to amplify the seriousness and validity of the common-law union.

Moreover, in disavowing the ideal colonial union, Mais juxtaposes the common-law union and the legal married union by portraying Rema's commitment to Surjue as she tries to meet all his needs, which is the same commitment that a legally married woman would display. This becomes apparent when Rema shows deep consideration and care for Surjue,

who asks her one evening: “You got any money for cigarettes?” She responds, “I got a pack of cigarettes in my bag for you” (29). Additionally, Rema continues with her devotion to Surjue, making sure even his recreational needs are met, so she tells him, “I’ll bring you home some of that shag tomorrow” (30), and that “I’ve got some change in my purse, we could go to a movie tonight” (30). Surjue kindly declines this offer, stating that he has other plans (30). Rema creates the atmosphere for them to enjoy life even if she has to pay for their enjoyment. Her commitment shows that she is able to treat Surjue like a “married” husband even with the economic constraints that society has placed on their lives.

Rema also helps Surjue financially as she works, and he is unemployed; however, Surjue does not feel emasculated because he tries to meet some of the financial needs by gambling. She even helps with his financial needs. When he asks, “[y]ou have any change in your purse could lend me a dollar?” Rema cordially responds, “I got the change, an’ you can have it” (29). The bond that this pair shares in their common-law union is striking. Rema is aware of the economic disadvantage that men in the slums face, and the criminal stereotypes attributed to them, so she warns him about his company whom she suspects is engaged in illicit activities. Rema tries to protect Surjue from unethical behaviors, and she is instinctively uncomfortable because of Surjue and Flitters’s association. Rema carefully and respectfully shares her concern: “I don’t ever aim to meddle in your business honey, but I’d be careful of that bosom friend of yours, Flitters, if I was you” (30). Surjue reassures her that he is aware of Flitters’s way of operating and that all would be well (30), suggesting the high level of understanding, love, communication, and trust that exist

between them. Through their non-traditional union, Mais allows Surjue and Rema to reject the European form of marriage; he effectively characterizes this couple to show an unprecedented family structure, though not endorsed by society.

Although poor judgment coupled with bad influence from the underhanded Fritters leads to Surjue's incarceration then death in prison, and Rema becoming psychotic after his imprisonment and eventually setting herself ablaze, their demise does not negate the idea that they disproved the colonial mind-set, which suggests that being legally married is the only respectable union. In short, Surjue and Rema's union speak to the issue of systematic revolt and personal affirmation. Moreover, Mais augments their relationship territory; they did not succumb to the system by way of entering into a legal union; instead, he illustrates how they live and function in a common-law union to confirm its value, thus, discounting the colonial orchestrated marriage principle.

Like Surjue and Rema, Mais uses Euphemia and Shag—another common-law couple—to further present his opposition to legal marriages. Mais does not present common-law unions as odd because even married unions have problems that lead to divorce or separation because of unfaithfulness and other problems (Lampard 325). In other words, like legally married couples have major conflicts, Euphemia and Shag in their common-law union are no exception. In a moment of intense emotion leading to tears, Euphemia tells Zephyr, “I hate him” (88), and she continues to reveal her disdain for Shag: “Yes, I hate him. God How I hate him. I lay in the bed beside him an' I make myself into a piece of board, hatin' him to touch me, wantin' to scream. An' he doesn't know” (88). In the colonial context, people married for different reasons; therefore, it is normal for a woman to commit to a

man because he makes her financially stable (Lampard 324). Hence, despite Euphemia's revelations to Zephyr about hating Shag, she, however, confesses that [h]e's so gentle, kind, and generous to me. He would give me anything I want" (88) and Zephyr tells her, "he loves you, that's what" (88). Interestingly, Mais illustrates how Euphemia is concerned for Bajun, her man on the side, not Shag, her common-law husband. Euphemia's display of deep affection for Bajun makes Zephyr realize that Euphemia takes money from Shag to give Bajun (88) who has "been out of work a long time" (88). Unfaithfulness is not confined to common-law unions; even on the plantations, slave masters were unfaithful to their legal wives, since they slept with slave women. Jack Alexander in "The Role of the Male in the Middle-Class Jamaican Family: A Comparative Perspective" notes,

while monogamous marriage was and is a central indicator of European civilization, Europeans in Jamaica were notorious for engaging in non-legal unions with non-whites. So that at the same time that unfaithfulness came to symbolize the absence of European values [,] it came to symbolize the presence of European behavior. (386)

Generally, the law deals with the consequences of unfaithfulness in legal marriages (Larson 95-96); however, in common-law marriages, the faithful partner metes out punishment to the unfaithful member of the union. Therefore, after Bedosa, "an incorrigible gossip" (31), tells Shag about Euphemia and Bajun's illicit relationship,

Shag returned home unexpectedly early that afternoon and went straight to his room. There he found Bajun Man stripped down to his BVD's lying stretched out in his bed, and Euphemia in her dressing gown alone was sitting on the stool in front of

the dressing table applying perfume to her body, and the front of the dressing gown was open and Bajun could see her reflection clearly in the big round mirror from where he was lying across the bed. (126)

Euphemia and Shag eventually separate; their union, fraught with mistrust and misunderstanding, leads, like Surjue and Rema's, to an undesirable end. Shag commits suicide after he murders Euphemia (265-66), applying jungle justice. "Jungle justice, as the name suggests, is a radical local version of law and order. Although perceived as fair by residents, it invariably involves violent measures of discipline and punishment" (Blake 67). Hence, Mais's intent in this instance could be to prove that all unions have problems, particularly if the commitment between man and woman is not real. Mais reveals Euphemia's display of deep affection for Bajun to sanction her superficial ties to Shag; Euphemia confirms to Zephyr that she uses Shag's money to support Bajun (88). Mais, then, exposes how poverty perpetuates common-law unions, and since there is no punishment by law for infidelity in common-law unions, like all other crimes, jungle justice is meted out by individuals who take the law into their hands, which is a common practice in tenement yards in Jamaica. Additionally, Mais revolts against the non-status of common-law marriages because the parties involved have no recourse in using the law of the land.

Moreover, he presents some unfaithful Black women instead of Black men as promiscuous. It might be that Mais positions these women to use their bodies to revolt against patriarchal rule, a practice since colonial times. Despite women revolting with their bodies, Mais depicts the unfairness of the treatment of women when they make choices in a

union because he projects the common-law union as a binding relationship much like a legal marriage. Regardless of his objection to society favoring legal marital unions, Mais discusses the relationship of one legally married couple, Charlotta and Bedosa, their son, Manny, and daughter, Tansy—members of a nuclear family. Mais explores this family structure to confirm the ridiculous notion that legal marriage is the standard for a proper family structure, especially in deprived communities in Jamaica. The nuclear family, the supposed ideal family structure, should offer support and stability since both parents cohabit with their children, and they have garnered society's approval. However, despite the presence of a father figure, Manny, at seventeen years old, is out of control with an insatiable sex drive and is ignorant to the facts of life. He refers to his penis size as "a real mansize dose" (19) and that he has "the real man-sick" (20) as his need for sex arises, since he does not understand how his body naturally functions. Manny's friend, Wilfie tells him, "You better tell your pappy. He'll tell you what to do" (20). Manny responds by telling Wilfie, "[d]on't need nobody tell me what to do" (20). Additionally, Manny drops out of school, and to assert his manhood, refers to himself as "a big man" (14), bragging that "[i]'m going by myself alone down the gully . . .to meet that half-Chinese gal, Squiz-Eye" (15). It is assumable that Manny is pepping himself for "donship" in the community with his overt sexual practices, a major characteristic of dons (Blake 57). To show "donship also," Manny tries to demonstrate "physical violence as a marker of his hegemonic position" (Blake 57), but in exerting power, Manny disrespects Euphemia, his neighbor, because he sees his father disrespecting his

mother, but Euphemia, with whom he had a physical altercation, beats him (34-35). Even though Manny is in a legal family unit, his family, particularly his father, does not teach him how to be a responsible young man, so the street schools him because “[o]n the streets and in the ‘yards’ of Jamaican garrisons young boys and men learn social codes of bravado and machismo” (Blake 57).

Manny does not see his father, Bedosa, as a man that he can emulate. Not only does Manny belittle women and treat them as sexual objects, he is also inconsiderate of his younger sister who complains to their mother that “[l]ast week he put a lizard down my back” (16). Frustrated with Manny’s behavior, Tansy tells their mother, “[y]ou ought to talk to him good, Ma. He don’t listen to no one, ‘ceptin’ you” (16). Tansy’s observations affirm the importance of structure and consequences within a family. A father is present in their household, but Manny only obeys his mother. This type of situation makes it challenging for order and discipline to take place because his father does not assert his role as head of the household. Hence, there seems to be a haphazard shift in roles, resulting in dire contradictions based on what this family structure projects and what it actually manifests. According to Hazle, male input is essential in how young males are raised in tenements in Jamaica because of the need for economic stability, supportive relationships, and positive father influence, which affect parenting (200).

Furthermore, Hazle points out the “struggle for families to stay together” (200) and that if the difficulties of their interpersonal relations do not fragment a family, the outside relationship may do so” (200). Mais’s characterization of Bedosa confirms Hazle’s opinion because Bedosa is a non-functional father and husband. Alexander also posits, “black, lower-

class male as husband and father is marginal to the family” (369). When Bedosa comes home from work, he nags his wife about being hungry without acknowledging her as his wife. He belittles the role of his wife to the point where “[h]is irritability showed not so much in what he said as in the nagging quality of his voice because his irritation with Charlotta was deep down and subconscious, and his way of getting back at everyone and everything in the world for his lack of manliness was to take it out of Charlotta” (30). It appears as though Bedosa because of his insufficiencies is preoccupied with himself and does not make his wife or family a priority, confirming that “male irresponsibility is revealed in the image of the father” (Alexander 375). Mais further places Bedosa’s lack into perspective as he projects his inadequacies on his wife, bullying her because he failed to control his son or anyone else; hence, Mais explains, “Papa Bedosa was a timid man and he made up for it in two ways: bullying Charlotta and making life miserable for her was one” (31). Mais also ascribes Bedosa as having dominant stereotypical female traits as an “incorrigible gossip” and a coward, which further emasculates him. He is described as having “a sneaking under-hand way he went about poisoning anybody’s mind he could about everybody else” (30-31) and “a mean tongue and the ferocity of a rat who would run away every time rather than stand and fight” (31-2). Additionally, Mais reveals that Charlotta “pretended not to see, not even when it became so glaringly obvious in relation to Manny, their son; for Papa Bedosa was afraid of Manny, who flaunted his authority, and knowing himself the stronger, despised him and laughed at him to his face” (31). It becomes evident that Bedosa is oblivious to his role as the patriarch in his family; Mais consciously assigns him to his anima that more conforms to

that of a female who does not exhibit or perhaps does not inhabit care, decency, and responsibility. Mais consciously portrays Bedosa as effeminate to expose how Jamaicans, especially inner-city communities, detest unmanly behaviors. Hence, Alexander's report on the derogatory term "mampala" (373) applies to Bedosa. "'Mampala' means 'a man deficient or aberrant in his masculinity. . . . As a term of insult to a man, this is among the most violent'" (Alexander 373).

Although the nuclear family unit members should undertake assigned duties and responsibilities as the model family, this family appears to be imbalanced in terms of the lack of responsibilities shown by the males who seem to be emasculated, while the females assume diverse roles. Perhaps Mais is satirizing the roles of the males in this family structure, since the colonial nuclear family affords males the power to control the other members of the family because men are regarded as physically and intellectually powerful. Hence, the roles of males are artificial since their actions do not meet their expected behaviors. Thus, Manny and Bedosa's duties and responsibilities come into question. Mais depicts Tansy with "a great big axe in her hand" (85), a task which the patriarch should be performing. Tansy attempts "to split some firewood" (85); however, "[t]he axe was too heavy for her" (85). Mais uses Tansy to reveal a greater truth; while she is struggling with male-related tasks, her womanizer brother, Manny, was "at the other side of the yard chopping words with Ditty" (85). Mais presents her as overworked, allowing Tansy to realize that her brother does not regard her because she is a woman. Tansy is devastated, becomes emotional and eventually cries. Tansy's crying, however, could be twofold: out of self-pity and out of pity for her brother who was

becoming a useless man in society despite being raised in the colonial accepted family structure.

Involuntarily, Tansy functions like the mother in the family, but she has no power because she is a child, and as the matriarch of the family, her mother does not affirm her. While, Miner attributes the female role in the family as a position that gives a voice and agency, she does not hide the negative overtone, where women who head households fall into financial problems in the absence of men (31), so they tend to act less assertive. Tansy bears adult responsibilities instead of getting the opportunity to enjoy and gain the benefits from attending school, which would make her develop into an optimally rounded adult. Instead,

Tansy was out in the yard by the cistern under the standpipe washing clothes, and she ought to have been at school, only her mother, Charlotta, was always making her stop home to help her, and it turned out that almost every week Tansy, thirteen, and making the third grade already had to wash for a family of four. (14)

Mais shows the disparity between males and females in a patriarchal society. Manny who is almost seventeen should get a good education even though he drops out of school, but his sister stops from school to learn how to take care of a family.

Tansy lacks the kind of support that she needs from her nuclear family; however, Mais, in affirming the common-law union as an effective family unit, reveals how Tansy gets support from by Rema who is in a common-law family structure. Rema “let her arms rest across the girl’s shoulder” (45) and “Tansy’s heart glowed with the warmth of love under that touch” (45). This motherly touch makes Tansy feel the love of a mother,

which she lacks. Mais articulates through Tansy that the emphasis that society places on the nuclear family structure is superficial, particularly since it does not meet the needs of its members. In a tone that elicits sympathy, Mais unfolds the deep-seated emotions of Tansy after Rema comforts her.

Nobody had ever made her feel like that before. . . .She had come to regard such a thing as warmth between people as something suspect. In her home, the meaning of love was never apparent. She knew such things as the need for security in the terms of a bed to sleep on, a roof over your head, a full belly, and knew that you had to do what you were told in order to secure these things, but there was always that underlying fear that at any time these things may be withdrawn, almost without notice. And with it came the meaning and knowledge of fear. (45)

Tansy's reflection discloses the fulfilling of Maslow's two lower tier needs—physiological and safety—but the absence of “love and belonging” (“Maslow”), the next tier, which is important to her. Unfortunately, this need is not met in this nuclear family, and additionally, all the needs that are met can be “withdrawn” (Mais 45) at any given time, which is similar to the uncertainty in a common-law union. Structural functional family theory addresses the functions of the family “as a system within the larger social system” (Miner 27). Miner gives five functions: “(1) the affective function that meets the psychological needs of each family member, (2) the socialization of children function, (3) the reproductive function, (4) the economic function, and (5) the health care function” (28). Since these functions are absent or not adequately met in

Tansy's nuclear family, Mais equalizes the instability in both the legal and common-law unions.

Additionally, Mais's revelation of the dichotomy of this family speaks to the absence of love, respect, and affirmation from Bedosa as head of the family. Charlotta's role is reduced; hence, it becomes difficult for her to assume fully her role as mother to her children, but she still caters to Bedosa. Thus, to comfort herself in her painful nuclear family setting, "Charlotta turned to religion and became bigoted and narrow-minded, the springs of her being that had flowed with love dried up, so that she was unjust and shrewish" (31). Charlotta chooses to mimic and conform to a legal marriage, but she projects abnormality in this family structure, proving that the nuclear family is not foolproof. Therefore, Bedosa and Charlotta's actions negatively affect their children. Manny patterns his father's selfish, naïve, and unkind manner, and Tansy, unappreciated, over worked appears to be emotionally fragile.

Brother Man: Constructing and Deconstructing Families in Protest

In subverting colonial family stereotypes that are levied upon the oppressed, Brother Man, a cobbler, ekes out a living from repairing shoes in a tenement yard that accommodates his family and trade, which allows him to be independent. When Mais first introduces Brother Man in the novel, he is at his craft. "Brother Man sat at his cobbler's bench before the open window looking out upon the lane . . . He was putting heels to a pair of slippers, and Minette sat on a lower stool, at his feet, blackening a pair of shoes" (22). As a sole proprietor, Brother Man has to get help from the other member of his household, Minette, in order to sustain

them economically. Hence, although, Brother Man and Minette are not married, they are a family in the same household. Jean Creary in “A Prophet Armed” states that there are only “a few hopeless jobs for a few hopeless people” (52), so the marginalized works under poor conditions or tirelessly for themselves. Ultimately, living in oppressed areas becomes a way of life, which includes underdeveloped and deplorable physical dwellings with limited space and amenities. Although persistent poverty, stemming from deliberate lack of opportunities since colonization, forces them to live in these areas, Brother Man and Minette find a way to survive in an unsanctioned family union—the common-law union. This hybrid family type, despite its negative trappings in the colonial world, has been a source of protest as it maintains a union that allows two people to live together even if they do not have the economic powers to get married legally. The common-law family shares all the rights of a nuclear family except the colonial legal bindings after separation. In “Violence and Patriarchy: Male Domination in Roger Mais’s “Brother Man,” Kwane S. N. Dawes claims that “[t]he community of Brother Man is characterized by constant power games played out between men and women. The reader can easily regard Mais’s portrayal of the ghetto community as a direct reflection of the society that existed in Jamaica during the 1940s and 1950s” (31), which gives credibility to the notion that this family structure protests colonial dictates.

Additionally, as a Rastafarian, Brother Man does not believe in colonial marriages, so the common-law union is used to rebel against colonial norms. Rastafarians see the rules of the church as part of the “Babylon” system, which uses laws to oppress Blacks. One such law

is the legal colonial marriage law, which according to James Thomas Hammock in *Marriage Law of England: A Practical Treatise on the Legal Incidents Connected with the law of the Constitution of the Matrimonial Contract*, the Jamaican Marriage law dates back to 1880 and should be performed by a minister of religion in the presence of two witnesses after which a certificate is issued. Although modified since Jamaica's independence, the principle of one man to one woman remains the same (406). Rastafarians subscribe to the teachings of the Old Testament in *The Holy Bible*, which they interpret in practical ways; therefore, the declaration in Genesis 18: 24, "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" is used to justify why they should not have a legally binding marriage. According to the Rasta's philosophy, *The Holy Bible* does not mention marriage; hence, a man (male) should choose a woman and call her his wife without any formal or legal act as required by the state.

In further illustrating how the poor does not align with societal dictates, Mais focuses on the, though controversial, "unrighteous" aspect of the "righteous" character, Brother Man; he does this in order to expand and give credence to the argument that the poor employs undermining tactics to devalue societal structure for family life, which serves the oppressed best interest. Brother Man takes Minette under his care when he rescues her off the street where she is prostituting, but he does not immediately take her as his common-law wife because he is principled. Mais, in an attempt to make the reader aware of Minette's situation, describes their initial encounter.

He had rescued her, starving, off the street. She had run away from the country to come to Kingston, and what had happened to thousands of girls before, had

happened to her. She was hungry and homeless, a girl of seventeen, without hope and without illusions, and yet he had found her like that. She had come up to him in a crowd by South Parade, had begged him to take her home with him, as she had done to other strange men so many times before. Some have treated her good, others not so good. But this one was different. He seemed not to understand what it was all about, that she was soliciting him. (31-2)

Brother Man takes Minette home after referring to her as ‘me daughter’ (my daughter) then he asks her if she is hungry and wants somewhere to sleep (32). It is, however, hypocritical that Brother Man, a holy and upright man, deceives the people by lying when he allows Minette to pose as his niece. Yet, it is understandable because if he did not create this relationship, the people would assume that he was having an intimate relationship with an underage girl, and as a Rastaman, this could mean imprisonment as Rastas were targeted as wrong doers. Mais uses Brother Man to show restraint even when he had the opportunity to have sex with Minette which subverts the colonial belief that Black men have no control over their sexuality. Brother Man undermines this stereotype of the Black man’s sexuality being uncontrollable as described by the colonialists’ belief as Fanon states, “one is no longer aware of the [Black man] but only of a penis; the [Black man] is eclipsed. He is turned into a penis” (*Black* 170). In protesting this stereotype, Brother Man’s sexual relationship does not start with Minette until she becomes nineteen years old, where she considers herself a woman because “[s]he didn’t feel young; at nineteen she knew herself a woman in all respects” (32). Minette even wants to become Brother Man’s mistress, a Jamaican term of endearment for a common-law wife, “as she shared his house” (32), suggesting that they were already a family. Minette

also refers to the common-law family when she says, “men and women live like that all over the place in the country and city alike” (32). In offering a perspective as an evangelical, Hazle’s moralistic observation can be used to set the precedence for Mais’s literary mandate; Hazle claims that “[w]hen the laws eventually made marriage accessible, couples who shared common-law unions were pressured by the missionaries to legalize their unions” (192). Hazle continues, however, to make relevant the rebellion of the underserved and enhances Mais’s commitment and passion to protest colonial ideals:

In spite of this and various initiatives in Jamaica since slavery to encourage legal marriage, the prevalence of non-legal unions has persisted down to the present time among the largely African-Jamaican working class. It seems evident; therefore, that union patterns, matrifocality, marginal paternal involvement and extended family households seen in Jamaica today could be a function of a history of slavery. (192)

It is becomes obvious that survival by any means necessary drives the oppressed; hence, they employ a tactical mode—an alternate approach contrary to what society projects on to them in order to survive a cruel and inhumane system.

It is imperative to emphasize that marginalized people understand that they must persist, so they display seeming abnormal actions in a way that parallels the privilege sect’s normal order of business. However, the underprivileged deliberately mocks and discounts the impractical societal supposed rules for their life and lifestyle, which they view as theoretical since they do not dignify the rules by applying them to their lives. Thus, when Minette becomes of age, as a Rastaman, Brother Man takes her as his “queen” as they

start to have sexual encounters. Mais shows this relationship as positive because even when Brother Man is falsely accused of a crime, Minette is still devoted to him. Therefore, when he is mobbed and beaten because he is falsely accused of stabbing a boy to death along with stabbing and raping a girl (169-7), Minette rescues him and helps to clean up his wounds (189). She also tells Brother Man that he should “go away” and “tek me with you” (188) as she feels that the people would harm him again (188). Rastas were targeted everywhere in Jamaica, so after Brother Man was accused, it was felt that “all bearded men should be placed behind barbed wire. They should be publicly washed (?) and shaved! They should be banished to Africa. They should be sterilized. They should publicly flogged. . . . They were in fact potential rapists and murders all” (173). While this family relationship is not normal in the colonizers’ view, Mais presents it as workable and functional with great qualities.

Hence, Dawes concludes:

The relationship between Minette and Brother Man quite naturally falls into the category of the good or positive relationship. In many ways [,] it is treated as creative and productive and it is characterized by devotion and kindness. It is relatively free of tension and conflict (until it is eroded by evil forces and desires) and while, like all the good in this novel, it is threatened by the evil element, ultimately, this good sector triumphs. (“Violence” 23)

The underclass structurally rewrites society’s rules as seen in *Brother Man*, which confirms Mais’s well thought out plan and alludes to Dawes’s perspective.

In principle, the determination and mindset of the marginalized as they execute their day-to-day activities in the fight against colonial oppressive values reconstruct societal rules

and apply them to reflect their realities. Thus, the physical edifices and living patterns of the outcasts as seen in how Brother Man constructs his family are direct and deliberate affirmation mechanisms and simultaneous protest forms, which reflect a decolonized group's adaptation, being cognizant of the various forms of systematic oppressions. Evidently, since the residue of slavery still resides in the minds of the marginalized, a protest author like Mais is fueled to fight for parity, showing disdain and revolt; therefore, the seeming easy-going nature that Mais characterizes Brother Man to display is not to be downplayed. Brother Man, with his "Peace and Love" (161) mantra, has a two-fold agenda. Mais creates a Brother Man number two character (the unrighteous), in this instance, to be the foil of the initially created Brother Man number one (the righteous). To expand, when Brother Man takes Minette into his home and calls her "daughter," his sincerity can become questionable—not full altruism. As a man, Brother Man intends eventually to make her his woman and queen, not a legal wife, as society would hope. With his plan of action to take effect in the offing, Mais positions Brother Man to deliver his initial and way-paving mandate: gaining the trust and respect of the populace; hence, he is humble, docile, trust worthy—Christ like—unsuspecting before his more crucial mandate: belittling society's moral view on marriage is subtly but deliberately introduced.

In addition, in an effort to presage what was to happen between Brother Man and Minette, Mais uses Papacita, Girlie's live in love, who has a romantic interest in Minette, to hint at Brother Man's mindset. In a moment of frustration when Papacita, as a man, recognizes Brother Man's game plan he disturbingly, rhetorically asks, "What the hell to do to get her out the clutches of that preacher? Bra' Man. . .[.]What did he think he was getting'

away with, anyway” (98)? Papacita, a man, who unlike Brother Man, only has a momentary sexual interest in Minette further remarks: “Of course Minette was his girl, his sweetheart. Don’t trust those bearded fellows. They were all the same. Bunch of Ras Tafariites. . . . Imposter that’s what he was” (98). Papacita realizes that like him, Brother Man has a hidden agenda and that ultimately, although Brother Man projects innocence, eventually the truth about his relationship with Minette would become evident. Moreover, significant to Brother Man’s plan for Minette is that he, before his common-law relationship with her, he had previous common-law relationship.

He told her the story of the ‘other woman’ told it simple, directly, without laying particular stress on any single point, as though he wished her to judge all of the issue involved without help or direction from him. He met her coming from the Coronation market one day, and he helped her carry her load. He took her as far as the bus stop, and waited with her until her bus came. He had nothing special to do [,] so he got on the bus with her, and that was how they became acquainted. Velta, that was her name, made him see things different from the start, made him grow up almost overnight, made him want to take his place in the world as a man. They were friends from the very first, and it seemed natural that they should become lovers. They went to live together in a little room in a tenement, and they were happy for months. (158)

Mais uses Brother Man to normalize the idea of non-legal unions—common-law relationships, by Brother Man recounting his life with Velta. This narrative that Brother Man offers also

serves to minimize the idea of the relevance of a legal union, which supports the idea that the poor do not necessarily need to subscribe to the tenets of religious Christian dogmas, as taught by the colonizers and directly emphasizes the decency and importance of a marital union. Mais also highlights how Brother Man detail the fact that he and Velta parted; there were no legal ramifications as they were not legally bonded, resulting in him being free to enter into another relationship without legal constraints. Again, the non-subscription to a legal union proves how the marginalized challenges the society's rule for governance in their personal life and conduct.

The expectation for males to control or dominate families in Jamaican households or the principle of a male playing the lead role in the family stems mainly from a colonial mind-set, which heavily hinges on a Biblical principle. Thus, Mais's portrayal of Jesmina's role as head of the family is critical and necessitates mention because Mais uses the extended family pattern where women are usually the head to undermine the colonial patriarchal system. Additionally, Mais places Cordelia a single mother, in a non-traditional family structure—the extended family, with her sister Jesmina as the head of the household to illustrate that a woman does not necessarily have to depend on a man for help. According to Mustapha, “the extended family includes additional generations and relations . . . who share a common household It provides financial and emotional support” (129-130). In order to discount the system's traditional family construct by proving that a non-traditional family structure can be equally effective, Mais offers an extended family structure that confirms that although a father figure is not present in a family with a child involved, women can head households. “The predominance and

persistence of woman headed households in the Caribbean have been explained as (1) a vestige of African culture and the slavery system, (2) the result of poverty and migration patterns, (3) an effect of the marginalization of men, and/or (4) the social and economic system” (Miner 30). The extended family structure is prominent in Jamaica as reflected with Cordelia and her son, Tad, and Jesmina, her sister. While many men within a traditional family setting are incapable of taking care of their family, “Jesmina was comparatively well-off; she was a dressmaker, and although she frequently had to wait for her money to come in, the neighbours always brought her work” (124), so she is financially capable of taking care of Cordelia and Tad. The chorus of people in the lane (8) alludes to Cordelia’s situation. Hence, Cordelia, also called Cody, becomes a part of their chant: “Cody’s man get tek-up fo’ Ganga” and “Po’ Cordy one fe mind de pickney” (8). Cordelia is left to take care of Cody’s son, Tad whose father is, who is incarcerated for “[s]ix years for peddling ganja” (17), Jesmina’s responsibility for parenting Tad is demanding.

Jesmina sat rocking in a little steam-bent rocking chair with the baby [Tad] on her knee. With one hand [,] she held his head down against her, and with the other she held a piece of folded newspaper which she used as a fan to keep the flies away. When he stirred against her body she pressed his head down again, whispered, ‘Hush! Baby fo to sleep.’ But he didn’t want to go to sleep, he wanted to wriggle off her lap to the floor. So at last she set him down, and gave him the folded newspaper to play with, and she went across to the bed to take a quick look at Cordelia. She was asleep. (36-37)

Furthermore, she takes care of her sister, Cordelia, who eventually goes “out of her mind”

(125). As would be expected from the head of a family, Jesmina oversees the household, and when Cordelia becomes ill, she reassures her when she enquires about Tad the he is “all right. Playin’ on de floor. Don’t mek nutt’n fret you, go to sleep” (16). Jesmina also “sprinkled a little bay rum on the soiled pillow-slip, let [Cordelia’s] head down gently upon it (17), considering that the “sick woman” (16) pleaded, “don’t leave me, Jesmina. You own sister, flesh an’ blood. One mother an’ one father” (16). Mais discloses Jesmina’s introspection, “How could she leave her now? Who would take care of Tad, now that [Jonas] was gone?” (17). In advancing the argument that the female-headed household demands great responsibility and commitment that aligns with patriarchy, Mais presents the episode of the burglary at Jesmina’s home, where Cordelia and Tad are also living. Brother Man rescues her and suggests that she stays with him and Minette for the night: “Jesmina, scared as she was, could not bear the thought of leaving Cordelia, ill as she was, alone in the house with the baby. She took her lower lip between her teeth an instant, and then announced that she wanted to go home” (55). Furthermore, Cordelia has been a problematic sister, and in a reflective moment, Jesmina thinks of “Cordelia and her strange behavior. . . . For Cordelia needed help if she was to be cured of the sickness that was eating at her mind; yet how to begin to set about helping her, she did not know” (149). Regardless, Jesmina understands the value of family responsibility.

She could not leave Cordelia in her trouble [;] she would have to stick by her,

even though Cordelia made it more difficult and more difficult for her to do so.

She wanted to be loyal to her sister, for whom she had had only respect and affection

all her life, as far back as she could remember. (123)

Moreover, after Tad dies (166), and Cordelia dies tragically (175), Jesmina, up to that point, honored her commitment to both her nephew and sister. Elisa J. Sobo in her article, “Bodies, Kin, and Flow: Family Planning in Rural Jamaica” clarifies that “[k]in, ideally, find helping one another fulfilling in and of itself. They take care of each other not for monetary rewards but for moral satisfaction” (56).

This type of female headed-family structure should not be discounted; in fact, it has great merit, as women even in the nuclear family have for generations played an integral role in their household, and often, for various reasons, they have to assume the lead role if a spouse becomes ill, unemployed, or deserts the family. Moreover, the matriarch’s lead role in a family structure defies the odds and confirms that “[t]he predominance of female-headed household within the Caribbean predates modernization and is a tradition that can be traced back to the days of slavery” (Miner 31). Further, a family that is led by a female “allows a woman to enjoy a position of power and prestige within her community that is not afforded by the traditional patriarchy” (Miner 31), and can therefore be viewed as a major protest and affirmation mechanism. Thus, through Mais’s illustration of the effectiveness and serious bond that the matriarch’s role in a family structure forms and provides, it can be confirmed that this type of family structure helps to defy the odds, as individuals who would have become further rejects by the society have a recourse since an alternate family structure will sustain them.

In forming a dichotomy, the story of Papacita and Girlie is one that Mais uses to decry the legal family structure—marriage. He presents Papacita to reflect the decolonialized mindset, but he presents Girlie as a strong representation of the colonial mindset. Hence, the

former rebels against societal marital impetus, and the latter succumbs to societal influence. Mais didactics illustrate the complexities of family structures: “[Papacita] just could not go on living with Girlie. She made too many demands. What a woman didn’t know was a man needed his freedom, more so when he was going steady with a sweetheart, living with her as man and wife” (128). Simultaneously, Mais shows how his well-informed agents, the chorus of people in the lane, place the common-law couple into perspective:

Papacita beat up [Girlie] las’ night . . .

Is a shame de way dem two de-live . . .

Gal waan fo’ him an’ she get married . . .

Hm! Papacita know what ‘married’ give . . . (8)

Mais uses the chorus to amplify the communal support that what the legal marriage represents in a relationship is superficial. The chorus also observes Girlie as a mimic of the colonial society; hence, she is fixated on getting married, but “Papacita know what ‘married ’give” (8). Because of the hypocritical expectations of the society, he rejects the hard and fast colonial rule of marriage that were problematic even to the colonizers. Schlesinger confirms the colonizers’ duplicitous acts in Jamaica stating, “the white colonialists almost completely abandoned marriage and monogamy. Concubinage was the custom of the country. The married white man kept one or two mistresses, and raised families on the side” (139-140).

Black Families in Poor Rural Spaces in *Black Lightning*

Mais changes his setting from city to rural—country—as it is termed in Jamaica in *Black Lightning* where he also shifts the focus from the common-law union as the

standard for the poor to an extended family, a legally married family, and a same-sex family, creating several twists. It is noteworthy that “Jamaica is predominantly a rural country, even though almost half the population lives in Kingston, the capital city” (Thorburn). Nonetheless, Mais still seeks to disavow the colonial acceptable family pattern as reflecting the realities of the poor whether they are in an urban or rural setting. Hence, just like the urban marginalized families, the rural indigent creates families without legal ties out of financial needs. The World Bank explains that “[b]ecause few men and women of the rural working class ever achieve this degree of financial security, most working class unions are consensual, and most children (85%) are born to unmarried parents” (qtd. in Dreher 496). An understanding of the marginalized, which validates their economic position, placement in dire spaces, and patterns of existence, becomes obvious when their meagre surroundings are exposed. Hence, “[a] typical rural Jamaican village consists of scattered houses; some are made of concrete blocks but most are made of wood planks and zinc sheeting. Generally, houses lack plumbing and electricity” (Smith 74-75). Thus, in comparing the rural setting of *Black Lightning*, there is calm in contrast to the violent urban settings of *The Hills* and *Brother Man*. Therefore, Mais proposes that irrespective of where the marginalized population is placed in Jamaica, they have to find creative ways to normalize and maintain their families.

Black Lightning: Constructing and Deconstructing Families in Protest

In order to maintain the change of mind-set towards marginalized family patterns that Mais projects, it becomes crucial that although he presents *Black Lightning* in a rustic setting, this unpredictable locale should not be minimized or ignored, given Mais’s

propensity for unnerving or unsettling society's set structure as seen in family constructions presented in his third novel. Mais, though subtle in the sub-texts of this novel, is no less aggressive in the novel's denotations, which he uses to revolt against colonial ordained family structure in defense of the marginalized.

Although he highlights an extended family structure between a curious-minded young girl, her nurturing mother, and a grandmother, Mais emphatically directs this novel to seriously undermine and scoff at society, when he constructs a family that helps each other when there would have been little hope for survival. Sobo alludes to a belief that propels extended families in Jamaica, which is that "[p]eople are supposed to instinctively care for others with whom they share blood" (56). What Mais cunningly does is not to downplay this family pattern; instead, he deliberately manipulates the family formation to revolt against colonial ideals since "people involved in kin networks [another name for extended family] gain the security of knowing that when they need help it will be forthcoming. Those who are caretakers now need not fear becoming dependents later as situational conditions shift" (Sobo 56). Hence, Mais adds another dynamic, however, which questions the wholesomeness of traditional legal marriages as a reality for the poor.

Mais's revisiting of the extended family in his final novel proves Hazle's point, "the importance of the extended family as a source of support" (199), and that "[e]xtended families also provided father substitutes in some situations, thereby cushioning some of the effects of father absence" (Hazle 199). This extended family lives in a one-room setting. Miriam is exploring her sexuality, and since she has no

means to accommodate Glen, her love interest, in her space, she meets him in the woods in order to maintain and build their relationship. Miriam is grooming herself to enter a visiting relationship, demonstrating that as she grows, she will be able to move from the extended family, to a visiting relationship, to a common law union and eventually even marriage despite mitigating factors. Dreher mentions that “Jamaican women have continued to believe that a visiting relationship will lead to a consensual union and perhaps eventually to wedlock” (496). In addition, Miriam’s family is female headed, which further proves that women have efficiently headed households in the absence of male figures. Moreover, Miriam’s family meagre existence allows the members to find solace under one roof even though they cannot adequately meet their physiological and safety needs (“Maslow”). Furthermore, it is understandable that Bess, Mariam’s mother, is seeking financial stability and immediate better physical accommodation, so she moves to live with Jake as his helper, not his woman (117).

Next, Mais, with his vast exposure and often hidden agenda, presents a legal married union that ends in separation followed by a common-law relationship and a homosexual relationship. His overt declarations of releasing self from mental slavery in addressing these family structures underscores the validity of a common-law union and the right to choose a partner even if that person is from the same sex. These alternate lifestyles give rise to power and unquestionable freedom to the marginalized with the intent to provoke society.

It is within the parameters of what postcolonialists refer to as colonization in reverse that Mais crafts the counter narrative of Estella leaving Jake her matrimonial

husband and entering into a common-law relationship to accentuate the common-law union. Colonization in reverse is a term fashioned by Jamaica's poet laureate Louise Bennett in a poem of the same name where she questions the colonizers reaction when the colonized returns the deeds and actions that were meted out to them in the subjugation process. Bennett explains that it is a "willful and aggressive act, one that springs from the bloodstained history of colonialism and slavery in the Caribbean" (qtd. in Dawson 3). Thus, the marginalized willfully disavows legal marriages by separating from their husbands or wives, an act opposing colonial sanctified marriages. The idea of colonization in reverse "is also permeated by a witheringly ironic attitude toward the imperial legacy that connects Caribbean colonial subjects to the British motherland" (Dawson 3). Mais places emphasis on Jake, a blacksmith, who lives with his wife, Estella, in a legal marriage. Estella becomes what society terms adulterous with her lover Steve, who helps her to realize that she is not in a happy marriage since she is in love with him.

One thing you ought to be sure of by this,' he said, 'you can't go on living with him any longer. You don't love him, that's why. It's me you love.' 'No, Steve, don't rush me. Give me time to make up my mind.' He laughed, harshly: 'It's made already. You are just stalling, That's what' . . . 'It's me you love. (28)

Estella deserts Jake as she decides to live with Steve confessing to Steve, 'Yes,' . . . 'it is you I love' (30). A colonial minded reader might view Estella's action as amatory because it is believed that "Black female function as an erotic icon in the racial and sexual ideology of the Western world" (du Cille 592), but Estella echoes a feminist

perspective as she claims the right to herself as a female with the rhetorical question: ‘Why shouldn’t I? Don’t I have a right to my own life at all?’ (30). Estella takes into focus the sexed and gendered Black body debunking the myth that a Black woman’s body is marked with inequalities as she makes the choice to leave her spouse, which is perceived to be a masculine feat, an act of colonization in reverse. bell hooks speaks of the Black woman as a subject and the realization that leads to “Black women whose identities were constructed in resistance, by practices that oppose the dominant order, were more inclined to develop an oppositional gaze” (127). Thus, when she becomes unfulfilled by Jake—probably sexually—Estella leaves to cohabit with her love interest, Steve, forming a common-law union. It is arguable that marriage does not cause happiness even with its legal standing, but people find happiness in all types of unions.

Even as a Rastaman, Mais evokes the “sensibilities” about the realities of the Jamaican poor as expressed in Velma Pollard’s “Language and the Downpressed: The Rasta Man in Jamaican Creative Writing.” Pollard continues to describe Mais’s worldview as promoting a “kind of inclusiveness” (460). Thus, it is not surprising that Mais, knowing the repercussions of presenting homosexuality in his novel subtly engages his readers to peruse this lifestyle as a system of revolt and survival in colonial Jamaica. Mais, with his rebel-with-a cause persona, documents the relationship between Jake and Amos.

Although Jake is married to Estella, he is attracted to Amos, and because the Jamaican society detests homosexuality, Jake’s love for Amos, out of necessity, would be covert. In addition, Estella’s relationship with Jake, who is incomparable because

“there isn’t a finer man in all the world” (20), must have been unfulfilling even though it is clear that he is financially stable enough to support her because they live in “a big house” (151). Regardless, it can be inferred that Estella’s sexual needs are not met; hence, she turns to Steve for sexual fulfilment.

Jake and Amos’s closeness becomes obvious when Bess teases Amos about Jake and Jake meets with Amos shortly after. Bess sees Amos in the woods and tells him, ‘Jake’s looking for you’ (25). He then replies, ‘you lie, I just left Jake’ (25), which gives the idea that they spend a lot of time together. The interaction between Bess and Amos suggests that other people may be aware of Amos and Jake’s relationship although “[i]n Jamaica, few topics are more of a cultural taboo than homosexuality, and the very presence of same-sex relations can and often does spark mob violence” (Lovell 87)). Mais, however, excludes the violence that is usually meted out to homosexuals in Jamaica; instead, he promotes the inclusiveness of this family type and the bond that exists as Jake closes his shop to find Amos whose music led Jake to him (33). Jake beckons to Amos to continue playing his music; when Amos finishes playing, he asks Jake, “You like that one?” (33) Amos asks Jake as if he needs assurance from his lover whom he had comforted with his music. After Amos stops playing, the ensuing conversation takes place when Jake, showing deep concern for his lover, asks,

‘What you got on your mind pardner?’

Oh, nothing, Jake.’

‘Must be something, pardner, you can tell me.’

‘I forget.’

Jake laughed.

'All right,' he said, 'What about a bit of music instead, eh?'

'Don't feel like it, 'said Amos, huffily, 'it don't sweet me anymore.'

'What, the music don't?'' Jake shook his head, looking down at the ground between his knees. (34)

Jake "looking down. . . between his knees" (34) has a sexual overtone, which could be interpreted as a sexual arousal of his manhood because he is physically close to his lover. Therefore, it makes sense that Jake's next move is to invite Amos home even though Amos tells him that he has a problem with Jake's wife, Estella. Mais pits Estella and Amos against each other to evoke a sense of jealousy as Estella has the man (Jake) that Amos wants although Jake feels that his wife and his "man" should "hit it off together" (35), and he wants "both of them to know each other" (35). At the house, the two men enjoy each other's company since "Estella had excused herself earlier. Said she had a headache, she was turning in for the night" (37). The relationship between Jake and Amos begs the question of infidelity on Jake's part because he is far too invested in Amos.

Amos is also vested in his relationship with Jake as he devotes most of his time to him. "Amos had formed the habit of dropping in at the shop afternoons, and staying on till closing time" (66). On one of his lengthy visits, "he found Jake alone, and this suited him" (66); thus, he prefers to be in Jake's company alone. Additionally, in one of Jake's introspections, '[h]e felt uncomfortable thinking about himself and Amos, and he wanted to banish thought about it from his mind" (69). Jake concludes that their

relationship is one of dependency (66)—Amos had to depend on him—much like how a female depends on a man. However, while there might be dependency, in another friendly banter, Mais ensures that the conversation is sexually loaded, which gives more insight into Amos and Jake’s relationship.

Jake said, ‘You better stay the night.

Might start raining any time now.’

Amos got up then.

‘No, Jake, I think I can make it.’

‘Don’t be a fool, man, said Jake.

‘All right, Jake, if you want it.’

‘If I want it nothing, can’t you see its’s going to rain like hell in a minute?’

And Amos said, meekly:

‘All right Jake.’ (57-58)

Jake and Amos’s discourse appears to have subtle undertones of intimacy, particularly “all right, Jake, if you want it” (57). In Jamaica, the word sex is almost taboo, so it is not usually said openly. A common replacement for sex is the subtle term “it.” Therefore, a man will ask a woman if she wants “it.” Mais puns on the word “it” to create a Freudian slip when Amos tells Jake, ‘[a]ll right, Jake, if you want it’ (57). Mais simply exposes the homosexual relationship, as he knows that the colonizers from early slavery banned homosexual relationships because they did not produce slaves. Clarke confirms, “the notion of respectability in sexual mores and ideology that excluded sexual acts not

leading to procreation such as the ‘nastiness’ of oral sex and same gender sexual relations” (9) were not allowed during slavery. Hence, Mais reverses the colonial norm by presenting Amos and Jake’s relationship.

The relationship intensifies and turns into a same-sex family structure when Jake invites Amos, who is indigent, to live in his house, after he tells him that Estella “is gone” (43). Therefore, while Estella is chided because she seems to be unfaithful to Jake, Jake also seems to have been just as unfaithful to Estella, but because he is having an affair with a man, his cheating is not recognizable because of the negative reception to homosexuality in Jamaica. This negativity is cultural since it “could be argued that some of the homophobic elements in the captive Africans’ worldview are traceable to commonplace homophobic ideas found in pre-slavery African culture” (Charles 8). Jake informs Bess, his helper that “Amos is going to live here You got to fix up some place for him to sleep” (132). In turn, Amos, as a formal resident in Jake’s household, offers companionship to Jake and helps him with farming activities.

To cement the relationship between Amos and Jake, Mais creates a scenario between the wife and partner where they engage in a jealous and hostile bantering after Jake’s death. Estella is hostile towards Amos when she confronts him and tells him, ‘You love [Jake]’ (214), and Amos replies ‘mind your own business’ (214). Estella responds, ‘it’s my business, too, I am his wife—and I love him’ (214). The conversation between them sanctions that there is a same-sex relationship since Estella realizes that Amos probably loves Jake more than she does. Estella continues to mock her husband’s lover as she credits Jake for Amos’s transformation. ‘You have grown into somebody,

Amos. You will never go back to being nobody again. Jake's done that for you. No wonder you are proud to be his friend' (215). Jake has taken in the man that he loves and has turned him in someone respectable. It is notable that Amos remains faithful to Jake even after lightning strikes Jake and he becomes blind. Amos's display of over attentiveness might also be because Jake has become incapacitated (211-212). However, the love and care each man has for each other is symbolic of two people in a union.

Additionally, Mais, again, scoffs at how White men during slavery used slaves as sexual tools, practicing homosexuality and other sexual acts just for pleasure.

[M]any plantation owners having left their families in Britain behind, and having come from a sexually stringent European climate, plantation owners took advantage of the opportunity to engage in sexual exploration with, and the sexual exploitation of, Jamaican slaves. This sexual exploitation almost certainly involved same-sex relations between the plantation owners and the slaves.

(Lovell 90)

Furthermore, after Estella moves out of the matrimonial home, Bess eventually moves into Amos's house to help with the household chores, leaving her mother and daughter, Miriam (117). Thus, Jake, Amos, and Bess share the same living space as a family unit. However, as in Jake and Amos's relationship, Mais does not clarify the nature of Jake and Bess's connection; Mais equally does not expound the three relationships combined—the threesome (71-72). Thus, Mais's action, permitting Jake to cohabit with both Bess and Amos, and his selected silence on these relationships, not directly clarifying the trio's relationship, requires an explanation. Hence, to ratify Mais's

subtle yet deliberate family ordinance, Hazel's observations are both applicable and meaningful.

[T]he present quality of family life experienced by many persons in Jamaica today, undermines their ability to achieve their full potential materially, socially and spiritually. Any attempt to empower family life must take cognizance of how family is understood in the Jamaican context. Family functions proved to be the main rubric around which the focus group participants construed family. Family was more about what it did or what its purpose was than structure or composition. So even a good friend can be considered family if there is mutual care or shared residency. (201)

Appropriately, based on Hazle's exposition, if Mais had intended only to highlight a homosexual relationship between Jake and Amos, using Estella as the decoy, he would have succeeded, proving to society that the indigent does strategize in an effort to disrupt and subvert plans, principles, and protocols that are meant to control them.

Chapter Summary

Mais adequately illustrates through multiple characters that there is strength and validity in common-law unions as in legal married unions, disproving the view that "whatever the stability or otherwise of the unions, there is no doubt that all Jamaicans consider that stable legal marriages are the ideal to which everyone should aspire" (qtd. in Schlesinger 145). A union that overly emphasizes legal and religious sanctioning does not necessarily advance family patterns in terms of the living conditions, the set skills,

and the communication mode that become relevant for these marriages to thrive. Mais proves that legally binding unions might be superficial and adheres to society's standards, not what is workable for individuals, especially the marginalized. Essentially, Mais recognizes and understands the psychosocial realities of the indigent; thus, Hazle's view that "marriage represents an unattractive option for many in the inner city" (197) is befitting. While several common-law relationships end in violence in *The Hills* and *Brother Man*, Mais does not attribute these acts to the common-law unions. In fact, Mais equates these relationships to legal unions, but because of the absence of the law to "split justice," the legal course is replaced by "jungle justice" when there is separation or infidelity. For Mais, nothing different happens in the colonial and common-law unions, but the situations that the common-law families face due to their economic conditions are amplified. Although Mais gives insights on Tansy and her mother's condition (subservient women), it is obvious that Mais also revolts against stereotypical gender roles because he presents other women who are heads of households, more financially stable than men are but are deprived of rights and privileges because of their gender. In "Roger Mais," David Barratt offers a personal perspective on Black Lightning: he notes that if Mais's *The Hills* and *Brother Man* "established his reputation, the third novel [*Black lightning*] "is often seen as his best" (1). Barratt further adds that the novel "melds the more traditional Biblical typology with Black consciousness" (1). Thus, it can be stated that in retaining his stance on belittling the colonial family stereotypes that are imposed upon the oppressed, Mais, though sometimes subtle, is no less aggressive in the denotations of his final novel, *Black Lightning*. In looking at the flaws of the legal

marriage and pointing out the effectiveness of common-law marriages, Mais s
colonization in reverse as he allows the colonized to revoke their stance on colonial
practices. Thus, characters move from being legally married, as in the case of Estella, to
embracing a common-law union. Homosexuality is also presented although Mais does
not explicitly expound on whether or not Amos and Jake are romantically linked, but
with the normalcy of queer research and writings today, it is not surprising that Mais's
works are scanned for homosexual tendencies despite his antagonism towards a
homosexual lifestyle. It can be argued that Mais covertly uses Jakes and Amos's
association (live-in arrangement) to recognize, but not necessarily approve male-on-male
relationship. Hence, to relegate the colonial society, whose standards are formulated on
major aspects of Europeanism, to bring to the fore the pervasiveness of Jamaican
homophobia, and to, colloquially "fiah bun" (fire burn...show disdain) for a non-
traditional family structure—homosexuality, Mais could be using the Jake-Amos
relationship to confirm what Watson declares, "as a means of sarcastically resolving
some of the incongruities in family structure" (339).

Chapter 4: The Arts: An Emancipatory and Revolutionary Mechanism

The Arts: An Overview

The suitability, capability, and the culpability of the arts is extensive and influential because of its ability to evoke both critical analyses and emotive responses. Based on its intended message, by way of compliance or noncompliance to predetermined societal standards, the arts is subject to multiple interpretations and applications. Furthermore, the power of the arts, without judgement of its expression and manipulation of human creativity and imagination in its visual and auditory mode, is evident through diverse forms: painting, sculpting, singing, poetry, music, literature, and dance. A form that is both subjective and creative is the chanting of words and sounds as evidenced in Mais's three novels: *The Hills*, *Brother Man* and *Black lightning*. Particular to *Black Lightning*, however, is what Barratt emphasizes: "Mais incorporates both African and Greek symbols and myths, resulting in a mythopoetic work" (1). Hence, Barratt interprets the novel as an art form—literature—so whatever the art form, its interpretation and application can both challenge society's creed and simultaneously avow the marginalized.

The Affective and Effective Role of Music as Revolutionary

A contemporary understanding of the magnitude of music presupposes the historical process of its evolution. Eduardo de la Fuente and Peter Murphy in

Philosophical and Cultural Theories of Music assert,

One of the key narratives regarding the art music of the last century was that the 20th century was the epoch of ‘great revolutions’ in music. This narrative posited a sharp ‘break’ with musical tradition sometime between 1890 and 1914. The ‘ruptures’ in question have over time acquired names such as the ‘emancipation of dissonance’, the ‘liberation of noise’ and the ‘destruction of regular rhythms. (89)

Thus, music attracts diverse meanings, when referenced in certain contexts, which can also lead to the appropriation of an unintended meaning. Overtime, though, music has adopted different dimensions in hopes of conquering many obstacles; a major objective is the promotion and maintenance of radicalism and liberation.

Jamaican Music as an Innovative Stratagem

The influence of music socially and politically has never lost its essence. In fact, music has and continues to have an agenda that seeks to express the core of people’s experiences; thus, historically, music serves as a means to challenge authority through its rejection of political formations, assessing and criticizing prevailing social norms, and conveying objection to those norms and standards. The indigent, given their limitations, innovatively uses music to communicate their mindset.

One of the greatest legendary protest songwriters, Robert Nesta Marley embodies the revolutionary mode of music as Donna P. Hope in *Reggae from Yaad : Traditional and Emerging Themes in Jamaican Popular Music* asserts, “Marley was looked upon as a Third World prophet, as some people would call him, and as a hero, who was a

spokesperson for the oppressed people in this, in the world” (14). Hope further highlights Marley’s mindset, “I have to sing to the people and talk to my people, the people with me. So I have to keep on that line. The Man that I Know I cannot stray” (14-15). Mais had the same mindset to speak to his people through his novels.

Revolutionary Artistic Sounds

Musical sounds echo the experiences of the marginalized in Jamaica, as they are expressions of the people’s experiences, reminiscing on their resistance, survival, and development. Often surreptitiously, Caribbean musical utterances are hybrid expressions through which Caribbean peoples articulate their emotions because of their oppressive conditions. Throughout the period of enslavement and beyond, traditional Caribbean music has always served as an outlet for the oppressed where they voice social messages. Musical utterances as a means of revolt is not new as slaves used songs and other musical instruments, such as the drums and horns, to pass secret messages to plot revolts and rebellions; however, these utterances also express their joys and sorrows. Because musical utterances were such strong instruments for the slaves, “[i]n Jamaica, Trinidad and Guyana, legislations were enacted to prohibit the drum because of its communicative signals and effect upon Africans as instigator to rebellion” (Saakana 28). Throughout the Caribbean, music holds the culture of the people, teaching them their histories and realities, proving to be a necessity in a solid oral culture that holds the key to their resistance and survival. Hence, hybrid musical utterances developed. Jerry Silverman in

his preface to *West Indian and Calypso Songs* gives a synopsis of the history of Caribbean music:

The European settlers who conquered the tiny islands of the West Indies during the 16th and 17th centuries brought with them a rich assortment of customs and folkways. Over the years, these new customs were adopted by West African slaves to form a colorful way of life that was unique to the islands of the Caribbean. No other aspect of this new form of cultural expression was as exciting as its music. Blending the complex rhythms of West Africa with the harmonies of European music, the islanders created a style of composition and performance that was both striking and original. (4)

Music has become one of the first love of Jamaica people who bask in their traditional and indigenous music styles, which are prevalent in all sectors of society. Mais is aware of the importance that Jamaicans place on music, and in fact, his writings are referred to as similar to traditional musical genres of the Jamaican people by other Caribbean stalwarts in the creative world. Kamau Brathwaite refers to *Brother Man* as “an imperfect yet the most successful example of the jazz novels he had read” (qtd. in Kuelker). To further the argument, Braithwaite states, “the violence [in *Brother Man*] is a kind of communal purgation. It involves the entire community of the novel, finally moving beyond the apparent chaos it brings, to that revelation of wholeness that one is

aware of at the end of a successful jazz improvisation” (342). Dawes also states that Mais

became a visionary who was in fact predicting the arrival of reggae, of Bob Marley, of Peter Tosh, of Don Drummond, of The Twelve Tribes of Israel, of Ites Green and Gold and of the current marketing of Jamaican society on Jamaica Tourist Board ads that sing in canned melodious notes the music of Bob Marley. (qtd. in Kuelker)

Mais evokes the cultures and the cries of the people in marginalized spaces, using musical utterances as a symbol of revolt. “Dawes describes how the language and concepts of reggae illustrate (and indeed interact with) the lives of Jamaicans socially, intellectually and linguistically; a ghetto song may illustrate the complexities of the artist in the community more candidly than a piece of literature from the same period” (qtd. in Kuelker). While Mais’s novels of the early to mid 1950s are a precursor to cultural revolts leading to Jamaica’s independence in 1962, he includes musical utterances in the form of sounds, songs, and a musical instrument, the accordion.

Sounds of Protests

Musical sounds are used in protests; they secretly signal others for companionship when the harshness of society has forced the marginalized to use the woods as solace. In *Black Lightning*, Miriam follows the sound of the axe that Glen, her lover, was using to locate him in the woods (9). The sound is described as a “steady rhythm of the axe strokes was somehow satisfying, out here, deep in the wood, it went with the solitaire’s treble fluting note in the distance, and with the sound the wind made

going over the tree top” (9). She then uses an onomatopoeia to get Glen’s attention, “Yoo-hoo!” (9) Miriam’s utterance is a bird call, which Glen should respond to in order for the young lovers to meet; however, this sound is a disguise because it could easily be thought of as a natural bird sound in the woods. Mais skillfully uses these sounds to show the subtlety of how the marginalized communicates when they are forced to meet in secret. This is reminiscent of during slavery when slaves had to disguise their communication through imitating sounds in nature when they plotted to revolt. Harriet Tubman, the famous abolitionist –who aided slaves to freedom via the famous underground railroad—used not only songs but also animal sounds as a symbol when they were escaping; “She carried a pistol during her 11 years working on the Underground Railroad, using songs, codes, and animal sounds to signal when it was safe for the fugitives in her care to reveal their locations” (Reynolds). Similarly, Mais illustrates how the sound of Amos’s accordion lures Jake into the woods when Jake was looking for him. Jake meets Amos, and the essence of their relationship becomes evident.

Additionally, Mais, knowing Jake and Amos relationship is questionable but that they still need to “meet” in order to build their relationship, and that Glen and Miriam not being able to meet in Miriam’s limited and humble abode with her grandmother being present, creates a space for them to meet in the woods. Mais, it can be assumed, shows how these marginalized individuals are reduced to meeting in the woods like animals because the colonized feels less than human at times because of their circumstances. Fanon elucidates that “[e]very effort is made to bring the colonized

person to admit the inferiority of his culture which has been transformed into instinctive patterns of behavior, to recognize the unreality of his 'nation,' and, in the last extreme, the confused and imperfect character of his own biological structure" (*Wretched* 236). For the marginalized, space is hardly private, so natural spaces with their natural or induced sounds create secrecy a rebellious tradition that was passed down from slavery.

Another musical sound that is very common in Jamaica is mouth induced whistling. It is used as a signal, and it is used to show delight, pleasure, or happiness. This melodious sound is socially approved when done by a male; it is disapproved when done by a female. This stance is in keeping with the perception that Jamaica is a religious country; it is also in keeping with a proverb, falsely accredited to *The Holy Bible*, "A whistling woman and a crowing hen is an abomination to the Lord." Hence, this practice is considered masculine. The idea, it should be noted, appears to be a colonial adage because whistling was also used as a signal during slavery, and the colonizers feared anything that they thought would be a signal for revolt. However, Mais goes against colonial restrictions and presents a whistling woman, which is contrary to the norm.

Additionally, in order to use a shared bath area Zephyr, one of the residents, 'went out into the passage and down towards the bathroom [,] [but] she found that Euphemia . . . had got there first. She leaned against the bathroom door and whistled so that Euphemia would know she was there . . .and heard Euphemia stop singing to herself in the tub. . .[.] In order to alert Euphemia of her desperate need to use the bathroom, Zephyr alerts Euphemia: "Euphemia, I want to get in there (*The Hills* 12-13). Zephyr

uses whistling to communicate her need to use the bathroom; however, when it did not work, she becomes overt in her demand. Thus, whistling is a covert form of communication adopted from slavery times.

In *Black Lightning*, George, the youngster who works with Jake, whistles as a signal to announce the end of the workday. “George push his hands in his pocket, whistled absently between his teeth. Jake turned away from the drum and started taking off his thick leather apron. ‘It must be past six o’clock. . . think we will just call it a day’ (85-86). Jake responds to this signal and ends the workday. After they are about to leave, “George put his fingers between his teeth and let out a piercing whistle now. He grinned wide and big, and his face took on its most puckish experience. He said: ‘That was the whistle you heard’” (85-86). The long whistle shows George’s delight that he is free to leave work. George also uses whistling to alert Mariam that he was coming towards her in the woods; thus, again, whistling is a signal. Furthermore, Glen whistles to connect with nature when he is in the woods; “[h]e whistled to the bird, and the bird cocked an eye to look at him, and whistled a few notes. He put both hands on his head turned his face up and whistled to the bird, so that you couldn’t tell which was the bird and which was the boy” (187). George is another example of the marginalized mimicking nature’s sounds as a disguise; thus, Miriam comments, ‘You whistled just like the bird. You would fool me’ (187). Whistling also symbolizes happiness and even pleasure as evidenced in *The Hills*. Manny whistles when he is going down to the gully to meet with Ditty to have sex. Wilfie, who is disgusted because he is also having a sexual relationship with Ditty, hears Manny’s happy whistling. Manny, however, is using his

whistling to signal Ditty since at the sound of the whistle, Wilfie sees “a figure whip behind the shacks and he knew it was Ditty, and that she was going down the gully to meet Manny for it was dark” (103-104). Sounds are very symbolic and significant to the oppressed who, from slavery, depended on these sounds to meet each other in secrecy as they were usually going against the master’s rules. Thus, Mais understands the importance of symbolic sounds, which are common among the poor, so he incorporates these sounds to show their importance to the oppressed who improvise ways to communicate and show their emotions in their confined spaces.

Revolting Through Chorus and Singing

Caribbean music is revolutionary from traditional folk songs to reggae and calypso, which represent the people’s experiences and resilience. Jamaican music tells the story of the marginalized, but it also reflects their radicalism and resilience. Mais’s characters use music to reveal their oppressed conditions, to express emotions, to revolt, and to maintain their identities. Rex Nettleford explains the cultural overtone of folk songs as “[a]ncestral echoes [finding] reality mostly in the traditional music that is to be found among a robust peasantry and the urban realists of Jamaica” (23). Mais introduces Jamaican folksongs when Miriam, a young girl, thinks about her boyfriend Glen and the possibility of her getting pregnant because he wants her to meet him “clandestinely” (*Black Lightning* 95) to obviously have sex. She expresses her concerns in a popular folk song that reminds her of the possibility of getting pregnant and the consequences: “Brown-skin-gal, stay home an’ mind baby” (*Black Lightning* 95). This song is used to remind young girls especially in the marginalized communities of the consequences of

getting pregnant and the responsibility that the young black girl would have in her already dire situation along with her abandoning her dreams because she has to stay home with her baby. Two women who ironically are in silent dispute because one suspects the other of cheating with her boyfriend sing another folksong that expresses a sense of camaraderie. Clara meets Miriam when they were walking home. Clara enquires about Glen, Miriam's boyfriend and sends a greeting for him, which made Miriam question Clara and Glen's relationship (*Black Lightning* 130). The folk song, "dis long time gal Ah never see you, Come mek a hold you' han" (*Black Lightning* 130) is about showing affinity by holding hands after not seeing each other for a long time. Ironically, Clara was singing the same song. Folk songs are comforting even in uncertainties as seen when the two young women are suspecting each other; thus, it is used as passive resistance because they did not express their true emotions. Songs disguise the true emotions of the oppressed, which was a common practice during slavery because they usually sing to ease their sorrows, but it was often mistaken for a symbol of happiness as expressed in Frederick Douglass's *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* when he explains that "[s]laves sing most when they are most unhappy. The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears" (Douglass 276). The oppressed continues these sorrow songs. On the contrary, in *Brother Man*, Minette also hums, "dis long time gal Ah never see you, Come mek we walk an' talk" (64) even though she states that it was not appropriate at that time; hence, it is stressed that she is singing for comfort and relief. Minette also states that it is a common practice for her and Brother Man to sing

folksongs. “They sometimes sat on the steps when the evenings were warm, and sang mentos together” (64). These songs are the wailings of the oppressed who sings them for relief. Nettleford posits that Jamaican folk or traditional music “has given to a wide cross-section of the Jamaican people and especially the oppressed a sense of positive achievement and identity through indigenous creative actions” (*Caribbean* 22). Mais could not have written about Jamaicans without evoking the folk culture that shows the realities of the marginalized and their emotions. Music is used as a release for the oppressed who have a limited verbal medium to express their experiences; thus, it becomes a method of revolt.

Mais also explores music that takes in improvised instruments and dancing as a medium of rebellion. Fueled from their African ancestry, Afro-Jamaicans have practiced using their bodies to create sound, thus, music. When mixed with voice and other improvisation, body music and improvised instruments along with voice have created sensational music for socialization and religious practices. Fanon describes these actions as “seemingly unorganized pantomime . . . in which by various means—shakes of the head, bending of the spinal column, throwing of the whole body backward . . . [is] the huge effort of a community to exorcise itself, to liberate itself, to explain itself” (*Wretched* 57). Folk songs are also used for entertainment purposes in Jamaica, but underneath the joy they bring are the expressions of the problems the oppressed faces. Mais’s *Black Lightning* depicts improvisation in music when Lennie and his gathering sing a folksong for entertainment. However, the song’s meaning gives glimpses of the marginalized struggles. This song is a “call and response” from the African tradition.

The ribber ben come down

The ribber ben come down

The ribber ben come down

A-how me come over?

The response that follows goes: “Woy-oh, a-how you come over. Woy-oh, a-how you come over” (49). The river overflowing its bank presents danger or hardship and the response asks for the solutions. The song becomes very possessive as all the members of the group become involved, and they develop music and improvise instrument from their bodies and discarded things, along with actions to create a pantomime performance:

Lennie rocked and teetered on the plank as he sang, giving a realistic imitation of a man trying to cross a river on a piece of board. And the chorus clapped their hands and swayed their bodies in rhythm and sang the responses . . .the bodies swayed rhythmically all the while, the hands clapping to keep time . . .

Patoo beat a drum with two sticks on the side of a packing case . . . Mass Mose stroking the back of his bent head with one hand, nimbly buck-steeped with a realistic show of anxiety on the opposite bank, added mime, as well as his voice to the chorus. (49)

The improvisation of the body and other materials to make music is hybrid and is very common in the Caribbean, a gift from their African ancestry, as seen with the use of horns, skins, and bones from animals, along with wasted steel, tree parts, and other

materials to make music. This improvisation is especially true for the oppressed who cannot afford to buy instruments.

Another type of musical demonstration that shows body movements along with instrument and voice is religious, which affirms the culture and identity of the oppressed people. Mais would be remiss if he did not include the tradition of religion that is filled with music, dance, and possession. Any cultural study of Jamaica must be enriched by the lively spirituals, chants, and dances that are a part of the most Afrocentric religion in Jamaica—Pocomania. Mais in *The Hills* gives a vivid description of “White-robed figures, mostly women, stood around a pool in the hills and sang hymns and clapped their hands and some shook tambourines, and they trumped pumping and grunting rhythmically, and waited for the rising of the moon” (109). While this musical event precedes the baptism that takes place, it is very captivating as the music is used to attract people while it serves as an invocation to God to be present in the midst. Pocomania, with its music, dances, and possession of the spirit, is an outright act or rebellion against the organized colonial churches because it has included African beliefs and practices. According to Fanon, dancing leads to cleansing and purification, initiating a killing of undesirable emotions (*Wretched* 57). Fanon in *Wretched* continues to explain the use of the body, as the oppressed responds to music, because he believes that a study of the colonial world and the oppressed must “take into consideration the phenomena of the dance and of possessions” (57) because

[o]n another level, we see the native’s emotional sensibility exhausting itself in dances, which are more or less ecstatic. The native’s relaxation takes precisely

the form of a muscular orgy in which the most acute aggressivity and the most impelling violence are canalized, transformed, and conjured away. (57)

Mais borrows the chorus from classical Greek drama such as Sophocles plays, which is a form of revolt through mimicry. The chorus performs music and drama “vocally in a group as opposed to those who perform singly . . . who described and commented upon the main action of a play with song, dance, and recitation” (“Chorus”). In “Resilience and the Creative Economy in Kingston, Jamaica,” Meaghan Frauts argues that

it is through these longer and deeper connections to the ways that colonialism and enslavement continue to shape the dispossession of Black life—the afterlife of slavery—that a cultural politics of resilience emerges. By attending to these histories, we are able to attend to the ways that discipline and domination continue to be mobilized through culture and creative practices under the banner of resilience, even if at the same time these practices are also repurposed by those being dominated. (397)

Mais “repurposes” the chorus in *Brother Man* although it has the same role as Sophocles’s actors as they are used to fill in the missing actions furthering the plot of the play. The chorus does this “[b]y actively maintaining their marginalization by silencing voices of dissent, the chorus members are potentially trying to sympathize with and be sympathetic to the more powerful central characters” (Campbell 71). Mais opens *Brother Man* with the chorus, which is made up of people in the lane describing them as “the tongues in the lane clack-clack almost continually going up and down the full scale of human emotions, human folly, ignorance, suffering, viciousness, magnanimity,

weakness, greatness, littleness, insufficiency, frailty, strength” (7). The chorus is placed at the beginning to show their importance in furthering the plot with their continuous chatting projected as a rhythm music more than natural speech. Mais mimics Sophocles’ plays such as *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*; hence, Bhabha’s idea is applicable to Mais’s use of the chorus in a novel as “effective mimicry” that “must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (*Location* 86). In furthering the plot, the chorus chants about Cordelia’s demise and the other members of the community in a rhythmic pattern that Mais refers to as a “clack.”

—Cordy’s man get tek-up for ganja

—Bra’ Man show the gospel way

—Me-gal still wi’ hold wid Bra’ Ambro

—Coal-price gone up since toddler day

—Lawd Jesus, po’ Mis’ Brody. (8)

And, Miss Mattie’s misfortunes are emphasized.

—Miss Mattie back rent due las’, soon-soon a’ mornin’ bailiff
come so mek him mark an’ gone.

—Lawd, po’ Miss Mattie. Favour trouble never come
one-one, las’ week only her pickney sick ‘pon she.

—Month gone her Aunty dead, had was to bury her; no
trouble never come one-one, is true. (60)

Mais presents the chorus giving snippets of the oppressed life to educate the reader about other events that he does not detail. The chorus is very emotive and has become a part of

Jamaica's culture where there are people gathered in different locations giving accounts of each other's life. Mias states that

[t]hey clack on street corners, where the ice-shop hangs out . . . under the shadow of overhanging buildings that lean precariously, teetering across the dingy chasm of the narrow lane. Around the Yam seller's-barrel, tripe seller's basket, and the coal-vendors crazy push-cart drawn up against the steamy sidewalk they clack.

(7)

Mais highlights the people whom he refers to as the "chorus of people in the lane" (7) because the Jamaican creole sounds melodious when the different tones and intonation along with the different cords are vocalized. Jamaican creole often called patois is said to have a "sing-song" tone.

As in Greek tragedy, the chorus also sings, but Mais presents this Black chorus to sing a Negro Spiritual after it praises the goodness of Brother Man who "mek Miss Martha pickney walk" (107). The Spiritual,

By Jordan-water I set me down,
Set down my weary load,
An' de Lawd He come an' raise me up;
Alleluya! Praise de Lawd! (107)

expresses the same hope that Brother Man gives to the people in the lane. It is revolutionary that Brother Man—a black Rasta Man—is given the quantities of the Christian God as this Spiritual is a hybrid version on the popular Psalm 137 from *The Holy Bible*, which speaks to the oppressed being helped. The chorus uses Jamaican

creole, which is a strong cultural expression and is very emotive which differentiates it from formal colonial English as it reflects African speech tenets. Ngugi wa Thiong'o pronounces in *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* that language and culture embody "moral, ethical and aesthetic values, the set of spiritual eyeglasses, through which [Africans] come to view themselves and their place in the universe" (14-15). Mais capture this ideology when the oppressed Afro-Jamaicans "view themselves" and try to "find a place in the universe" (Thiong'o 15). In expressing the tribulations of the oppressed, Mais is revolting through the chorus who were often made up of the marginalized in the Greek society. Thiong'o purports that "a history of subjugation set in motion a process of its own negation: a history of resistance. Thus the African . . . fought back to regain his freedom, regain control of his land and labour. In the process, he created a new culture, a fight-back culture, a resistance culture, which he expressed in his songs, his dances, his literature" (10).

The Accordion

The accordion is a well-known music instrument in the Caribbean, so although it is not from Africa, many Afro-Jamaicans use this instrument to play traditional African and Jamaican music in rebellion against Eurocentric music. It came with the colonizers from Europe but was adopted by Jamaicans and other Caribbean artists. It is believed that the accordion originated in Berlin or in Vienne; however, wherever it originated, the accordion found a place in the Caribbean ("Accordion"). There are even music festivals that solely focus on "The Caribbean and the Accordion" as a theme (S. Richards). Accordion musicians come from many different Caribbean islands such as "Jamaica,

Haiti, Trinidad and Cuba. The styles range from classical accordion to reggae” (Richards). Irrespective of the type of music, Nettleford posits that Jamaican music is hybrid, stating that “[t]he Jamaican musical heritage is itself the result of centuries of cross-fertilization of the sounds and rhythms of Africa, Europe, the creolized Caribbean itself, the Orient and modern America” (*Caribbean* 26).

Black Lightning is the only novel that explicitly discusses a musical instrument—the accordion—even though a flute’s sound is also described, and the clarinet is mentioned in *The Hills*. Mais does not explore a popular instrument found in the Caribbean like drum. To illustrate how the accordion plays hybrid or traditional Jamaican music, Mais places the accordion in a poor man’s hand, Amos. Amos plays the accordion to set the tone for the text because when it is first heard, he plays a sad song, which is described by Glen and Miriam. “From far away came the sound of the accordion . . . the sound of the accordion carried on the wind came to them more plainly, a melancholy tone . . . the sound of the accordion came to them sobbing on the wind; it grew in volume, and then receded” (16-19). Likewise, on another encounter in the woods, Amos “started to play a mournful tune. He played until he came to the end of that tune, then he started at the beginning and started all over again” (22). Even when he played for Jake, he played a “mournful” tune (33). While the sound is associated with Miriam and Glen, it reflects the sadness of all the downtrodden people’s lives. Mais sets the tone with the gloomy diction: “melancholy,” “sobbing” and “mournful” before the reader is aware of the sad events that will follow. Moreover, the Europeans use the

accordion for joyful events, but the Afro-Jamaicans revolt by reversing the tone to songs of sorrow because they are oppressed.

Art for Resistance, Art for Economic Gain

Jamaica boasts a diverse, rich, and dynamic art culture that contributes to the country's meagre economy. One facet of this cultural heritage is its intuitive artists in the craft trade that evokes the skillset of males and females especially in the lower economic segment tier of society especially in the early years, such as in the 1950s, when large industries and American and Chinese goods were not as prevalent as today in Jamaica. Shoemaking, dressing making, sculpting, and blacksmith are just a few of these craft skillsets. "The Vitality of Jamaica's 'Intuitive' Artists" by Edward Gomez clarifies who they are.

They do not have formal, art-school educations but instead develop their own techniques to express their ideas as effectively as many professionally trained artists. These art-makers are the world's self-taught, visionary or, as they are known in Jamaica, "Intuitive" artists. Also called "outsiders" because they operate beyond the cultural mainstream, these art innovators paint, make sculpture or sometimes create gardens or monuments that do not fall into familiar art categories. In recent decades, Jamaica has become known for having produced a significant number of such notably individualistic talents. (n.p.)

In cases where these artistic skill sets are used for economic uplift, the marginalized uses them to fight off poverty, thus, fighting off their oppressors. These sole proprietor businesses become income generators, which relate to the activities that are employed in

order to generate and procure unlimited revenue. Additionally, art used for economic growth results in utilization of talents as skillsets, poverty alleviation, and economic and social empowerment. Therefore, Mais depicts skilled craft workers who build, what is termed “cultural goods,” in all three of his novels who gain economic uplift in comparison to the other characters without these skill sets who continue to wallow in dire poverty. According to Arjo Klamer, in “Social, Cultural and Economic Values of Cultural Goods,”

[i]t may be a bridge, a piece of wood. Or a temple, a windmill, a painting, a piece of furniture, a mask, jewel, bead. It may even be a language, a ritual, or a practice. Whatever it is, it differs from other goods because people may consider it a symbol of something—a nation, a community, a tradition, a religion, a cultural episode—and endow it with various meanings over and above its usefulness. They may ascribe to it artistic, aesthetic or sacred qualities. They may draw inspiration from it, or value it because it gives rise to hatred in some and antagonizes others. Let us say, then, that the good has cultural value in that it is a source of inspiration or symbol of distinction. Therefore, we call it a cultural good. (138)

Due to high levels of unemployment, especially among Afro-Jamaicans in economically marginalized areas, Mais shows how, in revolt, the marginalized maximize each economic, cultural, and social opportunity in order to sustain themselves, families, and even friends. Furthermore, these crafts provide goods and services that would be lacking in these forgotten communities if these skillsets were unavailable in them. Culture is

revolutionary, as it becomes a tool to survive the problems faced in society economically, emotionally, and socially. Art, as “cultural goods,” also converts to a social institution under what is labelled culture and development. As Christina S. Kreps argues, “[d]evelopment is a profoundly cultural matter, in the sense that it is intertwined with and affects a people’s whole way of life” (V). Sustainable growth becomes an element of cultural art as presented in *Cultural Expression and Grassroots Development: Cases From Latin America & The Caribbean* by C.D Kleymeyer, which illustrates the significance of cultural art as it pertains to economic improvement. The study of art for economic improvement constructs a sociocultural background

[i]n which long-term economic growth is presumed to depend on more careful management rather than on more intensive exploitation of resources. This approach requires a new way of thinking about problems, one that emphasizes diversity and seek to tap the strengths of indigenous culture, regarding them as repositories of knowledge accumulated from centuries. (Kleymeyer 197)

Thus, Kleymeyer’s explanation indicates, based on the experience and history of the underserved, that the crafts in Mais’s novels become “cultural goods” because they are a result of the skillsets developed not from formal training but from traditional roles played by former slaves and passed down through generations. Hence, “[c]ultural goods oscillate among different uses, functions, values, and significances. For instance, if cultural goods become subjects of economic exchange, a monetary value emerges” (Hasitschka 148) that leads to economic stability. Mais presents Jesmina, a dressmaker, in *The Hills*; Brother Man, a shoemaker, in *Brother Man*; and Jake, a sculpture and

blacksmith, in *Black Lightning*, who use their crafts to create cultural goods for monetary gain and to rebel against poverty.

Dressmaking

Jesmina is the only female who Mais presents with a craft, and with her skill as a dressmaker, she liberates herself from the economic clutches of colonization since she is described as being “comparatively well-off” (124). Additionally, as a dressmaker, she supplies clothing to her community who reimburses her for her service. Her presence in the community also uplifts the community since having a dressmaker allows the members to get clothes for social activities, such as church, school uniforms for children (since 99% schools in Jamaica wear uniforms), and other types of clothing that would have to be purchased at expensive stores outside of the community. Purchasing clothing from Jesmina is also economically viable because she could be paid in installments based on how money is garnered by her customers. Hence, “she frequently had to wait for her money to come in, [but] the neighbours always brought her work” (124). It is because of her dressmaking craft that she is able to extend help to her sister, Cordelia, and her sister’s son, Tad. In addition, Mais emphasizes that Jesmina had “some ends of dress materials she had put there with the intention of making them up into playsuits for Tad” (149). Jesmina is able to meet the physiological and safety needs (“Maslow”) of her family, since she feeds, clothes, and shelters them through gains from her craft.

The Feminist Standpoint views can be used to assess Jesmina’s success in her craft. This theory looks at an ascribed position grounded on a communal social location with a group experiencing outsider status within the social structure, which leads to an

interpretation the lifestyle of those involved. In *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, Sandra Harding in the “Introduction: Standpoint Theory as a Site of Political Philosophic and Scientific Debate” contends that the Standpoint Theory emerged in the 1970s and 80s as a critical feminist theory about relations between the production of knowledge and practice of power (1-2). She further contends that the Standpoint Theory is a way “of empowering oppressed groups, of valuing their experience, and of pointing towards a way to develop an oppositional consciousness” (1-2). Although not mentioned, Jesmina might have acquired this skill from her mother, grandmother, or another older female who passed on the knowledge, so this skill has empowered her to rise above the economic constraints meted out to the people in her community. Memmi expounds on how the colonized is denied “liberty,” which is lack of basic choices and that “[l]iving conditions imposed on the colonized by colonization make no provision for [liberty]” (85-86). In a counter narrative to colonization, through her craft, Mais sanctions Jesmina liberating herself.

Additionally, Jesmina is empowered because she does not have to work with anyone and is able to stay at home, from where she works, to care for her family members who need her help. She also works at her own leisure, taking time out to construct her thoughts psychologically to face her problems as she works at her own pace. “Jesmina sat before her sewing machine, sewing a dress, and every now and then she would stop sewing, and rest her chin on her hand, and give her mind over to the thoughts that perplexed her” (149). If Jesmina were not self-employed, she would not have this freedom. In the patriarchal colonial society, Mais, with his all-inclusive stance,

gives women a voice through Jesmina and her craft. Jesmina is not empowered by men nor does she help to place men in dominant positions because through her craft, she does not fall into the capitalistic, political, or social viewpoint that place a bias on women who are expected to marginalize themselves to position men into a more privileged vantage point (Harstock 290-300).

Shoemaking

Mais in presenting the importance of art as an economic sustainer, that disrupts the colonial mandate to keep Afro-Jamaicans oppressed, focuses on Brother Man who is a shoemaker, and he barely mentions another cobbler, in *The Hills*, Mass Mose (7). Like Jesmina, his house accommodates his trade, so he has the freedom as a sole proprietor to work on his own accord without any pressure from the capitalistic colonial dictate whose aim is to preserve a working class that is dependent on their colonizers. Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* explains how low-paying workers are perpetuated to benefit the colonizers. “The lowest and the only necessary rate of wages is that which provides for the subsistence of the worker during work and for a supplement adequate to raise a family so that the race of workers does not die out” (qtd. in Marx 69).

Brother Man also serves his community as he makes and repairs shoes, which is a very expensive commodity for the poor. In the 50s, many Jamaicans were still walking barefooted, especially school-age children who went to school without shoes. It is within this setting that Mais introduces Brother Man as an appropriate hardworking craft man in his poor community offering a vital service to his community. Mais introduces Brother Man at his craft when the novel opens: “Brother Man sat at his cobbler’s bench before

the open window looking out upon the lane . . . He was putting heels to a pair of slippers” (22). Again, like Jesmina. Brother Man must have learned this craft from an older relative or an older trade’s man who taught him and made him become self-sufficient.

When Minette goes to live with Brother Man, she is taught the rudiments of this craft. While she is not able to build a shoes or repair heels, she “sat on a lower stool, at his feet, blackening a pair of shoes” (22). Mais has crossed stereotypical barriers, another stance in the art of protest, as he presents Minette doing a male oriented task. In Jamaica, tasks are gendered even today but more so in the 1950s. However, Mais does not ascribe to gendering his characters as seen in Chapter 3 where there is an emphasis on families in protests and where there are several strong female-headed households. Mais’s representation highlights the need for sharing skill sets that are cultural and economically viable. Thus, Minette is living with Brother Man, so with her assisting him, he will be able to use his craft to gain more money as he passes on certain skills to her. Brother Man is disrupting colonization, as Taylor explains, with the “behavior of the colonized who constantly resist the system of oppression while appearing to submit” (130) because he lives in depraved conditions even though he could become employed as a skilled shoemaker by a larger company.

Brother Man’s craft serves as an intersection for him to stay in tune with his community and have social relationships, but he serves the members economically through the earnings from his craft. From the visits of the clients, he is able to build social relationships with the members of the community, since he works at his own pace

and even if he has to take a break, at times, to socialize, he would not be penalized.

Brother Man develops a relationship with “a boy with a hoop [who] came in through the street gate to the window. And stood looking in. He said, ‘Miss Ida sen’ me fo’ de shoes, sah, if you finish with sem.’ ‘that you, Joe? Yes, come right in. Be finished in a minute with Miss Ida’s slippers’” (30). Brother Man engages the child who looks extremely poor. The boy asks for a dead bird, which the shoemaker had collected earlier, because he wanted it to cook and eat. In compassion, Brother Man observes the boy “through the torn shirt” and looks “at the thin wasted belly” (30) then gives him the bird. In addition, when the boy pays Brother Man for the shoes, Brother Man says, ‘You a good boy, here is sixpence’ (31). Brother Man’s generosity is known throughout the community. The boy hesitates to take the money that Brother Man earns from his craft because he remembers his Aunt Ida saying that Brother Man is ‘always givin’ his money away to people who don’t need it’ (31). Brother Man serves his community through his craft as he realizes that his gift at shoemaking is there to serve the poor people among whom he lives.

Blacksmith and Sculpture

Mais recognizes the importance of the cultural art forms that the marginalized employs. This recognition becomes evident with Jake who uses art as aesthetics; he is creating a wooden sculpture, which is also a craft for economic gains, since he is a blacksmith, to revolt against societal constraints. Jake uses two modes of artistic expressions, which is not strange, because as an intuitive artist, he creates both aesthetic pieces as a sculptor and as a blacksmith; he creates other pieces for consumption. Hence,

while his craft is economically viable, it cannot be ignored that most artists, through their artistry, seek to gain a sense of fulfillment through critical praise that can lead to fame and eventually profit. Thus, Jake uses his artistic abilities with the hope of gaining fame, as he is already, somewhat, economically gratified. Tyler Cowen and Alexander Tabbarock in, “An Economic Theory of Avant-Garde and Popular art or High and Low Culture,” note that most “artists produce works of art that please themselves in addition to pleasing the market” (232). Mais promotes art for art’s sake as well as using craft to suffice the artist’s economic needs. Thus, the oppressed is revolting by indulging in aesthetic art, which is seen as “high art” that is associated with the upper classes, and most importantly, the marginalized is using art to become self-sufficient.

Jake is a blacksmith who owns his business, but his artistic establishment is more expansive—though not massive—than the others encountered in Mais’s other two novels. Additionally, he has workers who help him to gain economic success, but he is the solitary worker on his aesthetic art piece. Moreover, similar to Jesmina and Brother Man, he has a heart for his people whom he also helps financially. Like the other crafters, he is able to close his shop for various reasons because his craft affords him the same freedom that Jesmina and Brother Man gain through their skills. The freedom he has becomes apparent because he had the liberty to close his shop to be in the company of his friend Amos. “Jake, too, came a walk into the wood. He was looking for Amos; had heard he had gone that way. He had closed the blacksmith shop, things were slow just now; left it to the boy, George, to lock up” (33). The Jake’s freedom counters the bondage that is forced on members of society when working for the colonial capitalists.

Furthermore, “Amos had formed the habit of dropping in at the shop afternoons, and staying on till closing time” (66), which suggests that Jake is able to accommodate his friends while working because he is his own boss, which also shows a level of freedom. Mais projects this freedom as a protest against colonial constraints because in the marginalized space, Mais creates characters who he can use didactically to teach people in the same geosphere how to rise against their oppressors. Jake’s revelation about his life supports the idea of the more privileged helping each other in a marginalized space. “People say, and rightly too, even though it may sound like boasting, that Jake the blacksmith, that’s me, can make or mend most anything—from a pin to an anchor, from a bedspring to a tombstone, from a hasp-and-staple to a sewing machine.” Jake, clearly, is honing his craft; he continues by bringing to the fore the satisfaction that is gleaned by the practice of altruism: “I might have found other things that I like to do, that would bring in more money, perhaps; but nothing that would have served the needs of a greater number of people. My father owned the shop before me. He didn’t think himself too good to be a blacksmith. He gave me opportunities he never had. But that doesn’t mean he fix it so I’d be too good to work as he did, at this trade. It suits me.” (101).

Jake is from a legacy of blacksmiths who takes pride in their trade, so he has vowed to use his talent to help the people in the community who cannot afford to buy needed equipment when the ones they own need repairs. Jake has given his talents to his community because he knows that they cannot afford to buy new wares. Jake responds to his elders who think that he is wasting his talents because he could get a public service or teaching job with his education, which shows his deep commitment to his people: ‘If

there was no one to carry on this trade, what would happen to all the people around who need a blacksmith to mend or make things for them?’ (100). Furthermore, Jake tells how he has relieved Mother Bado’s pain because from he had fixed her mattress, “her pains left her, and she has never been bothered with them again” (101). Jake’s vow to help his community goes against the colonial capitalistic selfish lifestyle that promotes self-help only and the self-made man.

There seems to be a communal spirit in all three novels, so Jake also uses his craft as financial gains to help the people in his community. He accommodates Bess in his house who help him with his domestic chores after his wife leaves him. He later takes in Amos and helps him as discussed in Chapter 3. It is also notable that he has two young boys, George and Glen, who help him at the shop. Although it is arguable, Jake must have been teaching the young boys the trade in order to make them economically viable when they get older. The transmission of the craft skillset is another didactic act where Mais projects the idea that sharing skill sets will serve as further advancement for the next generation. There is also a reciprocal relationship because the boys did odd tasks for him as seen when “Glen and George had gone off to get firewood for the house. . . George had gone to get the firewood; it was one of his duties” (66). Mais, then, shows the close relationship between Jake who uses his craft that results in financial gain to help others in his community, which shows how the marginalized helps each other to survive despite the negative behavioral expectations from their colonizers as it is believe that the oppressed pits against each other. Sandra Pouchet. Paquet reveals in “The

Fifties” that “the freedom of choice and movement is part of the challenge of everyday life” (69) the people face in *Black Lightning*.

Mais introduces art in the form of sculpturing, also done by Jake, for aesthetic purposes and for self-fulfillment; hence, art for art’s sake, which seems to be less favored by Mais because of Jake’s demise. Jake

was particularly attached to the story of Samson. He had read it over many times, turning it over in his mind, mediating on it; thinking over the cause and issues of his life, and what must have gone on under the surface between himself and Delilah. Things that the *Bible* never mentioned at all, things other than, more complex and in a way more disturbing than what was disclosed in the bald account. (60)

Jake gets his inspiration to create his artistic piece from Samson’s story, which is fitting because his wife Estella elopes with another man; Jake takes care of her financially, yet she deceives him. Ironically, the story of Samson also foreshadows Jake’s life.

The description of the statue is much like an image of Jake as he sees himself as Samson. The “big carving he was engaged on just then, and had been working on for the past several months, was a life-size statue of Samson. He was carving it out of a solid block of mahogany. He worked in a kind of loft above the blacksmith’s shop. Then evenings he worked, after the shop was closed, and even at night, sometimes” (60). When Jake shows Amos the sculpture of Samson, Jake simultaneously explains his exhibition.

You see? They have put out his eyes out of his head. The Philistines done that to him. Because he was a strong man, and they were afraid And now he is leaning forward a little, bent with the great burden he has to bear; and his hand is resting on the shoulder of a little lad. Samson, leaning on a little lad! For you see, now he is weak, and wanting. Because they have put out his eyes. (109)

While Jake is describing his masterpiece, Amos trembles at the sight of it and is fearful because he sees a replica of Jake who is blinded and weakened after he has taken on all the burden of his life and people. Hence, Amos says, ‘Yes, I see it now. I see what you mean. It ain’t Samson anymore’ (112). Jake has placed all his cares and aspirations in Samson, but in foreshadowing Jake’s demise, Samson is weakened and has become dependent on a young boy, and Jake will face this dependence.

Additionally, Jake uses his artistic piece as a stress relieve as he is suffering emotionally. Jake’s dedication to his artistry is not normal because he seems to be obsessed with it, so when he goes blind and can no longer work on it, he destroys it and kills himself. Paquet believes that “Jake pursues an impossible ideal of independence both in his life and his art” (69); however, Jake’s ideal is to use his art to both serve his people and please himself, but when he becomes self-aggrandize with his sculpture, he goes on a downward spiral. Cultural economist, David Throsby, theorizes that “art has its price: for those producing it, for those consuming it for their private enjoyment, for those making voluntary donations to support it, and for those required to contribute to it by way of compulsory taxation” (276). For Jake, he paid the prize for producing the sculpture for self-fulfillment, which affirms that the colonized is placed in a position that

causes lack of self-esteem and prevent self-fulfillment as shown on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as upper tier needs. Paquet credits Mais as the first West Indian writer to have "given the dilemma of the West Indian artist and his relationship to his community such exclusive treatment" (69).

Mais realizes that for the oppressed, art for art's sake especially with intuitive artists usually lead to the starving artist, which does not fit into the marginalized community because while aesthetics in art is good, it can lead to narcissism, and it cannot feed the indigent. Thus, Jake's death is "not on a negligent or unappreciative community but on an unresolved tension within the artist himself" (Paquet 69), who was looking for self-fulfillment in building a man-size statue to represent him. The reason given for Jake's blindness is an infraction against God which is in the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20:3-5, which states,

3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God. (*The Holy Bible*)

Jake is forewarned about his actions by the warner woman Mother Koby about his graven image, his sculptor Samson, when she visits his shop. She tells him of the commandment, 'Do not tempt the Lord thy God for God is not

mocked! Repent! Turn away from your evil ways, before the wrath of God fall upon you. Repent!’

‘What’s it, Mother Koby? What I have done displeasing to God?’ (75).

After he is struck by lightning, Mother Koby reveals that Jake’s blindness is because he was carving the statue. She refers to the commandment again: ‘The Lord set it down, thou shalt not make any graven images; and that’s the very thing Jake done. I warned him. And now you see what happen. He been making them images a long time, and it’s all contrary to the word of God’ (116). While Jake helps the community through his craft, he disobeys God as he violates one of the commandments, as he started indulging in egocentricity, which is not healthy in a communal society, so it led to his demise.

Chapter Summary

Mais’s inclusion of the creative arts of the oppressed as mainly tools of communication, stress relief, entertainment, self-indulgence, and most importantly poverty alleviation has highlighted Jamaican folk cultures which can be linked to several historical presence in Jamaica who used these tools to revolt. These hybrid cultures serve as revolting mechanisms because they help the social and emotional states of the characters along with their monetary gains. Mais’s novels with musical sounds and intuitive arts address more than the popular Reggae music that has garnered fame all over the world. These creative art forms encourage relationships and communal living. The artists’ selflessness is shown, which disrupts the stereotypical belief that oppressed people fight against each other, but when narcissism is evident, disaster occurs, giving a

sense of ambivalence on Mais's part for art of art's sake—its aesthetics. Mais's presentation of art in his text places intuitive artists in Jamaica in the forefront as their contributions that help the people disturb the colonial mandate to strip the oppressed of freedoms. Fanon establishes that “[i]n the man of color there is a constant effort to run away from his own individuality, to annihilate his own presence” (*Black* 60) because of the history of oppression that is associated with Afro-Jamaicans who are still marginalized because they are forced to deny self. Mais, however, depicts strong male and female characters who have taken on the tasks to affirm Afro-Jamaicans and conversely, revolt against the colonizers who have mechanisms in place to keep colonized people subservient. Using cultural art as revolt is a way to take back what the colonizers stole as expressed by Memmi who assesses the colonized cultural identity stating that “[c]olonial racism is built from three major ideological components: one, the gulf between the culture of the colonialist and the colonized; two, the exploitation of these differences for the benefits of the colonialist; three, the use of these supposed differences as standards of absolute fact” (71). Mais, however, uses creative arts in his novels to debunk the colonial set-up to belittle and divide the colonized through their cultural products.

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusion

The research objective, to establish Mais's novels as a practical guidebook for oppressed Blacks, based on both the literature review and the pragmatic research that was conducted, led to an overall enhancement of the writer's personal research objectives, proving that Mais's writings received minimal attention; establishing pioneering deductions from his novels that were never considered or explored before, leading to Mais's novels being significant if not the standard in contributing to Black people's evolution through hybrid religious practices, family structure, and artistic endeavors in order to survive while deliberately disrupting colonial ideals.

Generally, Mais focuses on penurious characters; he understands their mind-set, and he offers solutions to fit their various needs; hence, he introduces the idea of religion as an affirmative device as well as a revolutionary tool. Already established as the ethical principles that are common to a group of people, religion addresses what people highly esteem; it elucidates their life, and provides sanctity from eventualities that are a natural part of their existence. Religion equally takes into account political, social and economic issues. Mais's novels, *The Hills Were Joyful Together*, *Brother Man*, and *Black Lightning* provide an outlet for the challenges faced by the marginalized and concurrently offer the strategies that can lead the society to give positive regard to the marginalized's demand, which is to practically acknowledge and respect their humanity, since involuntarily they are placed in positions within the society that negatively affect their social, economic, and political life and lifestyle. Thus, Mais presents characters who adopt and illustrate passive-aggressive forms of insurgence and coinciding

assertion, and because of Mais's varied demonstrations of hybrid African religions that Jamaicans practice, he ensures that his characters accentuate how the advent of colonization has aggressively sought to diminish and make extinct these religious observations. However, for practical purposes, Mais similarly uses his characters to validate that by any means necessary, whether through obvious or imperceptible means, Jamaicans and poor people by extension, affix value, significance, and pride in the retention and demonstration of these hybrid religious creeds. Throughout his novels, Mais inserts societal unsanctioned religious practices that are unique to poor Black people.

Further, as evidenced in *Bother Man*, Mais magnifies and elevates Blacks through his characterization of Brother Man; he equally mocks the oppressive system when he diminishes and makes questionable the traditional belief that a White Christ exists. What Mais strategically does is to place Blacks in an elevated position when he presents Brother Man as replacing a White Christ who is acknowledge and endorsed by the society; how he ingeniously upsets the traditional thinking that the savior of the world is White and affluent to being replaced by a Black and poor person is remarkable. In his bid for parity, Mais illustrates how other Afrocentric religions are still relevant even though slavery was abolished; thus, regardless of the socio-economic conditions of his characters, they are financially poor, but cognitively high-spirited and hopeful, he uses them to exhibit strength of character, perseverance, and shrewdness as they make effective, through non-traditional religious practices, the plan to get society's attention in an effort to resolve if not totally alleviate their oppressive conditions.

In addition, while society projects legal marriages as the standard, and in an effort to debunk this concept, Mais uses different types of families to illustrate the legitimacy of common-law unions. Mais raises but does not explicitly answer questions on the superficial slant that the legal marriage often purports, in an effort to conform to society's dictates, when he juxtaposes common-law unions with legal unions. For Mais, the legally binding marriage and the common-law union are on par. In his rendition of *Black Lightning*, to rehash his attitude towards demeaning the colonial family stereotypes to which the oppressed are subjected, Mais cunningly uses Jake and his wife's relationship—a legally binding marriage—to progress into a separation and an eventual common-law union. Jake's wife, Estella, deserts him and goes to live with her lover in a common-law union, and Jake invites Amos, his long-time friend to share his home with him. This type of family arrangement strongly indicates if not confirms a homosexual relationship. While Mais does not support homosexuality, he was a Rastafarian, and homosexuality does not conform to the teachings of Rastafarianism, it can be reasonably assumed that the insertion of Jake into Amos's household is directly revolting against traditional marriages and equally asserting that legally binding marriages are, like any other union, flawed and not guaranteed to make individuals gratified. In addition, to make even more distinct the defects of the legal marriage as the standard, and contrasting that belief with the usefulness of the common-law union, the practice of colonialism in reverse becomes evident. Oppressed people rescind the colonial practice of legal marriage and instead form and maintain common-law or non-legal unions, which are socially scrutinized.

Furthermore, in keeping with his mandate to belittle societal values, Mais inserts the idea of creative arts— hybrid cultures— to give audience to the oppressed. These practices not only offer economic relief for the improvised communities, they debunk the colonizer’s mind-set to keep the underserved consistently economically deficient; they also serve as a means of social uplift, hence, affirming the marginalized. Further, the utilization of cultural arts as an insurgent device indicates a spirit of strong rebellion arising from the recognition that the intent of the colonizers was to divide and conquer even through colonial mores that were known and practiced by the marginalized.

This study sought to raise an awareness of the tools of affirmation and resistance that the poor employ to expose society’s overpowering influence on their religious practices, family constructs, and creative arts observances. The study also sought to finally establish Mais’s literary tenacity as significant to the advancement of poor Black people’s humanity, which concurs with a thought-provoking pronouncement made by Garvey, “Ambition . . . is a burning flame that lights up the life of the individual and makes him see himself in another state” (qtd. in Lee 38). Moreover, the evidences of revolt and simultaneous affirmation support Mais’s mission to realistically elicit, establish, and maintain change for the marginalized.

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