

【연구논문】

## Plural Masculinities and Postcoloniality in Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance*

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Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1979) is a classical postcolonial text that raises questions of colonial legacy and its impact on the local system in post-independent Trinidad. In the text, the four male characters, Aldrick, Fisheye, Philo, and Pariag, each experience identity crises and threats to their masculinities as symptoms of postcolonial trauma. All of them reside in Calvary Hill, an economic ghetto in Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad. Carnival played a significant role in this community since it enabled lower-class men costumed as the Dragon to be a powerful (yet temporary) threat to the colonial hegemonic system while reaffirming the core identity of the community. Yet Carnival, after Emancipation, gradually becomes tourist attraction, losing its original meaning. Aldrick and Fisheye, the Dragon and the Bad John in Carnival, begin to question the true power of Carnival and, consequently, their

masculine warrior identity. Meanwhile, Philo and Pariag, who were already marginalized men due to their lack of manliness, gain social mobility by skillfully adapting themselves to the new social system of neoliberalism and a new gender role. This inversion of the traditional hierarchy of masculinities between local men indicates the dramatic upheaval of gender as a system in post-independent Trinidad. Simply put, *The Dragon Can't Dance* is a story of local men's postcolonial survivals and failures in the wake of dramatic changes to the social system and local community.

Despite its literary importance in depicting Caribbean postcoloniality, *The Dragon Can't Dance* has not attracted the attention of many feminist critics in Caribbean Studies due to the marginal position of female characters (mostly as sexual objects) and its excessive emphasis on male experiences as universal postcolonial memory. Recent development in Masculinities Studies, however, provides new critical lens to read the book. Through this lens, one can reinterpret the male centrality of the text as a critical space for local masculinities interwoven with postcolonialism. Echoing the interests of Masculinities Studies, this essay aims to explore the representation of postcolonial masculinities in Trinidad, particularly lower-class men's masculinities, in order to see how the postcolonial condition and colonial legacy modify, disrupt, and reconstruct gender roles and the relationships between men. To be specific, this study examines the intersection of postcoloniality and gender by reading *The Dragon Can't Dance* as a novel which bears witness to the impact of postcolonial trauma on the masculinities of lower class men. In doing

so, I argue the text negates the homogenous notion of postcolonial masculinity and presents new types of postcolonial masculinities. In the first half of this essay, I will explain my theoretical engagement with the intersection of Postcolonial Studies and Masculinities Studies through the literary review of the book, whereas the second half will be devoted to the textual analysis of diverse representations of postcolonial masculinities in *The Dragon Can't Dance*.

## **1. The Era of an Impotent Dragon and Postcolonial Masculinities**

Earl Lovelace is a Caribbean novelist and journalist. Born in 1935, Trinidad, Lovelace has written about social changes and clashes in postcolonial Trinidad, winning several prestigious awards, such as Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1997. The anxiety of lower-class men in postcolonial Trinidad has been a recurring theme for Lovelace. *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1979), *The Wine of Astonishment* (1983), *Salt* (1996), and *Is Just a Movie* (2011) regularly address the postcolonial dilemmas of local men and their difficulties in adjusting to neoliberal culture within Trinidad. Lovelace strongly believes in the importance of local cultures, especially the role of Carnival as a symbolic resistance of colonial power and as a source of freedom claimed from the bottom.

Given the fact that indigenous cultural practices, such as the Dragon dance, Devil play, and steelband, are often performed and lead by the group of lower-class men, Lovelace's concern about

Carnival—corrupted by capitalist logic and degraded to a mere tourist attraction—is related to his concern of local masculinities. In his 1998 essay “The Emancipation-Jouvay Tradition and the Almost Loss of Pan,” Lovelace laments the contemporary condition of post-independent Trinidad:

When we woke up to the realisation that we were independent and that independence meant having a culture that we could call our own, we discovered that all we had that might be termed indigenous or native was what had been created or resembled and maintained here by those at the bottom of the economic ladder ... Independence was to face us with the questions: How were the people of this diverse society to access these native elements of what was now being seen as fueling a culture which all of us were to share? How was this society to authentically access cultural institutions that grew out of the struggles in particular circumstances by ordinary Black people for their self-affirmation and liberation? (56)

In the passage, Lovelace expresses his anxiety about losing the original function of “a culture that we could call our own” (i.e. Carnival) when he questions the present community’s ability to maintain its rebellious power earned by “those at the bottom of the economic ladder.” Since he himself was actively involved in the People’s National Movement (PNM) (the political movement aiming to win back the political power from the former colonial system) Lovelace mourns the loss of Carnival’s true power in Trinidad. This nostalgia motivates him to write nationalist and postcolonial texts, focusing especially on the confusion of local men located at the bottom of economic hierarchy after the People’s National Movement. For him, the original Carnival culture once represented an alternative

cultural institution, one that grew from the struggles of “ordinary Black people for their self-affirmation and liberation” without conforming to global capitalism. In this sense, his concerns direct to the cultural institution which now loses its political momentum in the contemporary Trinidad.

Most readings of *The Dragon Can't Dance* in the 1980s focused on Carnival and the identity crisis of Aldrick – Aldrick being a representative postcolonial subject. Anthonia Ekpa, for instance, notes that the book deals with Aldrick questioning the reality of his existence and seeing how he could adapt himself in the New World (69). Similarly, Bill Schwarz analyzes *The Dragon Can't Dance* as a story of “a new black subject” desperately looking for “[an] individual's place within the group,” “the sense of a moral order,” and “a hope for redemption and salvation” (11). These criticisms investigate the stream of consciousness of Aldrick, the protagonist and the Dragon in Carnival, representing it as existential crisis of a postcolonial subject.

The critics' understanding of Aldrick as a gender-neutral, universal subject reveals certain limitation by excluding the experience of women from postcolonial history. Aldrick as a universal male subject assumes a homogenous post-colonial experience, namely the experience of a black male subject. As one can see in the passage above, Lovelace's repeated use of rhetorical “we” does not consider indigenous female voices in the discourse; Carnival, often situated in the context of performing exaggerated manliness and masculine violence, marginalizes the role of women in its depiction of postcolonial history. Max Harris's ethnographical essay, for instance,

attributes the degeneration of Carnival culture in Trinidad to the “impotence of Dragons” (108). The sexual connotation of the term “impotence” reveals the collapse of masculine authority in the region, for an “impotent” Dragon is no longer able to reproduce a child, thus fails to control his woman, whose body often symbolizes “land” in a colonial context. In other words, the same political movement which espoused the unification of people within Trinidad often excluded the voices of underrepresented groups, such as women, under the catchphrase like “Carnival! Trinidad! All o’ we is one we is all one people, No matter what they say, all o’ we is one” (Lovelace 19).<sup>1)</sup>

The triviality of female characters and the underestimation of female subjectivity in *The Dragon Can’t Dance* explain the lack of feminist attention to the text in the 1990s, when feminist discourse in Caribbean Studies became more common. The text hardly appealed to feminist scholars who critically revised dominant discourses about female sexuality (Eudine Barriteau), motherhood (Patricia Mohammed), and sexual violence against women (Rhoda Reddock) in the Caribbean. Feminist literary critics also preferred to focus on the marginal voices of Caribbean women, as created by female writers such as Jamaican Kincaid, Jean Binta Breeze, and Dionne Brand.

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1) Many feminist scholars have pointed out the marginalization or the invisibility of women in the history of Caribbean, thus tried to broaden the scope of female participation. Reddock points out that “what was notably missing from the struggle for national liberation in the Caribbean was any sense of materially rewarding the contribution of women who contributed significantly to that struggle” (103). Caribbean feminist critics deconstruct the myth of Caribbean nationalists by interrogating the patriarchal system operated within anti-colonial nationalist movement.

Even though it was often referred to as a landmark classic and the most commonly used Caribbean literary text in classroom, *The Dragon Can't Dance* only received indifferent responses from feminist critics in 1990s.

It was not until the late 1990s that *The Dragon Can't Dance* garnered new attention from the emerging field of Masculinity Studies.<sup>2)</sup> Linden Lewis's pioneering work, "Masculinity and the Dance of the Dragon: Reading Lovelace Discursively" (1998), deals with the construction and negotiation of masculinity in the Lovelace's book. He interprets the marginal places of female characters in the book as rich sources of multiple masculinities, by showing how Lovelace uses invisible female voices as a voice of reason to guide male subjects. In this context, the essay provides new layers to the textual site of Caribbean masculinity and diversifies the types of masculinities in the book, specifically looking at minor characters like Pariag and Philo. Even though he does not exclusively use the concept of plural masculinities, the essay successfully "genders" male characters who often do not view themselves as gendered beings and, at the same time, complicates the homogeneous notion of postcolonial masculinity in Trinidad—the masculinity of the Dragon. Later scholarship on Lovelace's text, including Kenneth Ramchand's "Calling All Dragons: The Crumbling of Caribbean Masculinity" (2003), shares in Lewis' views.

Although my essay is greatly indebted to this previous scholarship,

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2) The new interest in Masculinities Studies provokes special attention in local masculinities in Caribbean. Many social science scholars have discussed the marginalization of men in Caribbean. See Rhoda Reddock's introduction of *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinity* (2004).

one critical flaw in Lewis' reading is that he does not sufficiently investigate the specific historical and political condition for constructing these diverse masculinities, namely postcoloniality.<sup>3)</sup> In other words, the study simply (yet elegantly) lists different types of masculinities without documenting the social and cultural structure of these masculinities. The structure of colonialism enables different masculinities to be gathered into one common figure (i.e. a postcolonial subject) or to create tension between those masculinities. In addition, I argue that reading postcolonial masculinities in *The Dragon Can't Dance* requires an intersectional model which addresses postcolonial masculinity and other factors, such as ethnicity, social reputation, and the degree of manliness. Although these lower-class men share the experience of the postcolonial condition, the text displays the diversification of their masculinities. Any analysis of these masculinities, then, must be dynamic and intersectional. For instance, even though all male characters reside in Calvary Hill, their respective social reputations in the community are widely differentiated, and the way each character deals with postcolonial trauma is varied. Thus the book addresses the complicated spectrum of masculinities beyond the dualistic division between hegemonic and marginal masculinities. *The Dragon Can't Dance* manifests an existing hierarchy even among marginalized, underrepresented groups of men.

I borrow analytical categories which maintain an awareness of the power differentials between different kinds of men. R. W. Connell in

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3) In this context, I use the prefix *post* of postcoloniality as a chronological and spatial construction of post-independence from colonial rule, than the de-colonizing practice.

his influential book *Masculinities* (1995) outlines four categories of levels of masculine privilege: hegemonic, complicit, marginalized, and subordinated. He defines hegemonic masculinity as a dominant form of masculinity and complicit masculinity as gender practices which do not fit characteristics of hegemonic masculinity but admire it (78-79). Marginalized masculinity is excluded from most of the patriarchal privilege, but still subscribe to norms of hegemonic masculinity like physical strength and aggression (80). Subordinated masculinity is located at the bottom of the power hierarchy because it exhibits the opposite values of hegemonic masculinity, such as physical weakness or femininity (78). In this context, the four characters in *The Dragon Can't Dance* can be divided into two groups: marginalized masculinity (Fisheye and Aldrick) and subordinated masculinity (Philo and Pariag).<sup>4)</sup> Compared to the first two of Connell's categories, both marginalized and subordinated masculinities are unable to share in the privilege of or conform to the major patriarchal masculinity due to their minority positionality (in *The Dragon's* case, economic inferiority and race). Yet the hierarchical relation between the two demonstrated categories (marginalized/subordinated) is still applicable based on their degree of "manliness." For instance, all four characters commonly question their masculinities and their authority as men, obsessively wishing for others to recognize their presence. Nevertheless

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4) In *The Dragon Can't Dance*, the institutionalized power and capital, which become the most important factors in defining hegemonic masculinity, still exist in various form, the Guy (rent collector and later politician), police, young lawyer, judge, and a professor. All of them are examples of hegemonic masculinities compared to Aldrick, Fisheye, Philo, and Pariag. The book does not explicitly describe the presence of these hegemonic masculinities purposefully; they remain abstract, vague, and nameless.

they find different ways to deal with their anxiety at the end of the novel. Even though I am keenly aware of the fact that categorization often simplifies complex phenomena, I argue that grouping the male characters into two categories can allow us to glimpse the author's position on postcolonial masculinities. This will be discussed in the following section showing how the narrative structure of the novel reflects the tension between marginalized and subordinated masculinities.

## **2. Men at Risk in *The Dragon Can't Dance***

The prologue of *The Dragon Can't Dance* displays apocalyptic scenery of postcolonial Trinidad in a fictional space called "Calvary Hill." Calvary Hill, a central setting of the novel, is a social, cultural, economic ghetto where "the sun sets on starvation and rises on potholed roads" and children hold "their poverty as a possession" (10). Located at the bottom of the social hierarchy, Calvary Hill accepts "misfits" from Port of Spain, the capital city of Trinidad. The marginality of the place attracts its own dwellers as it "hold[s] the people who come to the edge of this city to make it home" (10). This sense of community ("to make it home") emerges from its exclusion ("the edge of this city"), establishing its core identity as a place of outcasts. Calvary Hill, in this sense, shows how the colonial system has affected the most fragile underprivileged local community after the emancipation:

Emancipation, that emancipated them to a more profound idealness and

waste when, refusing to be grist for the mill of the colonial machinery that kept on grinding in its belly people to spit out sugar and cocoa and copra, they turned up this hill to pitch camp here on the eyebrow of the enemy, to cultivate again with no less fervor the religion with its Trinity of Idleness, Laziness and Waste. (10-11)

Calvary Hill embodies both a critical and marginal perspective against hegemonic power, hence it is the place of interest only to underprivileged people. The passage illustrates how neoliberalism takes the place of colonialism, implying that political independence does not guarantee complete freedom from the world system.<sup>5)</sup> Global capitalism even more thoroughly monopolizes the economic resources of the local in post-independent Trinidad. Even though the community is overwhelmed by a sense of defeat, Calvary Hill is still a battle field where locals continue to resist or are forced to resist again “the colonial machinery” and its beneficiaries. They refuse to be involved in colonial economic system represented as “sugar and cocoa and copra.” In other words, their marginality enables them to have a critical view on the dominant economic system (colonial machinery) and the institutional censorship (the eyebrow of the enemy). Yet their resistance is also an act of self-defeat because they adapt the passive strategy of do-nothing, and consequently the community loses its vitality except in “profound idleness and waste” (11).

The prologue moves forward from the overall description of the

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5) The award-winning documentary film *Life and Debt* directed by Stephanie Black deals with the problem of debt in Caribbean in the context of global economic system. The film blames the IMF for the economic failure of Jamaica in relation to the global chain system of debt and loan. Before, the blame had been often directed to the corruption of the local government.

town to the more detailed inner lives of the locals, giving the reader a more substantial depiction of the Hill:

[Y]oung men get off street corners where they had watched and waited, rubber-tipped sticks peeping out of their back pockets, killing time in dice games, watching the area high-school girls ripening, holding over them the promise of violence and the threat of abuse to keep them respectful, to discourage them from passing them by with that wonderful show of contempt such schoolgirls seem to be required to master to lift them above these slums and these ‘hooligans,’ their brethren. (11)

Notably, the passage displays the gendered division of Calvary Hill between street boys and high school girls and their different ways to deal with postcolonial reality. Although all of them reside in the same community and share similar economic status, they are isolated from each other. The street corner where the boys spend most of their time indicates that they are free from parental surveillance but, at the same time, deprived of proper care and safety. While boys physically “occupy” street corners, girls “pass” it to go school. Girls prepare for their future by gaining the social mobility to escape Calvary Hill through education (“lift them above these slums”). In contrast, boys only live in the moment, watching girls or gambling. They are always “staying” in the street corner, while girls are expected to “enter” or “exit” Calvary Hill. This dichotomy evokes the temporality of the street corner as a space of transition, providing the social identity of boys.

The gendered division of Calvary Hill does not fit the typical patriarchal model—men obtaining more privilege than women. Errol

Miller's *Men at Risk* (1991) provides a persuasive historical analysis of the subversion of the traditional gender hierarchy between lower class men and women in postcolonial Trinidad. He argues that, "ruling minority males purposely restrict the number of black males who are allowed upward mobility, with the result that black women inadvertently benefit and enjoy greater socioeconomic advancement than black men" (27). In this sense, females outnumbering males in higher education in Trinidad demonstrates how neoliberalism disrupts the local gender orders and roles. Neoliberalism has an implicit gender politics applicable to local human resources; for example, international corporations often prefer indigenous female workers to male workers due to their perceived obeisant and non-threatening behaviors. These companies tend to pay local women less, thereby benefiting financially as well while excluding the majority of male workers from the market. Local families are keenly aware of, and respond to, this need for transnational capital and market. For example, Caribbean parents often give better care to female children (more lunch money and school tuition) while many fail to control misbehaving sons (Chevannes 218-19). This phenomenon has provoked anxieties about the marginalization of working-class men in the Caribbean as the prologue describes. Discourse around these anxieties often contain misguided hatred of local women, who are thought to have stolen men's jobs. Yet Trinidad women in general are still marginalized both in public and private spheres in terms of gender discrimination and minimum wage. Thus rather than situating the problem as a competition between lower-class men and women, it would be more productive to consider the problem in the context of

the hierarchical relationship between transnational hegemonic masculinity (hegemonic) and local working class masculinity (marginal). This kind of relationship can be seen in the case of Aldrick and Fisheye.

### **3. The Downfall of Marginal Masculinities in the Dragon and the Bad John**

Traditional notions of lower-class masculinity in Trinidad are historically linked with the figure of the Bad Johns and Dragons, the Carnival characters that local men play. Historically speaking, Carnival has been an important source for the construction of masculinity in relation to the colonial history of Trinidad and, more generally, the festival has played a pivotal role for Trinidadians resisting British colonial oppression. Mikhail Bakhtin argues that during the Carnival, the controlling and suppressing power of the state and colonial system is temporarily suspended (124-5). The non-ordinariness of Carnival allows the public appropriation of critical power against the higher authority. Local masculinities, as the product of social and cultural practices, have been performed and reshaped throughout Carnival. The music of steelband and the dance of the Dragon, in this context, were the symbolic vehicles of indigenous resistance against colonial oppression and exploitation, mostly performed by Black lower-class men.<sup>6)</sup> Both Aldrick and Fisheye are

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6) The Trinidad government, for instance, introduced a Music Bill which prohibited the playing of drums between the hours of 6am to 10pm except with a police license (Brereton 21).

respected “warriors” in the carnival, and their performances draw attention from the public. Aldrick wants to be seen in his Dragon costume as “he demanded that others see him, recognize his personhood, be warned of his dangerousness” (36). Fisheye also desires to prove his manliness as a guardian of the Hill during Carnival.

The masculinities of Fisheye (Bad John) and Aldrick (Dragon) can be categorized as *marginalized masculinities*. As I mention above, marginalized masculinity is a form of masculinity in which a man does not have access to the prestige and privilege of hegemonic masculinity because he is also part of an oppressed minority due to race or poverty. However, he still subscribes to norms that are emphasized in hegemonic masculinity, such as aggression and manliness. Marginalized masculinities are marked as belonging to disenfranchised groups, thus fluctuating between access to and rejection from hegemonic masculinity. This creates the flexible positionality and ambiguity of marginalized masculinity. For instance, both Aldrick and Fisheye, lower-class Black men, are not capable of playing the traditional role of a breadwinner (“I can’t afford a woman”). However, their manliness enables them to earn social prestige as the Dragon dancer and Bad John in Calvary Hill.

Simply put, Carnival is a formidable opportunity for lower-class men to recover their humiliated masculinity and reaffirm their power within the community. The temporality of Carnival, however, restricts the effect of this reclamation to a short period of time; after Carnival, everything returns to the way it was and nothing changes. *The Dragon Can't Dance*, in this context, critically portrays the after-

Carnival life of Aldrick and Fisheye, when they are no longer able to find social acknowledgement of their masculinities. In this portrayal, Lovelace (who himself used to strongly believe in the power of Carnival as an indigenous form of resistance) raises a question of the festival's effectiveness in contemporary Trinidad through the male identity crises of Aldrick and Fisheye.

Aldrick embodies the dualistic division of Carnival and non-Carnival times. He only lives for Carnival, and thus the rest of his life is spent making his Dragon costume. He is socially and economically helpless, since he does not even know "where his next meal was coming from," and would "get up at midday from sleep, yawn, stretch, then start to think of where he might get something to eat" (11). His rejection of working for money (playing the role of a breadwinner) is his way of reacting against neoliberalism and the exploitation of indigenous people. All the same, his choice also causes him to isolate from reality. Although he does not submit to the hegemonic powers, he also has no way out. In the book, Aldrick spends most of his time in his small room that protects him from the outside world. As a result, his alienation from the outside world makes him a selfish and helpless Dragon whose influence gradually diminished in the non-Carnival world. As Aldrick keeps refusing to communicate with others, his rebellious power as a Carnival Dragon does not influence the world outside his room. Sylvia, whom Aldrick loves, is only allowed to stand in front of the door—without entering—because he has "no space even to invite you in" (42). Aldrick's small room becomes his refuge from the non-Carnival world, reflecting his closed inner mind. He is afraid of Sylvia threatening his

fragile masculinity when she attempts to knock on his door, because he interprets her action as the invasion of his inner world. As a result, Aldrick never challenges the hegemonic system itself: He never fights back to Mr. Guy who is “stepping around like a proper gentleman and screwing all the little girls [including Sylvia] on the Hill” (31). Aldrick's failure as a hero originates from his excessive idealization of Carnival and his lack of action in ordinary life. This idealization often forces him to pursue too passive and pessimistic views of the non-Carnival world without negotiating his needs of Carnival for a greater cause.

While Aldrick faces his male crisis by alienating himself in a limited space and only looks forward to two Carnival days a year, Fisheye tries to recover his masculine pride by expanding his territory and making every day a Carnival day. Fisheye, “a hell of a man,” constructs his masculinity based on extreme violence and physical strength, so that “even the police were reluctant to meddle in” (47). He reaffirms his masculinity by wandering around looking for fights. Since his masculinity can only be stabilized via constant reaffirmation of its power and influence over others, it is also in a fragile and contradictory state. Yet Fisheye does not use his powerful warrior identity to resist against the hegemonic and dominant group who is “keeping down black people” (59). Instead he uses his power to eject subordinated men like Philo and Pariag from the Hill.

Not only does the novel point out the problems of Aldrick and Fisheye's marginal masculinities, it also questions how these characters can survive in post-colonial Trinidad where the original meaning of Carnival is gradually changed by global capital and tourism:

“I is a dragon. I have fire in my belly and claws in my hands; watch me! Note me well, for I am ready to burn down your city. I am ready to tear you apart, limb by limb.” They grinned nervously and rushed hands into their pockets to find coins to offer him in appeasement. But no. No. He refused the money ... He wanted them to know that he would always be threatening there, a breath away from them. (124)

Here the Carnival can no longer provide what Aldrick wants. The Dragon amuses people rather than threatens; his horrifying language fails when the audience takes it as an empty threat. His performance is measured by “coins.” When tourism encroaches on Carnival and reshapes its original form, Aldrick remains completely helpless. Likewise, Fisheye is terrified when he finds out that “all he met with were old Bad Johns, warriors who had seen their time and lived now on their fame, their very names forgotten by everyone outside a small circle of acquaintances” (53). Fisheye is only a mediocre man in the new world where all his past reputation is no longer recognizable. Although both Aldrick and Fisheye play traditional masculine characters, such as Dragon and Bad John, they desperately need to reaffirm their power and influence over others in order to believe they are still alive. And when the social recognition is no longer available, their masculine subjectivities are impaired to the extreme extent.

In this context, it is not surprising that Aldrick and Fisheye disappear from the text after they are imprisoned due to their only and last battle against the government in chapter 13. The disappearance, I argue, reflects Lovelace’s view on the marginal masculinities of Aldrick and Fisheye. Out of impulse and desperation,

Aldrick and Fisheye try to replace Carnival—that already lost its original function—with the armed protest in Woodford Squire, a historic place where the slaves fought against their masters. Despite being unsure, or even misguided about their aims, Aldrick and Fisheye attempt to show off their influence in public, demonstrating that “[they] are armed and dangerous” (170). For example, wearing a badge of a warrior, Fisheye temporarily reaffirms his masculine authority and asks people to “touch it! Everybody, touch it! Look, I have the bullets” (170). In the end, their protest fails to elicit any substantial change except for the two men themselves—they are imprisoned.

*The Dragon Can't Dance* does not entirely blame Aldrick and Fisheye for their own downfall. However, it still attempts to inspect the self-reflection of “heroes” in Calvary Hill and their masculine privilege. In other words, the novel questions the way they construct their masculine privilege through bullying the weaker minorities, or avoiding the proper fight against the exploiting system. Moreover, it questions their adaptability within postcolonial Trinidad. Regardless of one's opinions on Trinidadian independence, the society has been changed by the emancipation, as the example of Carnival shows. Then, the central question that the novel asks is: How can one survive and possibly continue to resist under the circumstance of neoliberalism and the threat of globalization? Sadly, this is a task at which neither Aldrick nor Fisheye is successful.

#### 4. Remaking of Subordinated Masculinities in the Calysonian and the Shopper

If one can interpret the disappearance of Aldrick and Fisheye from the text as indicative of the authorial desire for an alternative masculinity, the creation of a new “hero” in the Hill should prove telling.<sup>7)</sup> In this sense, it is quite unique that Lovelace ends the novel with stories of Pariag (The Shopkeeper) and Philo (The Calysonian) in the last two chapters. Both of them are minor characters that the readers might not notice until late in the text. I interpret this shift of focus as a reflection of the author’s intention to rediscover the cultural implications of Pariag and Philo’s subordinated masculinities. Importantly, these subordinated masculinities have been ignored by the nationalist mythology of strong masculinities.

Compared to the marginalized masculinity of Fisheye and Aldrick (which still subscribed to at least some characteristics of hegemonic masculinities) subordinated masculinity deploys the opposite qualities of hegemonic masculinity, such as physical weakness and feminized emotion. For this reason, subordinated masculinity is often related to effeminate or gay men. Philo and Pariag are distinctively recognizable in the text due to their lack of hegemonic masculinity. Philo, a calypso singer (Afro-Caribbean music which originated in Trinidad), has never received as much respect as his friend, Aldrick, from the

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7) Some critics tend to positively interpret Aldrick’s change after the prison experience as a possibility of his adjustment to the new world (Lewis 172; Ramchand 323). I, however, doubt such a positive conclusion about Aldrick as a matured hero. In chapter 12, his naïve and lethargic refusal to confront the reality still causes him to lose Sylvia, and in the end he fails to open the door of Pariag’s shop after all even after his imprisonment.

residents of Calvary Hill. His effeminate appearance, "skinny and ordinary and unmuscular, look[s] nothing like the Axe Man," so it often becomes an object of ridicule and humiliation (229). In addition, he is constantly rejected by Miss Cleothilda, a mulatto woman, despite seventeen years of his yearning for her. Cleothilda insults Philo, saying that he is below her in terms of racial superiority because he is "blacker than her." Skin color decides the hierarchy of individuals, even in the ghetto of Calvary Hill. Philo, "a jackass in a jackass skin" is located at the bottom of the hierarchy among lower-class men (22).

Similarly, Pariag, a descendant of Indian-Caribbean migrated workers, is an outsider in Calvary Hill. Although Pariag came to the Hill to meet a world, "where people could see him, and he could be somebody in their eyes," he is always invisible to the people who never remember his name (78).

Well, I ain't big. I mean, I ain't have no huge muscles, and I don't sound tough, and I ain't tough, and I can't fight, and don't know how to play steelband or sing calypso, and I don't know much about Carnival. (91)

In the passage, Pariag defines himself only in a negative language of what he is *not* and what he can't do. Pariag accurately recognizes the reasons of his exclusion from the community. His feminized body prevents him from performing a strong male figure, whereas his racial otherness as an Indian does him from sharing cultural background with his neighbors. By discriminating Pariag's racial and cultural otherness, the residents of the Hill could reaffirm their

communal identity.

Both Philo and Pariag's invisibility and marginalization reveal the self-contradictory aspect of Carnival's claim that "All o is one"—the same claim that Lovelace draws upon for his criticism. At the end of the novel, Pariag and Philo succeed in gaining social mobility due to their malleable and performative subordinated masculinity. They don't share in any of the privilege of being a man in the Hill, so it is easier for them to move on. While Fisheye and Aldrick refuse change and isolate themselves in one place, one identity, and one tradition, Pariag and Philo successfully adjust themselves to the new system of postcolonial Trinidad. Pariag owns the shop at the corner and Philo becomes a popular calypso singer. Yet the text does not depict their adjustment entirely in a rosy way. Lovelace's writing demonstrates an awareness of the danger of conforming to the system. For example, Pariag's life is now overwhelmed by new capitalistic values, worrying about "the cost of flour and rice and starfish" the whole day long (209). Buried in his expensive house, young and pretty girls, and luxurious clothes, Philo might lose his ability to create original calypso but only imitate the glorious past in his calypso. Their distance from the violent and rebellious masculinity of the Hill enables Pariag and Philo to successfully adjust to a newly emerged transnational capitalism and neocolonialism. Yet it is also undeniable that they adjust too well, too quickly, and too easily to the new hegemonic masculinity, which only allows forms of masculinity that are not a threat to the hegemony itself.

Nevertheless, Lovelace still supports Philo and Pariag's struggle for a survival by giving them the role of delivering the final message to

the reader. Lovelace claims that resistance divorced from reality is doomed as one can learn from Aldrick's example. Thus, people should never stop negotiating and compromising their beliefs in order to make more lasting change. True change, Lovelace suggests, can only come from the bottom, without exclusion or subordination of others. As a result, the epiphany of this story arrives when Pariag stops trying to be "the man" that he always wanted to be and realizes the futility of the slogan "All o' we is one," because "we didn't have to melt into one" (210). It is also in this moment that Pariag redefines his relationship to his wife Dolly:

"We have to start to live, Dolly, you and me."

"Me and you?" Dolly asked, her voice choking. "Me and you?" (212)

As his subordinated masculinity enables him to see the pitfall of marginalized masculinities, his subordinated masculinity also helps him to redefine his relationship to femininity. Here, he redefines his notion of community and partnership by accepting Dolly as his equal. Similarly, Philo, despite his financial success and luxurious things, confesses his traumatic past and weakness and then returns to Cleothilda's house to say "I love you" (239). The novel finishes at the moment when Cleothilda, who had insulted Philo and considered him as her inferior, finally invites him inside her house (240). Each episode suggests Lovelace's view that the new masculinity needs a new relationship to femininity in postcolonial Trinidad.

In conclusion, *The Dragon Can't Dance* provides new readings of

lower-class masculinities in postcolonial Trinidad. It shows the division between marginalized masculinity and subordinated masculinity in Calvary Hill, by depicting how the postcolonial condition modifies and disrupts the local gender system and practice. In doing so, the book ultimately provides a selfreflective critique of the People's National Movement and the imagined homogeneity of the movement –“All o' we is one.” Such homogeneity was sold as a universal struggle, and its successes and failures were acted out through the festival of Carnival. At the same time, *The Dragon Can't Dance* sheds light on the new forms of masculinity found in the most marginalized of places, calling for a new Dragon dance in Trinidad.

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**Abstract****Plural Masculinities and Postcoloniality in Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance***

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This essay aims to explore the representation of postcolonial masculinities in Trinidad, particularly lower-class men's masculinities in Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance*. The book shows how the postcolonial condition and colonial legacy modify, disrupt, and reconstruct new gender roles and the relationships between men. Postcolonial condition, I argue, causes the inversion of the traditional hierarchy of masculinities and the dramatic upheaval of gender (as a system) in post-independent Trinidad. In this sense, this study examines the intersection of postcoloniality and gender throughout the representations of masculinities in the four male characters. In addition, reading postcolonial masculinities in *The Dragon Can't Dance* requires an intersectional model which addresses postcolonial masculinity and other factors, such as ethnicity, social reputation, and the degree of manliness. Although lower-class men in the book share the experience of the postcolonial condition, the text displays the diversification of their masculinities. Intersectional approach, then, could be helpful to analyze these diverse masculinities. By reading *The Dragon Can't Dance* through the impact of postcolonial trauma on the masculinities of lower-class men, I argue that *The Dragon Can't Dance* negates the monolithic notion of a (singular) postcolonial masculinity and presents new types of postcolonial masculinities.

**Key Words**

masculinities, postcolonialism, Earl Lovelace, Trinidad, Caribbean masculinities

