

**“I am a Barrysexual!” –
An analysis of queer identity in Bernardine Evaristo’s *Mr Loverman***

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<p>Abstract: On the Caribbean island Antigua, the view on homosexuality and sexual minorities has been quite negative and homosexuality has been something to keep silent about. This thesis will study the experience of the older Caribbean generation that has moved to England and with that moved to a more accepting climate. For there, too, is still the problem of learning to accept oneself as part of a sexual minority and coming out in the later part of life. The main source for this literary analysis is Bernardine Evaristo's <i>Mr Loverman</i> (2013), which tells the story of 74-year-old Antiguan Barrington (Barry) Walker who in his twenties moved with his wife to London. Barrington has been in a secret same-sex relationship with his best friend Morris since they were teenagers. The novel explores Barry's coming out process and identity crisis when stepping out of his comfort zone from a marriage that has been unhappy for a long time. The research question is: 'What effect does the culture of a character's homeland have on identity building and how are culture and societal attitudes present in the diaspora?' Secondary sources are articles on identity formation in LGBTQIA+ individuals, masculinity in Caribbean societies and analyses that have already been done about the novel.</p> <p>Masculinity and sexuality in The Caribbean is quite focused on masculine men who are strong, assertive, promiscuous, and more absent as parents than involved in home life and child rearing. Being a homosexual in the Caribbean or Antigua specifically is not easy and could often result in ostracization and ridicule since someone in a same-sex relationship is seen as less masculine. Religion and stereotypes play a part in this type of thinking.</p> <p>The timeline for someone belonging to a sexual minority is often seen as different from someone who is heterosexual. There is a need for figuring out oneself and self-acceptance which is not present in the same way in a heterosexual person's life. Coming to terms with oneself is often a process that is started alone since there is often in society more information and models for heterosexual relationships. These things are changing in today's world but slowly. And some places like Antigua are only on the precipice of change, having only legalized same-sex relationships in the summer of 2022.</p> <p>Life in London has been more accepting but not even there can the minorities escape violence, one example being the 1999 nail bombings where the last target was a gay bar called the Admiral Duncan. These circumstances are quite intimidating for someone who finds themselves belonging to the non-heterosexual group of the world's population. Coming out requires a safe space and a safe environment, and if a person has been hiding their true sexual identity their whole life because of the society and community's beliefs then taking the step to reveal their sexuality to others can cause anxiety and feelings of fear, dread and uncertainty. Barry faces challenges with his own beliefs as well as the fear of the reactions of his loved ones. He has been hiding his sexual identity his whole life and is comfortable with that. Accepting himself as a homosexual comes after some self-exploration as well as learning to understand other people and not only relying on his own views and assumptions.</p> <p>The thesis is based on an analysis of <i>Mr Loverman</i> and the main character's identity formation and struggle with himself. The theoretical framework comprises of articles and literature on the Caribbean view of masculinity and sexuality. The analysis concludes that the cultural beliefs affect the coming out and identity formation of Barrington Walker, and he struggles to accept that he is a part of the LGBTQIA+ community because of Caribbean societal beliefs. The LGBTQIA+ community is still fighting for their right to be in same-sex relationships and to have the same rights as heterosexual couples have on some of the Caribbean islands. Progress is happening but it is slow.</p>	
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1. Introduction

Discussions about LGBTQIA+¹ communities and their rights are still prevalent in the 20th century even though the different sexualities have existed for a long time. Some definitions are newer but they have come into existence because people have found a way to identify themselves as the sexual identities have become more nuanced. Considering the multitude of people and identities it becomes frustrating seeing the ways in which societies and people treat others that differ from themselves. There are many voices today who are asking or pleading for a place in society and standing up for equality, but there are also those who live in a society where coming out could cause irreparable damage to their lives, and it can be almost dangerous to reveal themselves.

Many countries and their people have taken significant steps in changing views and prejudices, but some are not working for change and even take steps backwards restricting the rights of LGBTQIA+ people. It falls then to other progressives to try and bring about a change. One person who has openly in many ways given her voice to the LGBTQIA+ community is Bernardine Evaristo, among others in her novel *Mr Loverman* from 2013. Evaristo is a writer, poet and playwright (Thorpe, 2020), born in London to an English mother and a Nigerian father (Russell, 2022). During her lifetime she has been the first in many ways: the first person of colour to be named president of the U.K.'s Royal Society of Literature as well as the first woman of Black heritage to win the Booker prize in 2019 (Russell, 2022). In her private life she has had relationships with both women and men and one might imagine that some of the feelings, issues and thoughts her characters deal with have been her own at some point in her life.

Evaristo uses humour in her writing while detailing difficult and heavy topics. The novel analysed in this thesis is written in first person throughout, mostly from the main character Barry's point-of-view but at times the reader also gets a glimpse into his wife Carmel's world. Barry's chapters are written in standard format but Carmel's contribution is almost like a long, ongoing inner monologue with no dots and sentences starting with small letters. The humour will be discussed later in this thesis. In an interview with Anna Russell for *The New Yorker* it is revealed that Evaristo started speaking in a Received Pronunciation

¹ LGBTQIA+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and more

accent which she picked up from a fellow-usher she worked with when she was young (Russell, 2022). In *Mr Loverman* she uses different play with speech and words, mixing English with some Patois and Barry's made up words.

Barrington Walker in *Mr Loverman* is a homosexual British-Caribbean man who migrated to Britain in his youth. His wife Carmel and daughters have no idea about Barrington's real identity or about his relationship with childhood friend Morris. The novel is a coming out story for the 74-year-old lovers. Barrington tries to hide his sexuality the best he can and, even while in contact with others sharing the same sexuality, he tries to create some distance between them, refusing to refer to himself even in his own narrative as a homosexual. The change in tone only comes after his revelation to his daughter and grandson.

Barry and Morris saw some prejudice already in their home country, since gay sex is illegal in Antigua, and this still "lingers in the diaspora" (Gee, 2013). This could be one reason, together with discrimination in the new country, why he chooses to not even affiliate with homosexuals, nor label himself as one. According to Carbado in *Black Rights, Gay Rights, Civil Rights* (1999: 287), in some discourses homosexuality is seen as a category which is applied only to those within the white community, rather than to persons of colour, and this frame of mind is very much present within *Mr Loverman*. In the novel Barry does not call himself homosexual, "Morris, I am an individual, specific, not generic. I am no more poofteh than I am homo, buller or anti-man" (Evaristo, 2013: 138). He calls himself "Barrysexual" (Evaristo, 2013: 138) as if he does not want to put a label on or categorize himself, especially with a group he can not and will not identify with.

Barry faces his wife and her friends, avid church goers who do not condone male and male or female and female relationships, calling them an abomination (Evaristo, 2013: 56). The community's views on homosexuality have not changed despite them moving to another country, and even though its members belong to a group that is racially discriminated against, most of them choose to judge and keep up the antigay rhetoric.

Morris has divorced his wife some years ago and he is pushing for Barry to do the same. He wants to live as a couple with Barry and seems to be a bit more open with his feelings. In the novel it is also revealed that Morris's ex-wife knows about his sexuality and relationship with Barry but how come the news never reached Carmel or any of their acquaintances is a question that stays unanswered.

The thesis focuses on the main character Barrington and his inner struggle as well as his community's attempt to come to terms with his sexuality and plans for the future, stepping into a new life with his long-time lover as a romantic partner in an openly gay relationship. Moving from Antigua, where same-sex relationships were not legally accepted until July 5, 2022 (nine years after the novel's publication), to England in the 1950s and today where the society and beliefs are a bit more liberal, the feelings and prejudices towards homosexuality still follow in the diasporic community. Finding one's own identity with an old culture's influence and a community in the new home country that does not feel like one's own can be challenging.

My research question and aim of the thesis will be to consider one aspect of being a gay man, of Afro-Caribbean ethnicity, living in a diasporic community. My research question is: how does the culture of a character's homeland affect identity building? How are culture and societal attitudes present in the diasporic community? The theoretical framework studies homosexuality in Caribbean culture, race and gender and identity formation in LGBTQIA+ people. The analysis of the novel focuses on Barry and his experience and feelings, and later other voices in the novel with Carmel, their daughters, the grand-son Daniel and some minor characters.

2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework consists of articles and books about sexual identity and identity formation as well as texts about the Caribbean culture and society's view on homosexuality and masculinity. Articles analysing the primary source, *Mr Loverman*, are also used, which give an introduction and view into the relationship between Barry and his wife as well as Barry's use of humour.

Identity formation is aided by descriptive labels that construct groups in political discussions or in communities. The labels can be chosen by the individual or group or forced upon them by others. By getting to choose labels themselves, individuals and groups have power over their own identities, when someone else defines them the power is lost and can even become undermining. This causes racism, stereotyping and discrimination among groups and people.

Queer identity & identity formation

Rosario, Schrimshaw, Hunter & Braun have studied the development of sexual identity over a longer time in their article "Sexual identity development among gay, lesbian, and bisexual youths: consistency and change over time" (2006). They start by stating that development of a GLB (they use gay, lesbian, or bisexual as the sexual identities that they study) identity is a "complex and difficult process" (Rosario, *et al.*, 2006: 1). In opposition to how other minority groups grow up, e.g. ethnic and racial minorities, the GLB youth seldom grow up in communities with similar people from whom "they can learn about their identity and who reinforce and support that identity" (Rosario, *et al.*, 2006: 1). At least according to the authors at the time this study was conducted. And, according to Rosario *et al.*, the youth in question are rather raised in communities that are ignorant towards their sexuality or even hostile (Rosario *et al.*, 2006: 1). This is a generalisation that might not be as accurate today even though it is a reality for many still. Perhaps considering a youth that is raised in a country where LGBTQIA+ identities are accepted, the environment might be more ignorant than hostile as Rosario *et al.* concluded. The individual knows for themselves who they are attracted to and until they choose to come out, their community will not know of the possible inner turmoil and difficulty to identify themselves with heterosexuality.

But some communities are hostile and do not offer a safe space to come out, like the society where Barry and Morris grew up. So, “because sexual identity development is a process for which GLB individuals have been unprepared and which is contextually unsupported and stigmatised, it would seem that the process would be characterised by inconsistency or incongruence among its affective, cognitive, and behavioural components, such that behaviours may not always coincide with affect and /or identity” (Rosario *et al.*, 2006: 1-2). But according to Rosario *et al.*, psychological theories have found that there is an attempt by GLB individuals to “achieve congruence among affect, cognitions, and behaviours” because of the psychological tension that incongruity would cause and this “same-sex oriented affect behaviour” could then cause an adaptation of “an identity consistent with such sentiments and behaviour (e.g. as gay or lesbian)” (2006: 2). And in the same way, Rosario *et al.* conclude that someone who identifies as gay or lesbian may because of this engage in sexual behaviours that are befitting these identities (2006: 2). Furthermore then the “incongruence among gay identity and heterosexual behaviour has been used to explain the eventual transition from heterosexual to homosexual behaviour, so as to remove dissonance between identity and behaviour” (see Higgins 2002 as cited in Rosario *et al.*, 2006: 2).

Many theories have been developed on sexual identity development for GLB individuals and the ones used for this thesis are in short describing the “coming-out process” with “identity formation and integration as individuals strive for congruence in their sexual orientation (i.e. sexual attractions, thoughts, and fantasies), sexual behaviour, and sexual identity” (Rosario *et al.*, 2006: 2). When identity formation starts, an individual becomes more aware of the possible sexual orientation and preferences they might have, with questions and a realisation that they might be a part of the GLB community which would lead to exploring and familiarising oneself with the community and GLB activities (Rosario *et al.*, 2006: 2).

Race and gender

Race and gender are socially constructed categories which can be found in every aspect of society according to Brittany Slatton in “The Black Box: Constrained Manoeuvring of Black Masculine Identity” (2014: 33). They *ascribe* preconceived ideas and expectations of how

people in definite categories, or with *ascribed* labels, should think and behave (Slatton, 2014: 33). Black male sexuality lives with stereotypes that have been created through time, and most prominently comprise society's negative views. Black males are often stereotyped as being criminals, hypermasculine and hypersexual (Slatton, 2014: 33). For an individual who fails to meet the expected characteristics of manliness, the prejudices can affect their self-esteem.

These issues might also be discussed with regard to the diasporic experience, which Rebecca Romanow studies in her article "The Postcolonial Body in Queer Space and Time" (2006). Being part of a group and feeling a sense of belonging is strengthened by shared interests, views, and sometimes even appearance. Moving from one place to the other, especially if someone moves to a different country, the sense of belonging is quite easily disrupted and as Romanow puts it, "diaspora is a concept that problematizes the cultural and historical mechanics of belonging" (Romanow, 2006: 32). The place where one is brought up affects the way the identity is formed and the beliefs that shape the mind and moving away "disrupts the fundamental power of territory to determine identity by breaking the simple sequences of explanatory links between place, location, and consciousness" (Romanow, 2006: 32). Living in a place where someone's identity clashes with society's beliefs will more than likely cause issues within that person but also with the outside world. Moving away can then sometimes be the answer for a more peaceful life.

A form of sexuality which has caused greater discrimination for black men than their ethnicity is being homosexual (Linden, 2003: 109), since people from their own social group will pass judgement on them as well. Homosexuality among black males has often been challenged or denied altogether, since sexuality as a construct has been deemed as something Western and white according to Carbado (1999: 284). In some black communities, black males have a stereotype to uphold of being strong, tough and not prone to show emotion. Riggs writes in "Black Macho Revisited: Reflections of a Snap! Queen" about the times before diaspora, and how the black man was supposed to be a provider for the family as well as a strong protector of the family. According to him, sexualities become distinct for different races, and in discussions homosexuality was something that could only be found in white communities and blackness was inherently straight (Riggs, 2006: 474). Having these types of beliefs alienates the individual representing other sexualities than the one ascribed by

society to their race. Identity crises and mental issues could potentially happen for the individual. If these thoughts and views were as prominent in society as Riggs writes then the problem of self-acceptance in LGBTQIA+ individuals would cause severe damage and identity crises. More so than what already are occurring. Considering the fact that we are coming close to twenty years since Riggs's article was published, I hope that society has progressed since then, also keeping in mind that there is still a lot of work to be done for equality.

Coming back to the issue about homosexuality and black men's identity, as Hutchinson has pointed out in "My Gay Problem, Your Black Problem", discussions about gay black men are frequently limited because of prominent antigay feelings in these social groups (Hutchinson, 1999: 304). According to Hutchinson, black gay men have three identity characteristics that cause alienation from society: being a man, being black and being gay and the "gay male identity subverts Black manhood" (1999: 304), which leads to sexuality being the side of oneself that is more preferably hidden. Probably also because it is a characteristic that can not be perceived from the outside. Further, Carbado writes about "race negating", when a black woman or a black man is out as gay or lesbian, homosexuality then supposedly "undermines Blackness" and Carbado states that one is not seen as an equally strong member of the black community for being homosexual (Carbado 1999: 284-285).

The discourse in Jamaica and the Caribbean on homosexuality situates it as something unnatural, immoral and also foreign in some discourses (Cummings, 2007: 177) and the same discourses also "[inscribe] heterosexuality as normal and native" (Cummings, 2007: 177). Same gender sex, sexuality and sexual orientation are taboo subjects in the Caribbean and have been avoided, and almost erased, in the society (see Crichlow 2004 in Cummings, 2007: 179). Coming out in the Caribbean is also still a dangerous thing to do and the queer communities there exist under immense social pressure and policing as Cummings writes in "Narrative Testimony as Theoretical Method: Examining the Critical Debate on the Culture of Policing Homosexuality in the Jamaican Context" (2007: 179), which then also most probably can be felt in the diaspora. Even if an individual has left the community the culture which has shaped one's identity follows to the new home country.

Cummings draws conclusions from discussions in masculinity studies of "masculinity in crisis" (2007: 183) and argues that homosexuality could be situated as a threat

to masculinity and that there is an opposition (Cummings, 2007: 183). This argument is dangerous in discussions about different sexualities and places them as an Other, a threat to an established norm which discriminates and causes exclusion. As Cummings put it:

So far in this essay I have used the terms gay and lesbian subject/ivity to talk about the ‘man royal’, ‘sodomite’, ‘buller’ and ‘battyman’ identities. This has allowed me to maintain a distinction between the voice of the critic(al) and the narrative discourse. The presence of this distinction is also arguably evident in much of the wider body of the emergent Caribbean queer critical discourse [...]. It is complex because of the fact that this act of naming is part of a politics of subversion and appropriation. A consideration of this issue further highlights the fact that narrating of the indigenous gay and lesbian subject is an inherently political task. Indeed, these words are still being used to enact a kind of psychological violence against men and women in the Caribbean. This process of subversion then necessarily involves the claiming of the history of shame associated with these terms as a source of strength. This is arguably a necessary precursor to the critical deployment of these terms.

(Cummings, 2007: 195-196)

As will be evident later in this thesis, these kinds of issues with identity that is built and affected by the Caribbean views are at the forefront of Barry’s mind. He is trying to accept that he is part of a group that has been so downtrodden in his old home country. The terms in the previous quote from Cummings, buller and battyman, are terms that Barry himself uses at one point when referring to other homosexuals (Evaristo, 2013: 114). It is a part of his attempt to make himself stand out, but in doing so almost making himself the Other.

Queerness in diaspora

Koegler writes her article “Queer Home-Making and Black Britain: Claiming, Ageing, Living” about “home-making, ageing and queerness in a transatlantic as well as transnational, diasporic black British context” (2020: 880). The discussion on ageing and queerness is of most value for this thesis but home-making will be touched upon first since the discussion shows the expectations and societal norms that Barry and Carmel are upholding. “Home-making” is typically, according to Halberstam, something that is combined with heterosexual identities and not so much with homosexual life paths (see Halberstam 2005 as cited in Koegler, 2020: 882), considering the fact that there are even today groups who believe that

a family consists of a man, a woman, and their children. These views are being challenged and are changing though. Diaspora is together with a nation viewed through an ideology of “home, family, and community” (see Gopinath 2005 as cited in Koegler, 2020: 882). Considering queer diaspora, homophobia travels easily from one place to another either in “the form of internalized self-harm and/or as part of the culture of a diasporic community” (Koegler, 2020: 883). Hatred and aggression are fuelled by homophobia and violence and abuse are seen as a justified by it, which then leads to shame, unhappiness and isolation of queer individuals (Koegler, 2020: 883). It does not matter where in the world this homophobia is manifesting itself, the results are the same either way, and no matter if homosexuality is more or less accepted and homophobia more or less common.

Koegler also argues that identification with a diasporic community is difficult if it intersects with queerness, as the subject will not find group solidarity but “resentment and ostracization” (Koegler, 2020: 884). Koegler analyses texts and concludes that gender norms are upheld even after moving to a new country within the migrant communities, even if the rules and laws in the new country together with society's acceptance are wider (Koegler, 2020: 885). Claiming “queer citizenship” (Koegler, 2020: 885), by which Koegler means building a queer life in public by having a home with a same-sex partner, and being open about the relationship, creates a situation whereby some will feel safe and accepted, but others might not want to live a life in the open. Accordingly, these may resort to not taking part in queer intimacies or having them in secret, even though they would be protected by the law.

As Koegler mentions, “*Mr Loverman* represents an urgent visualization of the commingling aspects of black queer British home-making, ageing, and diaspora” (Koegler, 2020: 888). The most important aspect in the novel is “Barry’s negotiation of normative masculinity and internalized homophobia” (Koegler, 2020: 888). The place he comes from, Antigua, was a place where homophobia was eminent when he left, and still is to some degree today. These beliefs, thought patterns, and judgements still live with Barry even though he has moved away from the environment that did not accept him. Barry has had a chance to see the “conditions for gay relationships in the UK shift to include, for example, gay civil partnerships and later gay marriage” (Koegler, 2020: 888) but still struggles with himself and the relationship between him and Morris.

Koegler surmises that neither Barry nor Morris have any sense of homesickness for the country they left, they only wish they could spend more time with each other than they do (Koegler, 2020: 888). Barry likes to reminisce about the relationship they have had, from the beginning until now, and Morris looks more into the future. Or at least the future they have left. Barry glorifies the relationship and likes it the way it is, saying he does not feel like he judges others for being queer but still does not want to leave the home he has built with Carmel. He does not feel anything romantic towards her and their relationship has not been one of love for a while, but there is the connection to the home-country which, Barry seems to feel, would be broken if he moved into an open queer relationship with Morris.

Even if there seem to be no feelings of missing his past home, perhaps the prospect of going against the homophobia from Antigua feels as too big of a step away from the person he used to be there. Feeling as if he would not be accepted there any longer and not being able to feel as a person that belongs to the Antiguan culture anymore. He would have to redefine his identity that others have seen, and perhaps come to terms with the turmoil inside himself. Taking a stand and what might feel like going against the grain. A big life change for someone who seems to like their comfort. The use of alcohol can also be questioned, is it only a habit that has formed or is it effect and the cause is internalised insecurity and unhappiness.

As Koegler points out one of the main themes of *Mr Loverman* is “queer love at old age, i.e. treating queerness and ageing intersectionally” (Koegler, 2020: 889), and Hess (Hess in Koegler, 2020: 889) has stated that ageing studies have to a large extent ignored “specifics of queer ageing” and queer studies on the other hand “tend to ignore issues of old age”. Heterosexual sexual activities are represented in a positive light according to Hess, the sexuality of elderly queers is “cast in negative stereotypes” left to be “tragic or ‘disgusting’”, “the predatory old lesbian, the aging queen, and the self-loathing gay man” (Hess in Koegler, 2020: 889). As is pointed out by Koegler, a lot of media attention has at least in the past focused on characters that are attractive and young in queer entertainment. Recently there has been something of a shift with films and TV series in particular showing narratives of elderly queer people (Koegler, 2020: 889), but there is still some way to go. *Mr Loverman* in comparison to these new TV series and films is a “breath of fresh air” with its narrative representing “two largely self-empowered, life-enjoying and sexually active elderly, queer

protagonists” (Koegler, 2020: 889). Koegler also points out the fact that the novel touches upon “one of the most iconic British diasporic generations: that of the Windrush” (Koegler, 2020: 889). By doing this there is a clear joining of three themes; diaspora, ageing and queer home-making in black Britain (Koegler, 2020: 889).

As previously suggested Koegler also touches upon the topic of “internalized bias and fears” (2020: 889). There is also the “intense role” that “hard-won privileges and comforts can play in building hesitation about leaving the heteronormative domestic setting” (Koegler, 2020: 889). There is the familiar and safe place that Barry and Carmel have built together over the years, even though the marriage has not been one of love for a long time and Carmel suspects that Barry is having an affair with another woman. Barry has also built himself up in a way from his migrant status. He owns many properties and is a landlord as well as quite eloquent and well-read, usually using a quite flamboyant language.

There is a power struggle in their home between a hurt and disappointed wife and a husband who does not seem remorseful but maybe feels like he owes her something and is comfortable with the life he is living even if neither is completely happy. Barry knows that Carmel would never accept him and perhaps he has a fear of losing one of the longest relationships he has had as well as the love of their children. As Koegler points out in her analysis, there is “a clear focus here on familiarity, comfort and security” (Koegler, 2020: 890). According to Koegler the conflict between Barry and Carmel and their behaviour towards each other is gendered (Koegler, 2020: 890). Barry sees himself as the provider of the family, the man of the house, the house that he has worked for and become a part of in a sense through all the years. But Carmel has made the house into a home, and she is guarding it, making Barry feel like someone who has to sneak in when he arrives from a drunken night out. With this house and home that they have built together Barry can keep up the “heteronormative pretences and as such internalized ideals of masculinity and home-making” that, Koegler quoting Mootoo 2014 (2020: 891), were “honed in infancy”. If Barry were to move in with Morris he would have to build himself up again as someone new with, as he might feel it, parts of his identity and culture left behind. If being masculine is important to Barry and his culture, he might feel a fear of losing this when moving in with another man. He would no longer be the man of the house, and some stereotypes of homosexual men like to paint them as soft and not masculine enough for society. Understanding the world today,

that stereotype is completely wrong, but for someone who has come from a background of perhaps even hypermasculinity, which black men often are subjected to, the fear of being seen as something else than that might be paralyzing.

Caribbean masculinity

Masculinity is one part of identity which steers people in society, but it can even become toxic when it does not leave room for anything more than the one portrayal of a strong man who shows no feeling. As Linden writes in “Caribbean Masculinity: Unpacking the Narrative”, the “issue of gender is inescapable and indispensable to any attempt at understanding social reality and the general reproduction of society” (Linden, 2003: 94). Linden explores the ways Caribbean men construct their masculinity in opposition and relation to femininity (2003: 94). Linden investigates how Caribbean men “negotiate their roles, how they embrace the roles society constructs for them and how they reject some of these roles, and the social cost of such rejection” (Linden, 2003: 95). There is also an assessment of stereotypes of Caribbean men, issues of power and “relations of domination and subordination” (Linden, 2003: 95). In his chapter Linden describes masculinity as a set of practices or behaviours as well as an “ideological position within gender relations” (2003: 95). Considering masculinity as a set of practices, Linden refers to the ways society gives identity to “male subjects as men” (Linden, 2003: 94). If biology is considered as the starting point men can start to consider themselves as different from women ideologically, when looking at it politically, sociologically and in the system of gender relations (Linden, 2003: 95). Masculinity is, according to Linden, something that is not fixed but a mixture of different practices and behaviours, it is constantly evolving by being negotiated, contested, and even destabilized (Linden, 2003: 95). “Masculinity has multiple layers of meaning, which are mediated by acceptance or rejection of societal expectations of behaviour, age, culture, race, religion, class and sexual orientation” (Linden, 2003: 95). His belief is that “men seek approval of other men in the performance of their masculinity” (Linden, 2003: 95). So masculinity is a performance that has to be conducted at least in front of others, meaning there are steps to be taken and certain characteristics to follow and show if a man is supposed to be viewed as masculine enough. Linden’s idea that the men in question seek validation only from other men is interesting though, it would be understandable to seek approval from

the people you want to fit in with. The group that you want to accept you. Do not women's views play any part in this? Or is it all just between men, a sort of rivalry where only other men can be judges on what the so called right masculinity looks like.

The gender conventions they perform are not decided and complete but can change and Linden goes on to say that masculinity also has to do with the relationship to women (Linden, 2003: 95). The men define their masculinity for themselves but are aware of women's influence on their definition (Linden, 2003: 95). When it comes to performing masculinity, women affect the "general terrain" (Linden, 2003: 95) and men, according to Linden, apparently do try to seek the approval of women just as much as they are trying to seek it from men (Linden, 2003: 95). Women interrogating or ridiculing a man's masculinity is one of the few most threatening acts to men and the men in question would tend to react with anger and incredulity (Linden, 2003: 95). Only reacting like this with women seems less than likely, but in some hopefully by now old societal views, women were seen as the weaker sex. So perhaps the physical threat to these threatened men was seen as lower. How strong that masculine identity is can be negotiated if someone else questioning their masculinity would cause such strong reactions.

In Linden's analysis the author concludes that women have certain expectations for men and that "masculinity and femininity are dialectically related to each other" (Linden, 2003: 96). Which then implies that they are affected by each other. How, then would the masculinity of a gay man or the femininity of a lesbian woman meet these expectations of the other gender if they in a sense do not really matter to the person? Society must still use these approvals as the norm which creates a stereotype or expectation that members of society would think that everyone should and would want to fit into. Today's society and more liberal countries are a bit more free in letting people be their own individual and trying to define their masculinity and femininity themselves.

But even if men react to changes in femininity their masculinity might not necessarily be destabilized (Linden, 2003: 97). Linden goes on to list "homosexuality, unemployment, sexual dysfunction or incarceration" as causes that might have a destabilizing effect on masculinity (2003: 97). If masculinity is fluid then some parts of the list Linden provided should perhaps not be affecting masculinity, especially if they are part of one's identity and

gender identity in particular. But perhaps that would require something more like a strong sense of self, self-acceptance and support from the society and culture.

Depending on the culture to which a man belongs, the emphasis might be on different aspects of masculinity. But according to Linden men in the Caribbean define their masculinity in quite the same way as men in other parts of the world no matter where they are (Linden, 2003: 97). They “define themselves in terms of biological difference and specificity, in behavioural terms and in terms that objectify their masculinity—that is, cars, boats, houses, dogs, guns may become extensions of one’s masculinity” (Linden, 2003: 98). Men like to define their autonomy and see it as a way to have the power to decide “where you want to be, what you want to do, how you want to dress and how you want to look in the eyes of women but also in relation to other men” (Linden, 2003: 97). Being a man involves being strong on the outside and tough on the inside (Linden, 2003: 97).

One of the most important things for masculinity is the “exercise of power and the issue of control” (2003: 97) according to Linden. Even if not all men use power there is a presumed power that masculinity is based on and apparently all men “view it as an entitlement” (Linden, 2003: 98). Because of this masculinity is often associated with the opportunity to use “resources, privilege and status” (Linden, 2003: 97). If things such as race, class or sexual orientation “impinge on male power” (Linden, 2003: 97) in any context there will usually be a persuasive explanation why some category of men “failed to attain this normative expectation” (Linden, 2003: 97).

Talking on about power and how historically men have been the ones to wield it, Linden also believes that patriarchy dominates social relations (Linden, 2003: 101). This use of power is unequal and is not only a question of men dominating women but also men dominating other men since again “race, class, sexual orientation, national origin or ethnicity” (Linden, 2003: 101) will affect the outcome of who has more power. So in Linden’s view, even if patriarchal rule often subjects women more to power, also “subordinate or marginalized men are also negatively affected” (2003: 101).

When thinking about Barry and Morris and where they came from this goes to thoughts about how the men in their Antiguan society might have been more of a threat than the women. Even if the women also can do damage, for the men of the society patriarchy “is a powerful force organizing society’s social relations” (Linden, 2003: 102) even if it is not

absolute. Falling outside of society and cultural life could be devastating for some if not most people.

Patriarchy and colonization did affect masculinity in a way, all men no matter what background could not follow the same concept of masculinity since they would then in a sense have to be equals and the power relations that existed null (Linden, 2003: 102). There is research that has stated a strong patriarchy that existed in the Caribbean before Europeans arrived (Linden, 2003: 102). Once the colonisers came new social relations would have to be forged because of the Europeans' power and their colonization of the Caribbean people (Linden, 2003: 102). When there are new arrivals to any place and group there will naturally be a shift in dynamics. The Europeans came in to, in a sense rule the native people and brought with them their own form of patriarchy and gender norms. This could potentially push everything down, worsening the situation for people and groups who are not at the top of the social hierarchy. "Caribbean nationalists did not interrogate the patriarchal system that had been bequeathed to them. Rather than treat gender inequality as a form of domination no less reprehensible than the European domination they all recognized and opposed, they essentially consolidated and reproduced it" (Linden, 2003: 103). So the system that was brought to them was not completely rejected but included in society. And perhaps skewed towards a more radical way of thinking since Barry and Morris found it easier to be in the UK where the norm originally arrived from.

According to Linden there seem to be some basic characteristics ascribed to Caribbean men even though the study on the subject is underdeveloped (Linden, 2003: 107). He points out earlier that we should look out for "vulgar reductionist claims about all Caribbean men" (Linden, 2003: 106) so as not to make the mistake of putting them all under the same stereotype. The characterization of men and masculinity from literature Linden has analysed is a view that a Caribbean man is "powerful, exceedingly promiscuous, derelict in his parental duties, often absent from the household and, if present, unwilling to undertake his share of domestic responsibilities" (Linden, 2003: 107). There also seems to be in Linden's studies a "demonstrated valorisation of alcohol consumption" (Linden, 2003: 107).

Some of these characteristics do fit with the character of Barry or the view that some of his family members seem to have of him. He does not apparently spend that much time at home and has not in the parts of the novel where we get to see his domestic life done anything

for the home in terms of domestic chores. And according to Barry it has taken two to make that house a home, since Carmel has taken care of everything in it and he has been the one to provide it for the family.

He remembers back to one time when Carmel had given birth to their second daughter and fell into a deep post-partum depression (Evaristo, 2013: 104). Barry starts to take care of his house, doing chores and looking after the children. He actually forms a connection with his oldest which eventually gets a bit sour when she grows up. He only does this as long as he needs to but one could imagine that this would be a good opportunity for him to look into Carmel's life even just a little bit. It is thought to be something foreign to him since they have kept some typical gender stereotypes going in their relationship where the wife takes care of the house. Barry also has a love for alcohol, quite often comes home drunk, and also starts his days with a drink. He and Morris do this together even at perhaps some more inappropriate places like a café, where Barry likes to make his coffee a bit stronger with something he brought himself and talks Morris into joining him quite easily.

Barry's family view him through these before mentioned stereotypes as well. They believe him to be promiscuous, going out and meeting other women and cheating on his wife every night when he comes home late. Even if this is not quite the case and he only has one affair that he spends his nights with, Barry's recollection of some earlier time in his life reveals that he did spend time with other men besides Morris at some point. Even if Morris believed them to be exclusive. This does not, however, authorize use of the label promiscuous since it is quite an unfair and unjustified description to put on anybody by judging their life choices.

Linden goes on to point out that "we cannot continue to treat the category of masculinity and men as some homogenous and undifferentiated bloc. Men in the Caribbean possess a variety of dispositions" (Linden, 2003: 107). This is certainly true for any group of people in any country but for the sake of this study some generalizations that society has liked to believe and propagate necessarily need to be recognised.

The way in which masculinity is constructed and practiced in the Caribbean is always, in one sense or another, mediated by the modalities of race, ethnicity, age, class, sexual orientation and religion, and by the way in which these social forces coalesce within a given cultural context. A fruitful way of proceeding with analyses of masculinity in the Caribbean might be to try to ascertain empirically the underlying

structural, institutional, symbolic, historical and psychological causes and consequences of men's behaviour in contemporary society.

(Linden, 2003: 108)

Linden points out that analysing Caribbean masculinity also needs a distinction between hegemonic masculinity and "other subordinated forms of masculinity" (Linden 108), since in the Caribbean it is not only black Caribbean men who dominate the "economic landscape of their societies" (Linden, 2003: 108). Linden uses as examples "white men in Barbados; whites, Syrians, Lebanese and Indians in Trinidad; Jews, Whites and Chinese in Jamaica" (Linden, 2003: 108). So when analysing the masculine Caribbean landscape one should take into consideration that the black men have gained a spot in society thanks to their education and probably do not have any wealth that would benefit them in this regard (Linden, 2003: 108). They have had to study and work as a way to gain mobility, both at home and the UK. In some discussions about masculinity there comes a power struggle between the worker who does physical labour and the white collar employee. Which one of these would represent the "right" type of masculinity?

Talking about hegemonic masculinity, it is a type of masculinity that "refers to practices of cultural domination of a particular representation of men and manliness" (Linden, 2003: 108). An orientation that according to Linden is "heterosexual and decidedly homophobic" (Linden, 2003: 108). This type of masculinity sees sexual conquest as a source of pride and men who define themselves differently, i.e. as not heterosexual, are ridiculed (Linden, 2003: 108). Hegemonic masculinity often turns to some misogynist tendencies, viewing women as inferior, and not adhering to this form of masculinity can be a cause for others questioning one's manhood (Linden, 2003: 108). Today this type of masculinity would perhaps be called toxic, especially if it strives to undermine other people or groups.

Masculinity and Homosexuality in the Caribbean

Linden writes that homosexuality is a quite complex phenomenon in the Caribbean. There is a silent understanding that homosexuality exists as well as homosexuals but not many men are openly gay because of the intolerance towards the lifestyle that exists on each island (Linden, 2003: 109). At least during the time Linden wrote his article. The islands have different levels of tolerance, and the reasons are complex according to Linden (2003: 109). Linden questions the reason behind some islands' hostility towards homosexuals and

homosexuality; does it mask problems with “insecurity about sexual identity and ambivalence about heterosexuality and manhood” (Linden, 2003: 110); questioning someone’s level of sexual maturity and sexual security for feeling a need to vigorously defend heterosexuality and apparently feel threatened by homosexuality to such a large extent that they lash out violently at any sign of homosexuality’s existence in society (Linden, 2003: 110). And also, according to Linden, even though “religious prohibitions against homosexuality greatly influence attitudes toward” it, some “levels of accommodation are met within Anglicanism/Episcopalianism and Catholicism” differing from the fundamentalist sects that exist on the islands (Linden, 2003: 110).

Because the machismo in hegemonic masculinity that can be found in the English-speaking Caribbean is quite prominent, homosexuals were not necessarily safe (Linden, 2003: 112). Linden writes that it is not surprising “precisely because homosexuality undermines and fundamentally contradicts hegemonic masculinity” (Linden, 2003: 112). If this is then the case the masculinity in question does not leave a lot of room for self-exploration or freedom for self-identity: which feels as if such a model of masculinity is making for quite a harmful society. Some examples Linden also mentions are song lyrics by reggae artist Shabba Ranks who raps about the punishment homosexuals should be dealt: “Me nah promote mamma man. All mamma man fe dead.” And goes on to proclaim: “Pam, Pam. Lick a shot in a mamma man head.” These lyrics are quite serious and explicit in the feelings the artist has for the minority.

Linden also mentions Buju Bantan, an artist who is also mentioned in *Mr Loverman* by Evaristo, Bantan shares the same sentiments as Ranks about homosexuals and the terms “batty bwoy”, which arises in Evaristo as well, is used in his lyrics. “Religious authority” was used by Bantan as his defence and that his lyrics where he incites violence towards gay men are only a warning, not meant as a way to incite violence (Linden, 2003: 113). Linden also wants to point out that “in fairness to Buju” it should be noted that the artist has become a “profoundly righteous Rastafarian, who has moved away entirely from smutty, misogynist and homophobic lyrics” (Linden, 2003: 113). This thesis is not about condemning one man but it seems like Linden’s point is quite null. Who decides on another’s redemption unless they happen to be a part of the affected group?

But disregarding the change of media, there is again a religious angle to the reasons behind the homophobia that has been present earlier in the material as well as in the novel. This in a way shows how the homophobia seems to be a part of the society that it even shows up in song lyrics by entertainers. And the possibility of meeting physical harm if you are an openly out suspected homosexual is real on many of the Caribbean islands (Linden, 2003: 113).

One thing to note is that even though Linden's text is from the year 2003, little seems to have changed on the islands. The rule against same-sex relationships was only struck from the Antigua and Barbadian legislation in the summer of 2022. This did not grant a lot more freedom for the LGBTQIA+ community, but taking part in a same-sex relationship is not against the law anymore (BBC). As is quoted in an article from Human Rights Watch discussing the situation for the LGBTQIA+ community on the island, "a 2018 Human Rights Watch report documented discrimination, violence, and prejudice against LGBT people in seven island nations in the Eastern Caribbean, including Antigua and Barbuda" (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Antigua and Barbuda seem to be regional forerunners when it comes to stopping the restriction of LGBTQIA+ people and their freedom, but there is still a long way to go on the matter.

When trying to understand the men and gender relations on the Caribbean islands Linden feels that the fact that homosexuality in the Caribbean as elsewhere is a "subordinated form of masculinity" should not be overlooked (Linden, 2003: 115). How and why exactly it can be viewed as subordinate does not become clear but I feel that statement should be questioned. There should also be consideration as to what is the cultural force that constrains or permits some forms of masculine expression and no other, and as Linden points out there is considerable work to be done on the matter (Linden, 2003: 115). But as Linden also writes, the existence of homosexuality validates his earlier argument about not placing all masculine forms into one mould, that there can not be the one and only set version of the Caribbean male (Linden, 2003: 115). It can not be concluded either that there would exist only two types of masculinity unless someone really wanted to make a generalization as simple as possible, and infer that there is only hegemonic masculinity and homosexual masculinity (Linden, 2003: 115). It needs mentioning that there are men in the Caribbean who embrace neither

one or make up a masculine identity of their own and at the same time, to some extent do not follow the gender norms society sets (Linden, 2003: 115).

Linden's conclusions about masculinity in the Caribbean arrive at the feminist discourse that has started to gain ground in the islands and how there has come a need for a re-establishment of the gender roles and equality. The men do not perhaps always meet these new changes with a positive outlook, even though it is not only the new gender relations that are being adjusted but there are "global, regional and national changes brought about by the restructuring of the global political economy, by a changing cultural landscape and by the profound impact of the global discourse on gender" (Linden, 2003: 121).

These have caused a power shift which the men in the region are forced to negotiate with "new roles requiring different orientations of men and involving new forms of socialization", for example the role of the father changes to a more involved one with emotional investment (Linden, 2003: 121). So the factors affecting the way men construct their masculinity are quite varied: "the cultural milieu within which they operate; the ideological role of the state, that is, the way in which the state contributes to the formation of social identities: the specific political, economic and historical conditions; the myriad ways in which race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and religion mediate these various practices" (Linden, 2003: 122). It is, I would chance to argue, as varied as in most other parts of the world. Popular culture has as well become more enriched with different types of people, sexualities and gender roles.

Crichlow as cited in Cummings comments that the narratives of Caribbean queer people pose the risk of them becoming the "exotic other" by admitting their sexual preference and the importance of not causing the stories to become only entertainment, but a learning opportunity (2007: 180). Cummings also comments on the violence and homophobic rhetoric that manifests itself in popular culture (2007: 182). As Lewis also states, Caribbean society is intolerant of people with different sexual orientation, perhaps because of a "possible insecurity about sexual and social identity of men in the society" (see Lewis 2003 as cited in Cummings, 2007: 182).

With the emergence of queer people on the social scene, creating a new perspective on how social structures and relations are formed since the early 1990s, sexual identity and all different forms of identity politics became targets for critique. They were seen as

“essentializing and underpinning the existing social norms, categories and divisions that are in the basis of production and maintenance of social hierarchies” (Kahlina, 2007: 157). According to Kahlina in her article “Lesbian-ness/Gay-ness: The Prospects of Combining Macro and Micro Perspectives in Sexual Identities Research“, when viewing “the category of sexual identity as an oppressive institution and a part of normalizing practices”, she points out that some queer theorists feel as if the concept of sexual identity should be eliminated and sexuality should be thought about “in terms of the act and the erotic pleasure” (Kahlina, 2007: 158). In that way no one would be put in a box and no labels would be needed.

In one way this is how Barry feels in the novel about his own sexuality, many times refusing to acknowledge to Morris that he is a homosexual and at one point referring to himself as “Barrysexual” (Evaristo, 2013: 138). It does happen more often when he is supposed to admit it openly and aloud, but in his own mind he does not have any problems with being quite explicit about his preferences. It is as if putting a label on himself is something he does not want to do, either because it is not something he is comfortable with or because he does not, in the beginning at least, see himself as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. Following his thinking, he does seem to still have some of the same thoughts about the community that have been discussed earlier, but he also considers the dangers that exist even in his new home country. There is mention of the nail bombings, and in Barry’s recollection he seems to put himself on the same side as the victims at least then (Evaristo, 2013: 246). The meeting with some of his younger daughter’s friends again puts him a bit at odds with at least that group of the LGBTQIA+ community (Evaristo, 2013: 252-253) when Barry’s statements can be viewed as quite toxic.

Kahlina points out that it would be important not to ignore the existence of gay and lesbian identities in society when considering the context of the “multiplicity and pluralism of late capitalism” surrounding the modern individual and their need to form an authentic self, contradicting the dominating heteropatriarchy “based on institutionalised heterosexuality” and that being the only so called right way of being sexual (Kahlina, 2007: 158). Forming sexual identities and even considering them became a topic after the start of the lesbian and gay movement in different parts of the world during the 1970s (Kahlina, 2007: 160). As the author writes:

It is Michel Foucault's ground-breaking work *The History of Sexuality* (1988) in which he argues that homosexual identities are products of psychological, psychiatric and medical discourses of late 19th century when same-sex acts began to be read as an evidence of a particular type of person, that provided a ground for criticism of essentialist notions of homosexual identities that are based on the presupposition that gay people and gay identities existed throughout history and influenced the emergence of social constructionist approach [*sic*] to (homo)sexual identities. [---] queer theory calls into question the notion of sexuality as a stable, fixed identity and exposes the multiplicity, instability and fluidity of subject positions.

(Kahlina, 2007: 160-161)

Belonging to a group depending on your sexuality should, according to Kahlina, be more of a process of self-discovery and self-identification, and not so much a definition made by the outer society or based on the physical aspects someone has (Kahlina, 2007: 172). For as she argues, "combining the historicized notion of sexual identities with re-evaluation of identity in terms of practice of identification will allow us to think of instability of identities without falling into a trap of "clichéd constructivism" and to move beyond the conception of identity as an intrinsically exclusionary practice" (Kahlina, 2007: 174).

A stronger point of view is presented by Halberstam, who sees that it is these differences, rather than accommodations, that constitute the experience of queerness. "Queer uses of time and space develop in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction, and queer-subcultures develop as alternatives to kinship-based notions" (Halberstam, 2003: 314). Halberstam introduces "queer time" and "queer space" as something that develops partly "in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality and reproduction" (Halberstam, 2005: 4). Why they would necessarily have to be in opposition is a question that might be asked.

Queer time and space also develop according to "other logics of location, movement, and identification" according to Halberstam (2005: 4). Thinking of queerness as an outcome of the, so called, "strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices" we "detach queerness from sexual identity" (2005: 4) writes Halberstam, and come to understand and see homosexuality as a way of life, rather than a way of having sex, as different from our own. Halberstam feels that queer space and queer time are useful notions when assessing change within culture and politics:

In Western cultures, we chart the emergences of the adult from the dangerous and unruly period of adolescence as a desired process of maturation; and we create longevity as the most desirable future, applaud the pursuit of long life (under any circumstances), and pathologize modes of living that show little or no concern for longevity.

(Halberstam, 2005: 6)

The social belief that life should follow one trajectory was common for a long time, where people go through school, start dating, get married, have kids, work their dream job and live happily married lives with their one spouse of the opposite gender. These beliefs have lost their ground in many of the modern societies today, there are couples who choose to be child-less, people who choose to be alone and single, people who do not want to get married but also people who still feel that this old social norm is the right one for them.

For a queer person this would perhaps feel more like a mould they would have to fit into if they do not want to have people doubting their sexuality. In a country, society and environment where it is accepted and safe to be themselves someone might have more sympathy for Barry and Morris as staying hidden was the only choice they saw and they decided to follow the way society expected them to live their lives. Like ticking off boxes but ignoring the rest of what comes with getting married to someone and being a father, at least in regards to Barry and how he handled his relationship with his wife.

A young queer person could be imagined to have a hard time with finding themselves. One of the most typical tropes in queer entertainment and queer people speaking out in media today is the inner struggle they go through with having to accept themselves, sometimes living in denial, sometimes having difficulty in actually understanding which “label” they fit under. After accepting one’s own identity, the next step would be to acquire acceptance from loved ones and society.

Early on in their teens, Barry and Morris had already accepted the feelings they had for each other and started a relationship. In a country like Antigua at the time, trying to come out would not have been safe nor accepted, so they chose to stay a secret to fit into society. Getting married would be the next step but legalizing same-sex marriage has only started to happen globally during the past twenty years (Pew Research Center).

Some churches and religions have been the instigators for abuse and persecution of LGBTQIA+ people through time. Carmel is religious and attends church regularly with a

group of her friends. In the novel their stance on queer people becomes very clear and seems to be on par with the older interpretations of the church belief system. Perhaps some old remnants as well from their cultural diaspora and the belief system and prejudice from their old home country. Barry knows though that this is a discussion in which he needs to tread lightly even though it makes his blood boil.

In today's England same-sex marriage is legal and has been since 2014 (Pew Research Center) but getting married within the Church of England is still prohibited because the Church still defines marriage as an act between man and woman (Pew Research Center). So in the time when the novel is set marriage would not be an option for Barry and Morris, but there is no law against being in a same-sex relationship. Many people do also chose not to get married in the church because of the way they or their groups have been treated by the church in the past. Church and religion can be one uniting force but also a very divisive institute that still today in some parts of the world has perhaps a bit too much of a rein on people and their thoughts.

Romanow tries to define the "postcolonial body" in her earlier mentioned "The Postcolonial Body in Queer Space and Time". Defining the postcolonial and the body are the first issues Romanow encounters when collecting different authors and their definitions of the terms, with postcolonial comprising of notions of "colonisation, globalisation, racism, and economic inequality" (Romanow, 2006: 2). Defining a "conception of the notion of the 'body' which focused largely on issues of gender, race, and physical transformation" dealing with "external facets of the body" (Romanow, 2006: 2). There is a point made by Romanow that the body should be inclusive of both the inner and outside functions, what physically happens to it with its postcolonial status as well as how it affects the mind and inner workings of the human (Romanow, 2006: 2).

There is a risk that nations and groups that have been victims of imperialism are only defined as "products of the colonial experience" (Romanow, 2006: 3), so it would according to Romanow almost become a need to build an identity for themselves not defined by the history of their people. But at the same time it is a lost cause since postcolonialism would be a set part of their identity in any country they end up. "This definition, then, becomes a reductive way of repeating the Othering produced by colonisation, while casting a wide net over all of those who have moved from one marginal status to another: the colonised merely

become the previously colonised, the past always informs the present, the future remains mired in what has already been” (Romanow, 2006: 3). The “postcolonial” is, indeed, a descriptor of a specific human experience, a time and a place inhabited by bodies that function in a mode of “postcoloniality” (Romanow, 2006: 3):

What I will argue here is that as the notion of the postcolonial itself has moved from being defined by the spaces of nationalities, so the postcolonial subject is seen as performing a metamorphosis from a member of the nation, to an autonomous agent in the metropole.

(Romanow, 2006: 5)

There can become a sense of othering, “necessary binary of Us/Other” in the lands “which have been subjected to imperialistic rule” (Romanow, 2006: 7). I would imagine there is a need in the local society to try and fit in with the coloniser, and one way to do that could be to adapt the same belief system and integrate them into the cultural views, for example reinforce the religious views about homosexuality.

Those who live in a queer time, a timeline in life which does not follow the normative timeline, “upset or disengage themselves from the normative progression of a life which should follow the expected pattern for individuals in many societies (Romanow, 2006: 6). “Double consciousness” (Romanow, 2006:8) is a term that Romanow introduces where the memory of the homeland one has left behind still lingers in the mind together with the new culture and language that has been introduced to an individual who has migrated. This will cause a mixture of “consciousness and locations that the postcolonial subject must acknowledge” (Romanow, 2006: 8). This double consciousness will also cause changes and disruption in the queer time and space as the old, so called normative timeline, meets the new in the homeland where a different society and culture might affect the normative timeline there.

3. Mr Loverman

Barrington, his wife Carmel, and many of their friends have moved from Antigua to the United Kingdom when they were young, before starting their families. Even though they have adapted to their new homes customs they still hold on to some beliefs and prejudices from their native country.

Barry has a sort of crisis within himself about acceptance. He describes and talks about Morris and their relationship in no uncertain terms, very straightforward and matter-of-fact. But he still likes to set himself aside from other gay people and not associate himself with them or as one of them. “I won’t have nobody sticking me in a box and labelling it” (Evaristo, 2013: 138) as he says. While meeting his daughter’s friends, who come from a different generation, he describes them to himself and the reader in demeaning terms, not seeing himself as someone like them and feels as if they are flaunting and too open about their sexuality. It is as if Barry is fighting with his own prejudice that he has been taught from childhood. He sees himself as an Other from them that is not as abrasive and inferior because they are showing so openly their sexuality and just trying to be themselves. It is if he thinks that sexuality is something that should be hidden and not made part of ones identity to the outer world.

Barry likes to be flamboyant with his words, using them as if to show that he has read the dictionary and can recite similar sounding words to sound smart. His school background consists of Antigua Grammar School (Evaristo, 2013: 7) and then evening classes in England since he didn’t score high enough for a scholarship to university (Evaristo, 2013: 8).

Barry and Morris have been in a relationship since they were teenagers, “I can honestly say to wife, ‘Dear, I ain’t never never slept with another woman’ ” (Evaristo, 2013: 13). He likes to pride himself with the fact that he has followed what his mother taught him about treating women right and staying around to raise the children as well as not wanting to “give place for shady, step-daddy” (Evaristo, 2013: 16). It is as if he is trying to ease his conscience, he knows that he has wronged Carmel and his girls, taken the chance from Carmel to actually live in a happy relationship. But Barry stayed, and even helped though only when really needed, and did not hurt Carmel physically nor his daughters.

At times he wants to tell Carmel the truth, “a projectile vomit of fifty years of deception, disillusionment and self-destruction hurtling down the stairs on to her back”

(Evaristo, 2013: 17). He did try to divorce her once but she refused to let him even speak the word. There is an inner struggle of sorts, when he acknowledges all the wrongs he has done and at the same time almost comforts himself with “I was fast-tracked down into the Eternal flames a long time ago” (Evaristo, 2013: 17) because of his sexuality, and he knows that is also where Carmel would send him once she knew the truth. As if he himself believes in the religious views he knows exist after growing up in Antigua and living with a religious wife. There is no mention of Barry’s own religious belief except that he refused to go to church but there does perhaps not have to be an explanation as to why.

Carmel is sure that during many years of their marriage Barry has been unfaithful to her with other women. Reminiscing about their youth and the beginning of their relationship Carmel is described as someone who has a lot of beauty but might have been a bit too young for Barry. Barry himself already knew about his sexuality but in a country like Antigua it had to be hidden. So he chose Carmel as a suitable partner, someone he might find it durable to build a life with. He knew that women liked him and perhaps felt this was an advantage. He also saw Carmel’s youth and naivety (Evaristo, 2013: 35) as a good thing. Was there perhaps an unbalanced power in their relationship at the time that Barry knew and took advantage of? Carmel is deeply religious so her never leaving Barry stems from a belief that marriage is for life. Carmel did not have any suspicion during their wedding night (Evaristo, 2013: 26, 77) or after about his true preferences.

There is a feeling that Barry must have known what it would be like in the future. He knew that he could not provide the kind of relationship Carmel expected but he chose to do it anyway to avoid being scrutinized in their home country. He claims himself to have started to pass the age where he should have settled already and felt pressure so as not to raise suspicion about his sexuality (Evaristo, 2013: 35). The home and failed marriage has become a constant in his life that he tries to convince himself that he has to leave. The marriage has been a struggle for Carmel as well, leading to depression after the birth of their second daughter coupled with Barry’s lack of interest and desire for her. For Barry marrying a woman and building a family with two children was the only front he needed for his hidden sexuality. He did not show any interest in Carmel or even try to be a loving husband after their marriage begun.

“I want to spend my remaining years with Morris” (Evaristo, 2013: 32) is a wish Barry has early in the novel. He goes a bit back-and-forth through the novel on what to do, even though he knows he wants to be with Morris. He just does not have courage enough to face Carmel and the rest of the world, at least in the beginning. Morris also has a past marriage but he was forced to come out, and did it twenty years earlier (the present time is set in the year 2010). Morris married Odette in England before Barry arrived since he didn’t think Barry would make it and he could not be a West Indian man living alone who did not start a family (Evaristo, 2013: 32). According to Barry’s recollection: “truth is, both of us was desperate to be anything other than what we was” (Evaristo, 2013: 32). Understanding this as Barry and Morris partly having trouble accepting themselves and their sexuality, perhaps thinking and imagining that it would be easier to be heterosexual and trying to fit into that part, living the life their culture expected them to live. But all this stems from society and the unfair expectations and discrimination it sets on people.

“Soon after my arrival we resumed where we’d left off” (Evaristo, 2013: 32), so marriage to two women did not change their feelings for each other. They still continued their relationship in secret even though they had left Antigua by that point. They were of course married and did not want to divorce their wives, feeling that it was important to still keep the pretence since there would be a diasporic community in England as well. The year 1989 brought change for Morris when his wife Odette caught Morris and Barry together (Evaristo, 2013: 32). Morris had to get Odette to keep their secret so he bribed her with everything he could give her (Evaristo, 2013: 33). Odette kept her word, never told on Barry and Morris and moved back to Antigua (Evaristo, 2013: 33). The reason why she never told on them would be interesting to know. It is of course a good thing done by her even though she was the scorned wife and could easily have hurt both men and their reputation. Perhaps she felt that the way they would be treated by their community was not right or fair, that she did not want to bring that onto someone else even though she was cheated on, lied to and tricked into marriage under some false pretences.

Barry must still feel that there is a difference between Odette and Carmel which he knows will result in a different type of reaction from Carmel. As he confesses during one of their discussions: “Morris, I don’t know if I can jump into the great abyss of social alienation with you” (Evaristo, 2013: 34). Part of it seems to be the difficulty of actually taking the step

and breaking down the home and home-life he has built with Carmel even though it has not been a happy time. Part of it seems to come from within which slowly reveals itself as not being able to accept his own identity but also as a fear of being left on the outside in social alienation as he says to Morris. Barry does not seem to have a lot of faith in the people he has in his life, and giving all that up is too scary at this point. Knowing himself and being comfortable with who he is might make it easier to accept his sexuality and to not need validation from others. Barry could give up the role of a heterosexual which he has played his whole life.

Remembering his youth in Antigua, he felt immense pressure to get married to a girl and even show an interest in them (Evaristo, 2013: 34). As a young man in Antigua, showing no interest in girls when he apparently could have any one of them was risky for Barry so he decided to court and marry Carmel when he was 24 years old (Evaristo, 2013: 34). And even so he states that he “almost left it too late for some” (Evaristo, 2013: 35) as “they was talking, and I was afraid I’d be up before a judge on some trumped-up charge of indecent exposure; or end up lying on an operating table with a bar of wood between my teeth and electric volts destroying parts of my brain for ever; or in the crazy house pumped full of drugs that would eventually drive a sane man mad” (Evaristo, 2013: 35). There are quite many possible scenarios that Barry is afraid of, and it seems as if only suspicion is enough to cause damage to someone’s reputation and possibly life.

Barry remembers a popular teacher who lived alone, didn’t have a relationship with girls and did not socialise the way their society felt he should (Evaristo, 2013: 35). He was accused of “touching up some fella in the market” and “hanged himself in the crazy house” (Evaristo, 2013: 35). So perhaps then Barry has seen marriage as a form of self-preservation in trying to fit in and meet the expectations of society. But still these feelings did not disappear with moving to England since Morris married Odette only after arriving in London and they both kept a low profile with their relationship even though as Barry puts it: “We all thought England was goin’ be utopia” (Evaristo, 2013: 35). A place where you could easily be anonymous. As Morris states to Barry: “this is 1980s London Barry, not 1950s St John’s. ...*It is legal. We are legal.. Nobody goin’ arrest us*” (Evaristo, 2013: 35).

During one point in his life, Barry is going through an inner conflict and many negative experiences he has had or heard of spring to his mind. One memory is of a man

Barry knew who got shot in the head. The official story was that he had been in a quarrel over a woman and some gangsters had shot him (Evaristo, 2013: 114). But the word on the streets was that “he had been cheating on his woman with a ‘batty’ man”, she had caught him with the other man and her gangster brother then shot him as “revenge for shaming the family” (Evaristo, 2013: 114). Barry wants to make a mark in England and “defy the low expectations the indigènes had of us” (Evaristo, 2013: 115) as if he wants to prove himself to others and himself. One might wonder if there is a sense of wanting to show that he is not what people with prejudices think. That he does not fit the stereotype. Is there perhaps even a feeling of inferiority because of his homosexuality and the language that is used about homosexuals in the Caribbean as well as how they are treated? You could be bullied in Antigua as a man who “wasn’t manly enough, who wore too-bright shirts, who was a bit soft in his manner, who needed straightening out” (Evaristo, 2013: 122). In England he can dress and act as he wants but still fears coming out and being completely himself. As Romanow states:

While modes of language, dress and behavior, cross-dressing as British and replicating forms of British activities, afford the colonial-as-mimic man the possibilities of believing that he has become enmeshed in the world of the colonizer, in fact, the process of mimicking becomes the only agency through which the colonized can foreground his identity, as he moves into the sphere of hybrid and mimic man, of “reality as mimicry.”

(Romanow, 2006: 30)

Throughout the novel Barry has some inner stereotypes about queer people that he likes to set himself apart from, and does not ascribe to being a member of the group himself. He does accept the part of himself that loves Morris but refers to himself as “Barrysexual” (2013: 138). The religious contempt that Carmel’s friends have towards queer people, which will be discussed later in the thesis, is something Barry will not stand for. But he is also himself in a way looking down on people who are open about their true sexuality and fit into his believed stereotype of queer people that he perhaps has been taught ever since he was young living in his home country of Antigua.

Considering the LGBTQIA+, community he calls lesbians and their coming out and taking more space in society “pinkification” (Evaristo, 2013: 121) which apparently has been around, as he says, for a long time: though men would have to be more discreet (Evaristo,

2013: 121). Barry used to go to Abney Park Cemetery at night where men would meet in secret. One night Barry and the man he was with were attacked and the group were yelling “Batty man! Bum bandit! Poofter! Anti-Man!” (Evaristo, 2013: 122) at them, the same words Barry avoids now as well as he can. Only when talking about himself though. This attack obviously left a mark and must have scared Barry a bit, which could make it harder with his self-acceptance and coming out.

There is a feel of Barry wanting to stay above queer people and keeping his place in the household as the man who provides for his family. The man who is learned and eloquent. Is there then an inner fear he has that if he came out he would be reduced to something less in his mind? Is the family unit with a wife a status symbol of sorts? “Maybe that explains me to myself too. I don’t like to buck the so-called ‘system’, like those gay exhibitionists Morris loves so much. I like to infiltrate the system and benefit from it. Same goes with my marriage. I don’t like being an outsider” (Evaristo, 2013: 159). He is living the right kind of life but can also in his inner monologue and with Morris act as if he is frank about their relationship and what it entails. But he still wants to live as a heterosexual man and the heterosexual life he has built for himself. The fear of losing what he has and perhaps losing himself, not knowing what life as an openly gay man would entail.

During a discussion with Morris, Barry states: “I didn’t really appreciate that attention seeking behaviour of those *gay* liberationists. They should-a kept the noise down a bit. As well you know, I believe in discretion” (Evaristo, 2013: 137). It is as if he feels that staying in the shadows is a good thing, what they are supposed to do or just be discrete and not attract attention to themselves. Mostly it sounds as if fear steers the way Barry thinks and feels about the liberationists whereas Morris sees their work as important. Even if same-sex relationships are not illegal in the UK Morris sees the need for more equality and understands how to achieve it. But Barry seems to feel that they are taking too much space, replicating almost the beliefs he grew up with in Antigua. And he also knows, as well as Morris does, that despite their relationship being legal it does not mean that they are safe: as can be seen from the previous recollections above.

Morris sees though Barry and is not afraid to bring him down to Earth: “yuh talking nonsense again, Barry. I believe in discretion too, but society don’t become more equal unless some brave folk get up on their soapboxes and start revolutions, like in Russia, Mexico,

China, France. You see, unlike you, who seems to think you are superior to most people, I believe in equality. I never did like discrimination of any kind” (Evaristo, 2013: 137). So it is not just other people of the LGBTQIA+ community that Barry feels superior to but according to Morris Barry feels himself to be superior to everyone. For the sake of this thesis the focus is going to continue to be on the feelings Barry has for sexual minorities and the way he expresses himself on the subject since this is also an exploration of how he comes to term with himself and his belonging in this community he wants to look down on.

Morris compares Barry to Carmel’s friends who like to preach the gospel and are visibly quite homophobic. Morris calls out his hypocrisy but Barry does not want to accept his accusations, “Morris, I am an individual, specific, not generic. I am no more a pooftah than I am a homo, buller or anti-man. ... I ain’t no homosexual. I am a Barrysexual!” (Evaristo, 2013: 138). Pooftah, buller, anti-man are, the same as homo, different call names for homosexual, but they are derogatory terms. He wants to set himself apart from the other gay men, or tries to at least by using himself the derogatory terms that he thinks someone might use about him if they knew the truth. He is in a way keeping control for himself, of his identity and sets himself as something other than these men that are being slandered and seen as less-than-men, anti-men. Wanting to be an individual is often seen as a good thing, but if there at the same time happens any intolerance as a way to set oneself above others it is not a good way to shape individuality. Not even if the person happens to be a part of the group or community and is re-using harmful language in an even slightly joking manner. You can be homophobic as a homosexual man.

There seems to be a sort of clash in Barry’s mind where he wants to give the impression to Morris of being open with himself and at ease with his sexuality, but he still likes to differentiate himself from other homosexuals and people of the LGBTQIA+ community. As previously mentioned he seems to still hold prejudices towards the community and does not accept himself as part of it, which shows how Morris in some ways is more accepting of himself than Barry. At one point the nail bombings from 1999 are brought up (Evaristo, 2013: 246) and Barry is for a second putting himself in the victims shoes when he states: “the quarter-brain who couldn’t get a woman, blamed gays, blacks and Bengalis and decided to blow us all up as revenge” but then in the same breath concludes

that this was one more reason why he decided to stay away from these bars (Evaristo, 2013: 246).

Carmel has a group of religious friends who she attends church with and, inviting them to her home, they end up infuriating Barry with their talk. One of their discussions turns to sexuality and how homosexuality is wrong and a sin. The friends of Carmel interrogate their oldest daughter Donna on her feelings of homosexuality, her son Daniel's, or Danny, possible sexuality and what she would do if he were gay. While he is sitting by the same table.

Before descending on Donna they have a discussion of a possibly lesbian woman who belongs to their community. The very religious women by the kitchen table do not approve, calling the potential relationship an "abomination" and citing Romans from the Bible, "if man lies with man as he lies with woman, he will surely be put to death?" and ending with a statement that the "pope agrees" with their beliefs and views (Evaristo, 2013: 56). During this discussion Barry is silent and quietly disapproving of these ladies. He knows that he can not say anything since it might raise suspicion towards himself. Donna, his eldest daughter, tries to get them to see clarity though, bringing up the fact that these scriptures are thousands of years old and that it would be ridiculous to base opinions today on them (Evaristo, 2013: 57). When discussing this generally Donna seems to disapprove of homophobia as well as Buju Banton, Beenie Man "and the rest with their sexist, homophobic lyrics" and she does not approve that Danny likes to listen to it (Evaristo, 2013: 58). There seems to be a generational rift between her mother's friends and Donna and the views each have about sexuality.

As noble as she tries to be, when Donna is put on the spot by one of Carmel's friends regarding her own son's sexuality she is not as straightforward with her support, "I've no idea if Daniel is 'one of them', as you put it. If he is...it would be up to...him" (Evaristo, 2013: 59). After some prodding she admits that she would not jump for joy and would only consider it a phase (Evaristo, 2013: 60) perhaps because she herself went through one of these "phases" when she was younger. One of the reasons she mentions why she would not be too happy with her son being gay is that she would like grandchildren, but that argument is quite void in today's world since adoption is an option. We could wish that it is just her wanting an easier life for Danny where he does not have to go through emotional turmoil

with accepting himself and then having to face the society and world where acceptance is not universal. She does have some examples of what the diasporic community might think right there by the same table after listening to Carmel's friends and the way they talked about someone who is potentially lesbian.

Barry eventually jumps into the discussion but does not get a lot of headway either with the women as their response is: "those homos are rightly suffering, God saved us to make us holy, Mr Walker, not happy" (Evaristo, 2013: 62). Religion steers many of their thoughts on the subject, "the homos are suffering because suffering is part of their salvation. The Lord says they should be beaten that they mayest be better" (Evaristo, 2013: 62). Carmel has been quite quiet during this whole conversation, the only thing she has to contribute is "it's not their fault they are sick but it's their fault when they act on it. We should pray for their souls to be saved" (Evaristo, 2013: 63). Whether it is a lack of understanding, fear of something unknown or just dislike of something or someone different, the image they give of themselves is of people who base their opinions only on the Bible and do not want to form any of their own opinions. They feed each other and their negative views.

Barry contemplates with himself whether to get involved or not but never reaches a decision as it is as if his mouth has a mind of its own and decides to speak up. He tries to protect his daughter and grandson from the interrogation and uncomfortable feeling they might be having, and perhaps himself? By the end he gets even more riled up when the women do not want to let things go but keep on pushing so Barry starts to threaten violence.

When Donna was younger she started spending time with a girl named Merle, who on their first encounter informed Barry that she is a lesbian, perhaps to see his reaction if Donna had been badmouthing her dad (Evaristo, 2013: 130). Barry says he does not have a problem with it, and in his mind wishes he could be brave like her and tell the truth about himself (Evaristo, 2013: 130). Donna and Merle do not last long together and Donna goes back to dating men, which might be the reason behind her thinking that it would be a phase if Danny turned up with a boyfriend. Barry tried to have a talk with her about accepting her and her sexuality, Donna did not take it well and after that the possible girlfriend was never invited back by Donna again. Barry kept in contact with Merle though and gave her a home (Evaristo, 2013: 53).

Towards the end of the novel Barry has Danny as a house-guest for a week, he sees this as a chance to bond with his grandson and gets to know some more about his daughter. He starts to realise that he might not actually know and pay attention to other people that much. He finds out that Donna likes to joke to Danny that Barry should have married Morris instead since the two are inseparable (Evaristo, 2013: 182) but Barry does not seem to think that Donna actually might suspect something, unlike Maxine. Over the years, he and Morris have wondered if the younger daughter might think that something is going on since she spends a lot of time around LGBTQIA+ people and frequents their clubs (Evaristo, 2013: 219). Barry thinks more during this week about the things he might lose when coming out, but is also quite tired of the life he has with Carmel. It is as he states to himself that he is afraid of the conflict that will ensue and stepping out of his comfort zone (Evaristo, 2013: 185).

Barry's eventual catharsis comes when he one night becomes enraged at Danny's homophobic friends who are playing the Buju Banton song "Batty boy" in his house (Evaristo 194). This is his sanctuary where he has lived the better part of his life. Even though he has not been able to be himself even inside of his own home it is still a sign of disrespect for Barry. The song and the arrogance of Danny's friend causes him to explode in a rather calm fashion, quietly replying "Yes, I am a cock-sucker" (Evaristo, 2013: 196) to the younger boys insinuations. Barry here once again surprises himself as during the discussion with Carmel's friends. It is not planned, more like forced, pushed out of him and he is surprised himself at the things he says. But the smugness and disrespect from the younger boy is enough to cause a reaction in Barry. During the altercation Danny steps in and tries to calm the situation down by at first trying to get Barry to admit that he is joking and then telling his grandfather that Barry is disrespecting him over and over again (Evaristo, 2013: 197). The younger generation in this section seem to have similar views as Barry's generation, and listening to Buju Banton might only increase these feelings.

Even though he was provoked he does not seem to be able to stop himself, even though his brain has caught up with what he is saying. His queerness has always been a part of him but now it almost steps out and takes control of his self-identity in public for the first time (Evaristo, 2013: 196). In his mind he has been free but in the outside world this part of him has been suppressed and allowed itself to be indifferent perhaps to abuse. As Koegler

writes, “heteronormative and/or homophobic tendencies that either exclude and obfuscate or directly invalidate queer home-making are harmful and harming at various levels of representation. This harming potentially poses a challenge to normative identity narratives” (Koegler, 2020: 894).

After the altercation, where Barry, among other things, threw his grandson out and went on a several day bender, Maxine arrives to clean up the mess and she eventually gets Barry to tell her what happened (Evaristo, 2013: 219). Partly because he feels tired of hiding. Maxine admits to knowing, having figured the relationship out a long time ago as Barry and Morris have suspected (Evaristo, 2013: 219). She approves of the relationship but not of the way her mother has been treated and feels like her sister and mother can never know the truth. At this point Barry does not yet reveal that he intends to leave Carmel. Even though he has now come out to his daughter he still has a problem with labelling himself and almost as if his masculinity is threatened when Maxine calls him “camp” and “Caribbean queen” (Evaristo, 2013: 219 & 222). He worries about Maxine thinking him “effeminate” with her camp comment, and when she calls him homo he retorts with “the only homo I am is sapiens dearie” (Evaristo, 2013: 220) in his mind, but not out loud to her for some reason.

The fact that Maxine is so supportive and not surprised about her dad’s sexuality was already prefaced earlier in the novel when Maxine was watching Barry, while Barry was watching Morris. Maxine’s comment to Barry, “Daddy, if there’s anything you ever want to tell me... you know I’m not Mum and the God Squad” (Evaristo, 2013: 105) makes the reader wish for a bit that Barry would be brave enough to open up but he does not. It is a show of how different beliefs can exist within the same generation, considering Donna and her reluctant views on same-sex relationships.

When Barry is thinking about himself and Morris he also feels that their love brings shame and that “moving in with Morris sounds so brave, *too* brave” (Evaristo, 2013: 106). It is not often in the novel that Barry actually admits to any feelings of shame which probably stem from his upbringing and the environment he lives in. I will not get into the father wound in this thesis but it might be worth noting that his father died when Barry was young. He had already at that point started his relationships with Morris and parts of him in his recollection felt relieved that Barry was spared from his father’s disapproval (Evaristo, 2013: 158).

Barry's brother Larry teaches him to sweet-talk girls and Barry reminisces about hoping it would cure him (Evaristo, 2013: 161). There seems to be a wish in Barry that he would not be homosexual, but considering the way homosexuals are treated in Antigua it might be understandable. Larry walks in on Barry and Morris (Evaristo, 2013: 161) and though Larry never tells on them or reveals their secret Barry knows that his brother "didn't approve, didn't understand it, pretty sure he didn't like it but accepted it because Barry was his little brother" (Evaristo, 2013: 162-163). Once again someone from Barry's early life knew about him and Morris, someone like Odette who had grown up in the discriminating climate of Antigua, but decided to stay silent.

After coming out to his younger daughter Barry and Morris join her in a gay club for a get-together with some of her gay friends, since as Barry puts it, "might as well explore the gay life that's on offer" (Evaristo, 2013: 240). Barry has from the start quite a stereotypical view of Maxine's friends, quite literally judging them by their looks from the beginning and does not even bother to refer to them by their names resorting to "Blondie", "Blow job lips" and "Spaghetti Head" (Evaristo, 2013: 251-253). For Spaghetti Head he changes the nickname as the discussion continues but it is as if he has determined that they are part of a group that he does not belong to and that he is above them in intellect and styles (Evaristo, 2013: 246-263). There is a clash between generations and some of Barry's learned homophobia shows but he manages to leave as an ally. One could almost see it as an initiation rite to the life as an out, gay, man.

During the larger part of the story Carmel has been in Antigua taking care of her dad's funeral arrangements while Barry has been at home coming to terms with himself. She has learned from Odette the truth about Barry and Morris and in the end arrives back in London only to tell Barry that she is divorcing him and moving back to Antigua for good (Evaristo, 2013: 279). So Barry escapes the uncomfortable coming out to his wife, even though the divorce was less than amicable.

One time when viewing his younger daughter Maxine and considering her way of dressing and showing her own identity through her appearance Barry thinks to himself that "we all present carefully selected versions of we-selves to the world at large" (Evaristo, 2013: 87). Considering how he has lived his life he knows what he is talking about, even though he has always used a "flamboyant style" which judging by the choice of words by the author, is

a style that is more out there and something that Barry has built his identity with. The choice of clothes is often the first thing people notice about others, and is also something that others' opinions and interpretation of oneself is based on. They can naturally be quite misleading depending on the style and people's prejudices that exist. Style and clothes is a way to build an identity, even if it might just be an identity for show. Barry prides himself in his style and outer appearance, as with his wanting to seem learned and eloquent, using a vocabulary with eloquent words even though Carmel at one point almost bitterly thinks about Barry's need to seem educated, "a dibbler-dabbler who hides his flimsy knowledge behind an intellectual self-aggrandizement that is plainly *showing off*", even though he barely finished school and was not accepted to higher education in England (Evaristo, 2013: 146). Words are quite a big part of this whole story, as the question boils down to how Barry will define himself and how not. Rosario *et al.* talk about "identity integration" which involves incorporating and consolidating a GLB identity" (2006: 2) as Barry finally does. "This is evident by the individual coming to accept a GLB identity, resolving internalised homophobia by transforming negative attitudes into positive attitudes, feeling comfortable with the idea that others may know about the unfolding identity, and disclosing that identity to others" (see Rosario *et al.* 2001 as cited in Rosario *et al.*, 2006: 2). In the end, Barry seems to accept himself and starts his new life with Morris. He realises that reactions he was afraid of do not always happen as he thought, for example Danny who "might be okay with having a Barrysexual, correction, *homosexual* (la-di-dah) grandfather" (Evaristo, 2013: 299). In the end it is Barry's whole family that knows, but Morris's children are still in the dark. That seems as a bit of a contradiction since it is Morris who throughout the whole novel has pushed for Barry to come out.

4. Other Voices

The story introduces other people as well and some of the chapters are read from Carmel's point of view, depicting their life together and relationship. In a way it is also a growing-up story for her since she is in the end finally ready to step out of her loveless marriage. Of course the push comes from Morris's ex-wife Odette who tells Carmel the truth about Barry and Morris. The daughters Donna and Maxine represent in a way the same generation as daughters of two migrants but with a ten-year age gap between them. Though it is not the gap in years between them that has caused the difference in character, Donna is far closer to her mother and Maxine has been Barry's princess, especially since Donna started to favour Carmel and turned against her dad. Danny represents the youngest generation in the novel during the present, but there are glimpses of all the other characters when they were young as well.

Carmel

Carmel I believe is a very proud person in the same way Barry is. She wants to live the life a woman is supposed to according to her beliefs. Married to her husband, taking care of the house and making it a home as well as going to church on Sunday. She has checked all those boxes but not the way she thought they should happen. Carmel was 16 when she married Barry and was so proud of her well-dressed and handsome suitor later turned husband (Evaristo, 2013: 21, 24).

When it comes to it Barry does step up and take care of his family in more ways than just providing for them. Carmel falls into a post-partum depression after Maxine is born (Evaristo, 2013: 104) and Barry together with Carmel's friends take care of the kids and the household. Carmel is worried that Barry is judging her and will not leave her alone with the baby since she one time dropped her by accident (Evaristo, 2013: 68) and Carmel struggles with herself and feelings of jealousy which could stem from the attention Barry gives Maxine (Evaristo, 2013: 147). Getting attention from Barry is what Carmel hoped for when she was younger but during the years they have been married she has realised he will not be the husband she thought he would, never even saying that he loves her (Evaristo, 2013: 147) which is something that she silently longed for.

After recovering from post-partum depression Carmel decides to go to school and educate herself, realising that she had lost herself while being a wife and a mother (Evaristo, 2013: 146). Carmel ends up finding a job and doing really well for herself, ascending to higher positions (Evaristo, 2013: 232) and having colleagues she befriends. Even though her marriage situation is not what she would want she still makes it a point to have a picture of Barry on her desk, to show off her husband to the others as if she feels it would be some type of status symbol to show that she is married (Evaristo, 2013: 147). At her job, Carmel meets a man named Reuben who very clearly shows interest in her from the beginning. Carmel does not at first find him attractive but as time goes by she warms up to him and they start an affair (Evaristo, 2013: 206). With Reuben she experiences something she has not with Barry, being wanted and adored and exploring her own sexuality (Evaristo, 2013: 234). Despite the relationship with Reuben and the way he makes her feel, the thought of divorce is something she refuses to think about, and Barry is not allowed to think about it either even though he tries to suggest it at one point (Evaristo, 2013: 238). It feels as if in today's world people would put their wellbeing and happiness before an unhappy marriage but not Carmel.

In the end while Carmel is spending time in Antigua she meets Odette, who talks Carmel into taking a massage and pampering herself (Evaristo, 2013, 286-287). From there starts a new chapter in Carmel's life where she starts to take better care of herself, instead of the house and home she has been taking care of while in London. She feels a bit guilty and thinks about her marriage vows when she runs into Hubert, a man she had a short relationship with when she was young but she broke up with him in order to be with Barry (Evaristo, 2013: 27). At this point Odette reveals the truth about Barry and Morris to Carmel, a secret she has been keeping for twenty years (Evaristo, 2013: 278, 286). Carmel is furious but once she returns to England she is calm and collected while telling Barry about their looming divorce (Evaristo, 2013 276-279). She makes it very clear that she does not accept homosexuality and does not give Barry any chance to talk. She had rekindled her romance with Hubert, who is a successful man now, back in Antigua and she intends to stay there after taking everything she is owed in the divorce (Evaristo, 288-290). And perhaps rightly so considering how long Barry and Morris had their affair behind her back. She does inform Barry that she will not reveal his relationship with Morris to anyone because it would not do any good for her, only show everyone what a fool she has been (Evaristo, 2013: 279). Carmel

says to Barry that she “spent fifty years of my life betrayed by your lie. My whole adult life been wasted” (Evaristo. 2013: 305) which for Barry feels like a sucker punch still one year after she announced that she would divorce him. So he seems to have garnered some sympathy for her but this happens after she does not want or need it anymore.

Donna

Donna is the older of the daughters and according to Barry is Carmel’s Rottweiler who always takes her mother’s side and seems to have an ever-present animosity towards her father that Barry can not explain. She is the mother of Daniel, a single-mother who is still looking for a husband. Perhaps part of her frustration stems from her not achieving the core family that is so highly valued and expected in the trajectory of a heterosexual timeline of life.

Donna’s thoughts about homosexuality are revealed at an earlier point in this thesis during the discussion about Carmel’s friends in the kitchen and their judgemental thoughts about different sexualities and people. She made a promise to her mother that she would not tell about Barry and Morris’s relationship but Danny reveals that she actually spent months gossiping about her closeted gay father and his best friend lover with her female friends (Evaristo, 2013: 299), so if she actually had a problem with homosexuality she would keep it hidden as her mother wished?

In her anger during a fight Donna reveals to Barry why she has been so dismissive to her father through the years and why she seems to lack any respect for him. One evening when she was still a teenager living at home she went to look for Barry as he had left the house and saw him sneaking out of the cemetery, the “outdoor brothel” with someone Donna assumed was a woman (Evaristo, 2013: 230). She realised he was having an affair, never had the heart to tell her mother that she knew but turned against her father and has been hard on him ever since (Evaristo, 2013: 230). What she does not know is that despite her behaviour towards him, Barry has still protected her as best he could. When Donna was beaten by Frankie, Danny’s dad, so badly she wound up in hospital, Barry and Morris decided to go pay him a visit which ended with the pair beating Frank up (Evaristo, 2013: 178). Barry never reveals this to Donna or anyone else, there is only a rumour going around that Donna had some gang members beat Frankie up and Barry never corrects it. Donna blames Barry for her

problems with men, because of the pain Barry caused Carmel in their marriage as well as when he would come home drunk and pick fights with Carmel, which would scare Donna as a child (Evaristo; 229). She does also though have incredibly high standards for the men she dates which might in part explain the difficult love life she has.

Donna and Barry never discuss the relationship with Merle after Donna ends it. It is never certain what label Donna has, she does not want to talk about it with Barry or even listen to him when he tries to tell her that he accepts her no matter who she loves (Evaristo, 2013: 129). As if Barry is telling his daughter the things he wished he could hear himself, giving her the approval he himself has always lacked in his life from others and in part from himself (Evaristo, 2013: 131).

Barry and Carmel know that Donna has always been envious of her younger sister Maxine since she was born and took a lot of Barry's attention away while Carmel suffered from depression (Evaristo, 2013: 217, 285). Then finding out that her father was cheating and having to listen to her mother lament about how hurt Carmel is by Barry's actions would not make his points rise in her eyes. As earlier stated, the sisters are very different, but also very similar when considering their dealings with men. Donna seems to have a hard time choosing and finds fault in them all whereas there is never any mention of romantic relationships regarding Maxine. Donna does have some feminist views, talking about black women's rights and trying to get her mother to leave Barry (Evaristo, 2013: 149). Carmel, and Barry who also gets earfuls of both daughters' feminist views, do not take them to heart or really agree with them. They both believe in more traditional gender roles.

Maxine

Maxine in some ways is a complete opposite to her older sister. She does not worry about dating or finding the right man, she is more career oriented and wants to make it in fashion (Evaristo, 2013: 96). She is more daddy's-girl than Donna who is close to their mother, and Barry has enjoyed spoiling her (Evaristo, 2013: 147), perhaps because she is the only woman in his family who does not shun him and he got to spend a lot of time with her when Carmel suffered from depression which was the start of their strong father/daughter bond.

Barry does realise that the way he has treated Maxine, almost as the centre of his world, never saying no and not wanting to punish her, can be the cause of her difficulty to

settle down and finding herself now when she has to realise that the real world will not put her on a pedestal the same way he did (Evaristo, 2013: 109). She struggles with finding her place in ways of work and wants to start her own fashion brand. At 40-years-old she feels alone in the world and as if no one cares (Evaristo, 2013: 264). As I stated earlier she does not either have any luck with men, if she even is trying to find one. She spends a lot of time in gay bars and has gay male friends instead. That is also why she started to suspect Barry and Morris in her teens, after starting to attend gay bars (Evaristo, 2013: 219).

Even though she is not as close to her mother as Donna is, she does look out for her mother and has a better relationship with her than Donna has with Barry. Maxine scolds her father after talking to her mother and hearing how hurt Carmel is from Barry's late night drinking and once she finds out her suspicions are true she does state that she does not like Barry's cheating (Evaristo, 2013: 220). But she is still the one, first of all, to cheer Barry and Morris on and wants to help them come out properly and to feel good about it. It is a little different than Danny's reaction but Maxine has also had 20 years or so to come to terms with the idea that her father might be gay.

Danny

Danny represents the younger generation. Having been born and raised in England he is still affected by the Caribbean culture and society indirectly, being influenced both by his mother as well as his friend group. He comes off as cheeky, a bit arrogant, but smart with high ambitions when aiming for Oxford and then Harvard and then on to become "Britain's first black PM" (Evaristo, 2013: 180). When Barry gets to spend some one-on-one time with his grandson after many years, he does not perhaps realise how grown-up he actually is. Taking into account Danny's ability to analyse his mother and her apparent flaws, he seems to be the most progressive out of the younger generation and down to Earth, not taking to account his future plans for himself. He is still the one that judges Barry the way Barry is afraid of being judged when the older finally comes out.

When Barry reveals his sexuality to Danny and his friends, Danny tells his grandfather that he is disrespecting and shaming him (Evaristo, 2013: 197). As if Barry and his sexuality is any type of reflection on Danny, or perhaps his friends' prejudices and cultural views have affected Danny and his views. Even though he seemed to be more open

minded in earlier conversations, an “all-round Progressive with a capital P” (Evaristo, 2013: 299). Barry throws everyone out, including Danny, who will not be seen again until the end of the novel, almost a year after that night when Barry threw him out. He seems to have gone through a small change of mind himself, telling Barry that he has dropped his homophobic friends and to Barry’s delight seems to be happy for Barry and Morris (Evaristo, 2013: 299). Even so, in Danny’s apology to Barry he mostly deflected any responsibility, blamed it on his acquaintance and the fact that Danny himself was drunk, because he did not know his own limits and that is why he exceeded them (Evaristo, 2013: 297).

Danny gets accepted to Harvard with a scholarship, and Barry and Morris worry that they are going to lose him to America. Danny retorts that his roots are there in England (Evaristo, 2013: 301) and Barry continues to deliberate the fact that Danny is a part of him, and Barry will live on through him. Even though Danny will not realise it, America is going to mould him (Evaristo, 2013: 302). Perhaps in the same way that, as Barry realises, England has moulded him during all his years there.

Others

Merle, who Barry met through Donna, becomes a part of his life even after Donna ends their relationship. While Merle still spends time with the older daughter she tells Barry about her life and how she wished her parents were like him (Evaristo, 2013: 130). Sometime after the relationship has ended Barry discovers that Merle is living in the streets, since her parents threw her out because of her sexuality (Evaristo, 2013: 133). Barry decides to house her in one of his apartments and stays in contact with her all these years, but never tells Donna about it. Perhaps Barry sees himself in Merle and feels a need to help and protect her as much as he can. He can probably understand that the same thing could have happened to him, perhaps even worse, if his own parents ever found out about him. Barry gives compassion to someone in the way he would deserve it for himself.

Barry’s brother was the only person from his family back in Antigua who knew about him and Morris. Larry decided to keep it a secret and warned Barry about being careful, since he knew as well as Barry that their father probably would never have accepted homosexuality in the family (Evaristo, 2013: 158). Barry’s father wanted each generation to do better, he wanted to move them to England and Barry thinks he had visions of rising up in the world

(Evaristo, 2013: 158). Which does happen with Barry moving up to middle-class in the English society and Danny aiming and going further by being accepted to Harvard. Barry did wish that he would have had a chance to talk to his father more and ask for advice (Evaristo, 2013: 159). Barry did spend time with Larry as a grown-up in London and at times during quiet moments Barry knew that he and Larry were remembering the incident where Larry walked in on Barry and Morris, but Barry did not know how to talk about it (Evaristo, 2013: 162). Perhaps there was a wish from Barry's side to actually be able to talk openly with his brother about a fact they both knew, but not having the right words and way to go about it.

The God Squad, the Ole Ladies' Society of Antigua, or the cronies depending on who is talking, was mentioned earlier in this thesis. They are Carmel's group of friends which has stayed together since Antigua, a group of women with strong opinions and high morals that they might not live up to themselves. They base their opinions and prejudices largely on religion and use that as an excuse to judge other people and their way of life. During a chat one Sunday after church, which has been discussed earlier in the thesis as well from Barry's point of view, they have very discriminatory views on same-sex relationships and homosexuality in general. Through both Barry's and Carmel's recollections it becomes quite obvious that they like to preach a lot about God and how others should live their lives.

They are all presented as individuals but together they almost become a mass of prejudice and discrimination, egging each other on while passing judgement on others. None of them really have perfect lives either and as much as they judge other people outside of the group they judge each other as well. It feels as if they are the representation of the Caribbean society and culture that does not change even though they have left Antigua ages ago. They are the most prominent, openly homophobic characters that in the end do not really matter for Barry and Morris's happiness.

5. Humour and storytelling

In this novel Evaristo deals with a topic that is quite heavy but still important in societal discussions. I would imagine the struggles that LGBTQIA+ people in the Caribbean have, were and are still going through are quite unknown in Britain and Evaristo shines a light on the problem with this intricately layered story and the complex characters. It should be observed that this is a story of fiction and can not be generalised. As Russell writes, some readers find Evaristo's "fusion fiction perplexing" (2022) which can be seen particularly in Carmel's chapters in the novel with the missing capital letters at the beginning of sentences and no dots at the end (a style approaching the stream-of-consciousness technique pioneered by James Joyce and Virginia Woolf).

Despite the difficult topic the reader is quite easily swept away by Barry's and Carmel's chapters and stories. Barry's wit and jokes make him at first easily likable, but as the story goes on the flaws come out. The humour throughout the novel with sarcastic quips and jokes lightens the mood "without ridiculing the serious topics at the heart of the text" (2016: 126), as Karschay and Rostek point out in "*Man haf fe do wha man haf fe do:*" *Humour and Identity (Re)Formation in Bernardine Evaristo's Mr Loverman*. Karschay and Rostek analyse the way Barry uses his humour to cope with the "discursive categories of race, gender, sexuality, and age in the process of his identity (re)formation" (2016: 126).

The author has colourful and vibrant descriptions of the people and the glint in Barry's eye can almost be seen as he goes through his life. He plays around with words a lot which in the beginning makes for an amusing way of expressing himself. As Karschay and Rostek analyse his actions they suggest that Barry uses humour as a strategy to hide and "bridge the tensions between 'nature' and 'culture' that act upon him" (2016: 126). And in the same discussion they emphasize Barry's struggle with his own identity, as well as the feelings and inner nature that, throughout his whole life, have been in contradiction with his and some other character's cultural beliefs. The amusement is then layered with inner struggles and the outside worlds open homophobia that the author brings into the fold. As Washington puts it, the story has a "rich territory - dense" (2014). A story where much is said and a lot of ground is covered in a short time, which could cause the reader confusion if it weren't for Evaristo's "confident control of the language, her vibrant use of humour, rhythm

and poetry, and the realistic mix of Caribbean patois with both street and the Queen's English" (Washington, 2014).

None of the characters are perfect, the story is far from black and white and reading one can sympathise, empathise and judge them all (except the openly homophobic, they deserve only judgment in my opinion). The light language makes the story easy to finish but it will stay with the reader for a long time after. Barry twists his humour and wit both inward and outward, turning it to almost cockiness while describing himself and then also to "defend *and* to attack; to exclude *and* to include; to ward off *and* to accept; to alleviate *and* to circumvent painful introspection" (Karschay & Rostek, 2016: 127). This type of humour that Evaristo uses almost takes away the edge of Barry's sometimes homophobic and misogynistic comments. Not excusing them but seeing Barry's ridiculous and sometimes pompous way of expressing himself makes his comments seem over-the-top and overcompensating for something he does not want to admit to himself. Karschay and Rostek also surmise that Barry's way of using humour to differentiate him from other gay men who perform their sexuality in a way that Barry does not approve is his way of dealing with trauma (2016: 131), even though he has not come out he has been attacked in a park, as previously mentioned, but he can not talk about it since that would reveal why he was doing there and his true sexuality. Another theme that is quite prominent in Evaristo's writing is age, there are many generations that the reader meets but the ones using their voice the most are the older generation. Even though both Carmel and Barry state that most of their years are behind them and that it can be seen in their bodies changing, there is no doomsday thinking where the only next step is death. As Karschay and Rostek point out, "humour is not aimed at the allegedly pathetic and ridiculous 'side effects' of aging, but functions as a means of injecting old age with energy and life" (2016: 132). Never does age seem to be a problem, something that would slow Barry or his contemporaries down. Barry, Morris and Carmel start out new lives for themselves, and even though Barry does realise how much he has hurt Carmel (Evaristo, 2013: 305), they choose not to focus on regretting the lives they've lived and people Barry has hurt but looking happily to the future, how long it ever might be.

6. Conclusion

When Evaristo wrote this book the situation in Antigua was different than what it is today. Antigua like the other Caribbean islands has not been very tolerant towards LGBTQIA+ people and communities. On the island as previously mentioned in this thesis there has been a development. Albeit small it is still in the right direction. On July 5, 2022 the “High Court of Justice for Antigua and Barbuda struck down discriminatory legal provisions that criminalized same-sex relations” (Human Rights Watch, 2022). According to Human Rights Watch, the court saw that these laws “violated the right to liberty, protection of the law, freedom of expression, protection of personal privacy, and protection from discrimination” (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

The Sexual Offences Act of 1995 viewed certain sexual acts as offensive and could lead to up to 15 years in prison, and the act excluded heterosexual sex in its definitions of penalised acts (Human Rights Watch, 2022). According to Christian González Cabrera, an LGBT rights researcher at Human Rights Watch, the laws that criminalise same-sex conduct make it possible for “discrimination, violence, and prejudice against LGBT people” (Human Rights Watch, 2022). The laws against “buggery” and “serious indecency” are “relics of the British colonial period” (Human Rights Watch, 2022) showing the long-held effects of colonialization that still exist in the societies in the Caribbean.

One instance that might cause some pushback to bigger freedom for LGBTQIA+ communities is the Christian Church, which still is “a cornerstone of society in much of the Caribbean” (Handy, 2022). A senator in Antigua and Barbuda, Aziza Lake, who was interviewed by the BBC commented how pronounced homophobia still is on the islands, with people not having enough understanding of sexual and gender identity as well as being “raised to believe that gay people were ‘sinful’ ” (Handy, 2022).

LGBTQIA+ people do not have to hide their sexuality and status, there are places like bars that are aiming towards this clientele but because of historical events the security is quite extensive. The nail bombings from the 1990s are one example which was also mentioned in *Mr Loverman* (Evaristo, 2013: 246). Sadly, a recent review conducted about the police force in London by Baroness Louise Casey has revealed that the Met is quite homophobic, sexist and racist (The Baroness Casey Review). This is perhaps not a surprise but very worrying, for people living there and for people who might have family or friends there who belong to

these communities. So there is not only work to be done in the Caribbean but in the West as well.

In choosing the theme for this novel, Evaristo put her finger on a topic that is quite important and quite prevalent in her writing, other works by her have the same type of themes but none less important than the other. The voices she gives to the characters are fiction but might as well be real, proving that nothing is completely black and white.

It is a story about accepting oneself but also re-learning some old habits and homophobic thought processes that Barry at least did not want to admit to himself. Not wanting to identify as a homosexual but still knowing that he is one, as if sexuality becomes something all-consuming in his mind which he tries to comprehend for himself and step away from with his talk and jokes. He tries to conduct himself as open minded and learned but does harbour some prejudice against more vocal members of the LGBTQIA+ community, the ones who try to be openly themselves and gain more rights and equality for the community. There is a feeling that Barry wants to stay in the shadows, maybe there is pressure to come out himself after seeing other LGBTQIA+ being openly out. But living in the closet for so long might also raise insecurity and confusion about where in society he is, what is his part in it and relation to other people? Perhaps he thinks that he has to go through some major transformation on the outside as well. Maybe he harbours inner feelings of having to stay closeted because of violence and hate crimes that have happened.

One's own identity is shaped from birth, at first by parents and family and later on by friends, community and the wider world. Evaristo writes the novel as a call for help, using comedy, humour and irony. Even though the situation in Antigua has improved before the completion of this thesis the topic is still quite current since the situation in other countries, even some Caribbean islands, still needs work. It is not a Cinderella story with all-good and all-evil characters but complex and flawed people that are trying to grow. One would hope that some might live through a change in their belief and evolve while reading the novel the same way Barry does. This analysis has shown, regarding Barry, how deep-rooted and prevalent culture and society's influence can be even though he embraces his sexuality in secret. Being a part of a community that is affected by racism he lets his inner fears affect the way he thinks of the LGBTQIA+ community. When he finally seems to accept himself

as an out, gay man and realises that the world did not go under he seems to be more lenient to his new community as well.

The use of fiction as a commentary on society and the ins and outs of forming one's own identity are well presented in this novel. Reality does perhaps not always have a happy ending the same way Barry and Morris got, but we should all, perhaps, keep our hopes up that the fight for equality can move in the right direction.

7. Summary in Swedish – Svensk sammanfattning

”Jag är en Barrysexual!” – En analys av homosexuell identitet i Bernardine Evaristos *Mr Loverman*

I denna pro gradu-avhandling analyseras Bernardine Evaristos *Mr Loverman*, som utkom 2013. Evaristo är en engelsk författare med nigerianskt ursprung. Hens böcker berättar ofta historier om migranter och minoritetsgrupper bland Englands befolkning. Stilen Evaristo använder i sina verk är ofta väldigt humoristisk. Texterna är en blandning mellan så kallad *received pronunciation*, det vill säga en standardbrittisk engelska och olika dialekter. I *Mr Loverman* blandas den brittiska engelskan med karibisk patois.

Ämnet i avhandlingen är koncentrerat på sexuell läggning, identitet och maskulinitet bland karibiska immigranter i England, närmare bestämt personer som hör till sexuella minoriteter på Antigua och flyttar till London. Åsikter och stereotyper på Antigua och i hela Karibien om personer som hör till sexuella minoriteter har länge varit negativa. En man på Antigua borde vara maskulin, och att vara i en relation med någon av samma kön ses som icke-maskulint och fel (Linden, 2003: 112). Bibeln påverkar också åsikterna starkt och homosexualitet tolkas som något som är mot Guds ord, men de kristna religionerna på öarna kan till och med vara mer accepterande än vissa fundamentalistiska sekter på öarna (Linden, 2003: 110).

Som material används i huvudsak *Mr Loverman* samt artiklar och texter om sexuell identitet och maskulinitet i huvudsak i Karibien men också utvecklingen av sexuella minoriteters rättigheter i Antigua och England. Undersökningsfrågan för denna avhandling är: Vilken effekt har kulturen i karaktärens hemland på skapandet av identiteten och hur kan man se kulturen och samhällets attityder i diasporan? I dagens läge är olika sexuella läggningar mer accepterade i många länder än de var på 1900-talet, men det finns fortfarande ställen där homosexualitet inte är accepterat. Sexuell identitet eller sexuell läggning handlar om vilket kön någon blir kär i och sexuellt attraherad av. Samhällets enda accepterade relationsnorm var länge relationer mellan man och kvinna, vilket var ett synsätt på relationer som baserade sig på Bibeln.

Mr Loverman berättar historien om Barrington (Barry) Walker, en 74-årig migrant som flyttat från Antigua till London med sin fru Carmel för närmare 50 år sedan. Barry och Carmel har byggt ett liv tillsammans i London, fått två döttrar vid namn Donna och Maxine.

Barry blir framgångsrik som bilförsäljare och köper förvaltningsfastigheter runt om i staden. Carmel var länge hemma med döttrarna men studerade och blev framgångsrik inom boendeservice i stadsdelen Hackney. Deras förhållande har dock aldrig varit vad Carmel önskat sig; Barry har aldrig visat något intresse för henne och ju längre tid som går desto mer har hon börjat hon misstänka att han har ett förhållande med en annan kvinna. Hon har delvis rätt, Barry har varit i ett förhållande sedan han var i tonåren men inte med en annan kvinna utan med sin bästa vän Morris. Homosexualitet i Antigua och Karibien är överlag inte accepterat så de har varit tvungna att hålla sin sexuella läggning hemlig hela sina liv. Båda har gift sig med kvinnor och skaffat familj för att undvika misstankar från omgivningen. I romanen följer läsaren Barrys strid med sina känslor, sina rädslor och sin inre homofobi som han lärt sig på Antigua.

Hans uppväxt och samhällets ogillande har följt honom till London. Där möter hans egna stereotypa tankar om homosexuella och sexuella minoriteter bland annat religiösa tankesätt om hur homosexualitet är en synd enligt andra karibiska migranter. Barry ser sig själv som något annat än homosexuell, "Barrysexual" (2013: 138), och vill inte bli definierad och stämplad som en av de andra. Sakta men säkert måste Barry ändå bestämma sig för hurdant liv han vill att hans sista år ska vara. Han börjar acceptera sig själv som en homosexuell man som inte vill leva i ett dött förhållande med sin fru längre.

Maskulinitet och sexualitet i Karibien har varit väldigt patriarkatiskt och fokuserat på maskulina män. I vissa samhällen existerar stereotyper enligt vilka männen ska vara starka, tuffa och inte visa några känslor, åtminstone inte positiva känslor (Riggs, 2006: 474). Om någon misstänks vara av en annan sexuell läggning än heterosexuell eller om hen avslöjas som homosexuell, kan det ha allvarliga följder för hans sociala liv. Homosexualitet är fortfarande till och med kriminellt i vissa länder; på Antigua slopades lagen som kriminaliserar homosexualitet först år 2022 (BBC). Även om Barry och Morris bor i London där homosexualitet inte strider mot någon lag, har de ändå växt upp på ett ställe där det orsakade problem för personer som till och med bara misstänktes vara homosexuella. En av orsakerna till att Barry gifte sig med Carmel var för att andra i samhället hade börjat misstänka honom, han var redan över 20 men hade inte visat något intresse för att gifta sig. Genom att gifta sig med Carmel gjorde Barry vad hans kultur förväntade sig av honom.

Tidslinjen för en person med annan än heterosexuell läggning när det gäller livshändelser ses ibland som annorlunda än den som är förväntad (Halberstam, 2005: 4). Enligt Halberstam skapas då en homosexuell identitet som inte följer de förväntade livshändelserna för en individ, till exempel att skaffa barn (2006: 4). Någon som inte är heterosexuell har möjligen inte heller samma stödnätverk och måste först komma underfund med sig själv och att hen är attraherad av till exempel samma kön. Att be om stöd och tala om saken kan vara svårt beroende på samhället och omgivningen, vilket kan leda till en identitetskris som påverkar det mentala välmåendet.

I romanen visar Barry en rätt så nedlåtande syn på andra homosexuella män och personer som hör till sexuella minoriteter. Man får också ta del av Carmels åsikter och tankar eftersom en del av kapitlen är skrivna ur hennes synvinkel. Hon har länge varit missnöjd med hur deras förhållande blev men har på grund av religiösa skäl inte ens velat fundera på skilsmässa. Hon är starkt troende och har homofobiska tankar som baserar sig på Bibeln, och när hon slutligen får veta om Barry och Morris ser hon till att Barry vet att hon inte accepterar deras relation på något vis. Barry kommer undan den väntade krigsförklaringen från sin fru, det är inte han som till slut väljer när han berättar åt Carmel, eftersom hon får höra sanningen av Morris exfru. Likaså kommer Barrys sexuella läggning lite av misstag på tal med hans barnbarn Daniel och Daniels vänner. Boken kan kanske ses mer som ett sätt att få problem som finns i samhället och kulturen framförda och inte lika mycket som en berättelse om den kultur Barry växer upp i, även om han ändå accepterar sig själv och sin sexuella läggning till slut.

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