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Confronting Neocolonialism

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RHONE FRASER

IN THE INTRODUCTION TO THE ORIGINAL 1969 EDITION of his edited collection *Black Expressions,* Addison Gayle Jr wrote that the Negro critic

> must be guided by a temperament which allows him to explicate the work of art in terms of its contribution to the alleviation of those problems which have confronted humanity for too long a time . . . [H]is is the predominant voice in American criticism which calls upon the Negro writer to dedicate himself to the proposition that literature is a moral force for change as well as an aesthetic creation.[1]

Using Addison Gayle's approach to literary criticism, this essay examines the "problems" of racism, imperialism and neocolonialism as explored in Marlon James's third novel, *A Brief History of Seven Killings*.[2] Sociologist Joe Feagin defined racism as the practice of race prejudice plus the economic and military power to enforce it: a "system of oppression of African Americans and other people of colour by white Europeans and white Americans".[3] Vladimir Lenin defined imperialism as an economic condition where "it is possible to make an approximate estimate of all sources of raw materials . . . of the whole world . . . captured by gigantic monopolist combines".[4] Meanwhile Kwame Nkrumah defined neocolonialism as an economic system that keeps "standards depressed in the interest of developed countries . . . [R]ulers of neo-colonial states derive their authority to govern, not from the will of the people, but from the support which they obtain from their neo-colonialist masters."[5]

The "depressed" standards that Nkrumah defined as being a characteristic of neocolonialism, explain the conditions imposed on Jamaica by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), articulated by Jakob Johnston in his 2015 report "Partners in Austerity" for the Center for Economic and Policy Research. Johnston writes that the terms on which Jamaica received IMF funds required that they implement social policies that "have seen a two-fold increase in poverty since

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2007".[6] This two-fold increase in poverty did not prevent former Jamaican prime minister Portia Simpson-Miller from lobbying the Congressional Black Caucus in 2014 to convince IMF chair Christine Lagarde to lend Jamaica more money and continue their neocolonial relationship.[7] What James shows in *A Brief History of Seven Killings* are the consequences of depending on a neocolonial economy that include poverty and ultimately death. It is an exposure and critique of a chain of command – with the CIA at its top and teenage gang leaders at its bottom – that ultimately critiques neocolonialism.

This is a novel of multiple narratives within one single narrative about the two December 1976 assassination attempts of Bob Marley, identified in the novel as "the Singer". The novel consists of five sections, or what I will refer to as 'books', set on five different dates: 2 December 1976; 3 December 1976; 15 February 1979; 14 August 1985; and 22 March 1991. The first three books are set in Jamaica, while the latter two are set in the United States. The five dates are those of targeted assassination attempts or deaths of those involved in the attempts. Assassination attempts of the Singer took place on 2 and 3 December 1976; 15 February 1979 was the date of death of Papa-Lo; 14 August 1985 was the date of death of Weeper; and 22 March 1991 was the date of death of Josey Wales. Within this novel is also a single chronological narrative that details actual or attempted "killings" of the following seven characters: first, Sir Arthur George Jennings, a former politician who is relating his story though deceased;[8] second, the Singer, reggae superstar of the world; third, Bam-Bam, a fourteen-year-old gang member from the Copenhagen City district of Kingston controlled by the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP); fourth, Demus, a fellow gang member; fifth, Raymond "Papa-Lo" Clarke, a don of Copenhagen City; sixth, Weeper, gang enforcer of the Storm Posse; and seventh, Josey Wales, head enforcer of the Copenhagen City gang. This is a gang that rules by instilling fear into Copenhagen City residents to vote for the politically conservative JLP. After the Singer's death, the gang's don enlarges his economic power by selling cocaine in New York. This novel narrates the "killings" in chronological order of those men in this gang from the lowest socioeconomic class – Bam-Bam and Demus – to those from the highest socioeconomic class – Josey Wales. The Singer never speaks to the reader; he only speaks in the narratives of Bam-Bam and Papa-Lo. The narrative of the entire novel is framed by Jennings, the deceased politician who at the beginning or end of each book tells the reader how each narrative is assembled in a single story. That story ultimately seems to correct the narrative by "mainstream America" about Bob Marley. Marlon James noted, in an interview

with me, that Jennings puts things "in a far bigger context" than any other character.[9] James's character Jennings shows that the narrative of Bob Marley known by mainstream America is one created by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States through the character Mark Lansing, who as a filmmaker is planning to film the Singer's performance for the Smile Jamaica concert. According to Papa-Lo, Lansing, who is apparently based in part on the actual Carl Colby, son of former CIA director William Colby,[10] warned the Singer: "Mainstream America doesn't need your kind of message so think real hard about these tours . . . maybe you should stick to the coasts. Stop trying to reach mainstream America" (131). Jennings ultimately counters this memory of Jamaica and Bob Marley by mainstream America and, in order to avenge his own murder by the younger Peter Nasser, narrates "a story of several killings, of boys who meant nothing to a world still spinning, but each of them as they pass me carry the sweet-stink scent of the man that killed me" (3).

James, throughout the novel, is calling attention to the dismissive way these young men's lives were treated by the neocolonial state of Jamaica, under the domination of a small, white elite. Stanley Reid asserts that this elite developed at the pinnacle of Jamaican post-emancipation society and "enjoyed high status and . . . firm control over the economy".[11] This Jamaican elite functions, as Frantz Fanon has described, as the "colonised bourgeoisie" that "serves as a conveyor belt for capitalism".[12] James's Peter Nasser character, based in part on the former Lebanese-Jamaican prime minister Edward Seaga,[13] is identified in his "Cast of Characters" as a "politician, strategist" (xi). Reid states that the ascendancy of the Lebanese, as well as Jews, local whites and Chinese, followed and anticipated the transition of the plantation state to independent nation.[14] Tony Martin further writes that the "Syrian-Lebanese" imported mostly American goods, making them valuable proxies for US penetration.[15] This elite is a hegemony that depends on mainstream America's imposed, whitewashed, wilfully accepted false memory about individuals like Bob Marley who are perceived to threaten Jamaica's neocolonial relationship with the United States. This false memory also demonises those at the bottom of a chain of command. Jennings says at the end of the fourth book: "Buy guns, sell powder, when building monsters don't be surprised when they become monstrous" (600).

In a 1972 interview, Addison Gayle Jr. stated, in reference to black men's relationship with black women in America: "What happens so often when people are oppressed is that they begin to see each *other* as the real enemy instead of the oppressor . . . Black people have one oppressor, and that's this country. There

are Black people who, in collusion with this country, oppress other Black people. And they are both male and female. But the real enemy is not Black people, it's this country."[16] This observation also applies to what Jamaican drug dons like Josey Wales and Papa-Lo do to teenage recruits like Demus and Bam-Bam. Both Josey and Papa-Lo are clear about their roles as drug dons and their strategic use of Jamaican youth, however nowhere in their narratives do they see their roles as "oppressive". In fact, Papa-Lo believes that as a drug don he can "eradicate robbery and rape" (90). Josey Wales uses the wealth gained from his work as a drug don to raise a family. However, all Jamaicans employed by Peter Nasser and the CIA are dead by the end of this novel, presenting a cautionary tale to the reader about the futility of trying to work within the corrupt neocolonial system in order to change it. This is a tale that ultimately warns against working with those referred to by Nkrumah as neocolonialist masters, who encourage gang members to see fellow gang members as "the real enemy" instead of what Gayle identified as the true oppressor: "this country".

James's novel is a cautionary tale about a significant number of Jamaicans who are unable to change their circumstances because they believe and internalise the hegemonic narrative asserting that they need to be gunmen in order to survive. Bam-Bam, Demus, Funky Chicken, Leggo Beast, Reston, Papa-Lo, Weeper, and Josey Wales all die in acts of gang violence. They die partly because they internalise an imperialist hegemonic narrative fuelled by the "problems which have confronted humanity for too long a time", to use Gayle's words, which are racism, imperialism, and neocolonialism. As James noted in my interview with him, one of the biggest symbols of this internalisation was the popular US film character Harry Callahan, who was an archetype for Jamaican gun culture in US films that were popular in Jamaica such as *Dirty Harry* and *Magnum Force*. Bam-Bam internalises this narrative when he kills others not only to get "free C" but to also gain the respect of Papa-Lo; Demus internalises this narrative when he agrees to work with Josey Wales; Papa-Lo internalises this narrative when he believes he can eradicate drugs by selling them. These characters internalise these narratives as a result of what Nkrumah called "depressed standards" in a country whose wealth and power are controlled by a few families.[17]

In the first book, Jennings's narrative is followed by that of Bam-Bam, who seems to be talking to the Singer. Bam-Bam describes the Singer as one who is trying to reconcile the rival gangs that are controlled by the rival political parties in the island nation: the JLP and the PNP (People's National Party). He says, "you talking all the time to Papa-Lo like you two is back in school . . . and word

reach that you still talk to [rival gang leader] Shotta Sherif, the man whose deputy kill me family and me learn to hate you in a new way, even as me love Papa-Lo" (35). Bam-Bam is the first gang member to show the reader the way that neocolonialism has been internalised by Jamaicans, and demonstrates a certain kind of schizophrenia. Journalist Laurie Gunst wrote that during the 1960s "the JLP was turning into a kind of schizophrenic entity, the party of the black have-nots and the reactionary haves, an odd alliance that still persists".[18] This schizophrenia is also shown in the thoughts of Bam-Bam who on one level celebrates the Singer as one who unites the two rival parties, but also on another level, like the JLP-funded Copenhagen City gang, hates the Singer for his reconciliation effort because it means opposing Jamaican hegemony and, consequently, trying to eliminate the Copenhagen City gang. For Bam-Bam, part of this schizophrenia includes a lust for murder: "It really was nothing to kill a boy" (39). He admits that his role is to threaten the residents of Copenhagen City to vote for the JLP: "Papa-Lo send us to every house to remind us how to vote" (78). He also admits that he does not want to kill anybody; he just wants "some free C" so he "would stop being hungry" (80).

Demus makes the most sophisticated critique of the neocolonial gang-enforced economic order led by Josey when he observes of Josey that "all him doing is giving poor people fish to eat because now that he reach he don't want nobody else learn how to catch fish for himself" (109). James's Demus character here summarises the neocolonial position that Jamaica has been placed in as a result of IMF policies that require increasing foreign investment which, economically, prevents Jamaican businesses from profiting from their own internal economy. The IMF does not want Jamaicans to "catch" for themselves, however this is only enabled by the voluntary dependence of Jamaican leadership that James models in his Peter Nasser character who regards the CIA station chief as a necessary benefactor. As Carl Stone and Aggrey Brown noted in their 1977 publication, "Caribbean societies besotted with a lengthy past of colonialism and racism must involve, then, an attack on the psychological structures and patterns of relationships."[19] James's novel begins the attack on this abusive relationship pattern.

The second book is set on 3 December 1976, the day of the Smile Jamaica concert. What makes this book a most revealing critique of neocolonialism are the specific reasons that hired gang members Demus and Bam-Bam provide for not wilfully killing the Singer. Demus talks to the reader in terms of his Rastafarian worldview, his cocaine hunger, and his reverence for the Jamaican maroons who escaped plantation life. Instead of following Josey's orders to shoot the

Singer, Demus runs, and relates his own freedom from the control of Josey Wales to the freedom of maroons running away from plantation life. Like the biblical Nicodemus who questions the state's ability to fairly enforce the law, Demus questions and subverts Copenhagen City gang's enforcement of its own neocolonial law. Demus tells the reader, "I don't have to think about this bridge and how me only did want to show the brethren not the Singer to never fuck with Demus" (263). Demus tells the reader he refused Josey Wales's and Papa-Lo's orders to murder the Singer because he resented being used by an economic system that controls Jamaican citizens by intimidation and fear. Bam-Bam tells the reader that the music and the message of the Singer inspired him to run from the concert and refuse orders to assassinate him. Both Bam-Bam and Demus die for refusing these orders. Bam-Bam is buried alive and Demus is murdered by individuals Jennings calls "Rasta Avengers" who are colluding with white men who presumably work for the CIA – a shadowy possibility as evidenced by Jennings's own doubt in his narrative: "I have some memory of this place but I don't know if it's my own" (272). Jennings, it should be noted, is the only person in the novel who refers to these killers as Rasta Avengers; perhaps because of his class, he is unable to distinguish between real and pseudo Rastas. Historian Horace Campbell writes that "the United States imposed a pseudo-Rasta group to promote confusion in the ranks of the Rastas. This campaign by the United States took the organisational form of the Ethiopian Zion Coptic Church."[20] Jennings talks to Demus about his death: "Your neck is in a noose at the end of a rope that shoots up and over a strong branch then down the tree into the grip of two Rastas who wrap it in their hands and tug. I wonder if you find this as obscene as I do that they are so quiet, as if this is work" (273). It is Jennings's narrative that challenges the stereotype that all Rastafarians are fighting US imperialism. The "Rasta Avengers" who murder Demus on behalf of Josey Wales are in this moment working, to Gayle's point, "in collusion with this country [the United States], to oppress other Black people", including their fellow Jamaicans who refuse orders to assassinate Bob Marley.

In the novel, in a conversation with US journalist Alex Pierce, the filmmaker Mark Lansing brags to Alex about how much closer to the Singer he is than Pierce:

> [M]et him a month ago when his label boss hired me to get a crew together to film this concert. Even brought him a pair of cowboy boots. A big shiny pair of brick red ones from Frye. Cuz you know, these Jamaicans, they love their cowboy movies. Fucking boots cost a fortune too, I hear. –You didn't buy them? –Fuck no. –Who? –So we got the exclusive rights to film the concert. (194)

Lansing, as we observe, changes the subject when Pierce asks him who bought the boots for the Singer. In his 2000 exposé, writer John Potash related the following report by journalist Lee Lew-Lee:

> Carl Colby brought a new pair of boots for Marley. The reggae star tried the boots on immediately – a reported customary gesture among Rastafarians. Sticking his foot in, the singer exclaimed "ow" as something jabbed him. Marley pulled out a metal wire that was embedded in the boot. Lew-Lee said he thought nothing of the boot incident at the time but then became suspicious when Marley was playing soccer five months later and broke his toe on that same foot. When the bone wouldn't mend, doctors found it had cancer. The cancer quickly metastasised throughout Marley's body. Marley's manager Don Taylor also claimed in his memoirs that a "senior CIA agent" had been planted among the pre-election concert film crew as part of a plan to "assassinate" Marley. Many suggested that the wire in Colby's gift boots was either made out of a radioactive metal or contained a highly carcinogenic chemical element on its tip.[21]

In James's novel, Lansing's presumed knowledge of the origin of the boots suggests that he may in fact have known it contained a carcinogenic metal wire that would deliberately infect the Singer with cancer. Lansing expresses the essentialist belief that Jamaicans "love their cowboy movies", highlighting the role of US cultural imperialism (194). There is an added cultural dimension in that traditionally, many Jamaicans have a penchant for not accepting gifts, because the bearer of the gift might have what Jamaicans call "bad mind" (bad intentions), as much as they might assert that they mean well. The Singer's willingness to wear the boots from the white American then represents the ultimate willingness to identify with white Western culture.

Without naming him directly, Jennings implicates the CIA station chief Barry DiFlorio as one of the "killers" of Bob Marley when he says: "Three killers have outlived the Singer. One dies in New York [Weeper]. One sees and waits in Kingston surrounded by money and cocaine [Josey Wales], and one vanishes behind the Iron Curtain [Barry DiFlorio] where he sits knowing, waiting for the bullet to the head" (601). James also shows how murders or "killings" are carried out not only by guns but by television and newspaper propaganda through a kind of character assassination. In the novel, Barry DiFlorio states that he is supposed to "revoke the Singer's visa because he's suspected of trafficking drugs into the United States of America" (172). DiFlorio's objective is to "promote propaganda and psychological warfare: disseminate information to counteract anti-US propaganda, neutralise communist influence in mass organisations, establish alternative organisations" (177). DiFlorio is not able to succeed in popularising

the propaganda of Marley trafficking drugs. On the other hand, James's narrative shows how the CIA employed individuals, especially Doctor Love and Josey Wales, to traffic drugs into the USA, enabled by the Jamaican elite.

What makes the third book, set on 15 February 1979, revealing is the ghetto trial intended to prosecute those involved in the two assassination attempts without prosecuting the two main orchestrators: Papa-Lo and Josey Wales. In fact, Papa-Lo is organising this trial. This book is titled "Shadow Dancin" after a song that the protagonist Kim Clarke likes. Her own narrative begins as the lover of Charles/Chuck whom James identifies as an engineer from Alcorp, an aluminium company. Kim first appeared in the first two books as Nina Burgess whose Rastafarian sister Kimmy tried to convert Nina to join "the struggle for Black liberation, Africa, and for His Imperial Majesty" (158). Nina thought that she would rather "take whatever revolution she can ride with her vagina" (158) and likened Kimmy's Rasta social circle to "a Victorian novel" (159). By 15 February 1979, Nina, who has now changed her name to Kim, is in a romantic relationship with Chuck in the hope that she will leave the increasingly violent Jamaican neocolonial state and country. Nina had earlier said that "the visa is a ticket out of the hell that this fucking PNP going bring on the country" (226). As Kim she has the same belief: "White man please come over here and save me because I have nowhere left to go look" (289). Kim is willing to do anything in order to leave Jamaica. Kim is a woman on the run and is afraid to look back because looking back means subjecting oneself as a woman to personal and patriarchal abuse. She is scared of having original thoughts: "because all thoughts take you back to that one thought, you hear me? Never go back. Only stupid women ever walk backwards" (295). She is scared of remembering the past.

Before her lover Chuck comes from work one day, Kim wants to wipe blue ink off of her fingers in order to remove the evidence of her sleeping with a Justice of the Peace in order to get a visa to leave Jamaica. James shows Kim's belief in a neocolonial chain of command with herself at the bottom.

Weeper is the gang enforcer of the Copenhagen City gang who also believes in this chain of command and follows the orders of the drug don Josey Wales. Weeper promises to sell cocaine in order to leave Jamaica. Kim Clarke and Weeper epitomise the type of Jamaican that Marcus Garvey wrote of in 1917 who "are leaving their homes simply because they haven't the pride, nor courage enough to stay at home and combat the forces that make them exiles".[22] Because Kim Clarke is scared of remembering the past, and because she depends on a white man to take her out of Jamaica, she does not have the "pride, nor courage

enough" to combat the forces that would make her an exile. She lacks the pride and courage to contribute to "the alleviation of those problems which have confronted humanity for too long a time".[23]

The dominant narrative of this third book, and indeed the entire novel, is that of Papa-Lo, in which we see most clearly the glaring contradictions of ending a neocolonial system by working within in it. Papa-Lo claims to use his position as a drug don to "eradicate robbery and rape" (90), yet participates in a system that robs the poorest in order to give to the wealthiest. He claims to administer justice, yet is unable to apply this moral standard to his own self. In his narrative he talks to the reader directly, part of a group he calls "all nice and decent people" (335). Through Papa-Lo, James makes his most significant critique of black middle-class respectability politics. Papa-Lo organises a trial against some of the young men accused of the 1976 assassination attempt and invites the Singer and his manager to Kingston's McGregor Gully to reach a verdict on their involvement. This trial is apparently based on the actual account of Bob Marley's manager Don Taylor in his memoir *Marley and Me*.[24] The way James imagines Papa-Lo's motivation for this trial is revealing. Papa-Lo says of one of the accused, Leggo Beast: "I want to kill Leggo Beast, bring him back to life and kill him again. At least seven time until the Singer satisfied. But that won't satisfy nothing. And this court is already a joke. Me want to leave even before he want to leave" (351). Papa-Lo says he wants to kill the young gang member Leggo Beast, yet he does not want to kill those who serve the Jamaican elite like Josey Wales, Peter Nasser, the CIA consultant Doctor Love, or the CIA field officer Mr Clark, for doing much more than Leggo Beast to maintain an economic system devoted to building and enabling child drug addicts to coerce the Jamaican people into voting for neocolonial politicians who serve the elite. Papa-Lo is ready to prosecute the young four accused, but is not ready to prosecute himself for recruiting them. Bam-Bam had earlier told the Singer that Papa-Lo recruited him into the Copenhagen City gang, and Papa-Lo tells the reader he rescued Josey Wales in 1966: "me did pull him out of 1966 with my own hand" (344).

By the end of the third book, Papa-Lo's performance of justice is unable to save him from his death. Papa-Lo narrates his own death, from gunshots by Jamaican police, in a manner similar to that of a spaghetti Western where he trivialises his own death by gunshot. He prophesies the end of the Singer who dies not at the hands of Jamaican gunmen but at the hands of CIA agents: "the Singer have no hair anymore the Singer on a bed the Singer getting a needle from a white man who have a German Hitler sign burning in him forehead" (361).

According to Don Taylor, one of Marley's contracted killers "went insane over the attempted assassination and died afterwards of a cocaine overdose".[25] James, in writing the fourth book, is conceivably imagining the details of what this young man thought and did in his last years. From Josey Wales's narrative we learn that he is asked by Doctor Love to help a Colombian ship his cocaine to Miami and "move it on the street to New York" (417). Josey employs Storm posse member Eubie as an enforcer of his cocaine trade in New York, and employs Weeper to sell the cocaine in Brooklyn; however, Weeper starts to use and abuse cocaine and at the same time raises his price, trying to take over the cocaine buying market in Manhattan. Weeper's bull move attracts the attention of Griselda Blanco, James's female Colombian drug lord character, who employs an assassin, John-John K, to murder Weeper. This book takes place in 1985 – a year which, according to journalists Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St Clair, "marked the peak of the Meneses-Blandon drug sales, at the time of the CIA's greatest need for money for its Contra army created in the late 1970s by the CIA with the mission of sabotaging the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua that displaced Anastasio Somoza".[26] The conscious decisions of Weeper and Josey Wales to sell cocaine in New York support neocolonialism not only in Jamaica but in the CIA's Contra army in Nicaragua, and this novel's fifth book shows the clear chain of command from Josey Wales to Weeper.

By this time, Kim Clarke has transformed to Dorcas Palmer who, now in Manhattan, is employed as a caretaker for Kenneth Colthirst. Dorcas is confronted with her intellectual equal in Colthirst: an individual who is co-dependent and would rather confine himself to a safe enclosed space and time than take the risk of acknowledging his own history and using it for self-development. Like Papa-Lo, Josey Wales and Peter Nasser, devoted to the neocolonial order, Colthirst does to Dorcas what her previous self, Kim Clarke, did to Chuck in the third book. Kim Clarke locked herself in the bathroom once she realised that Chuck had no plans to bring her to the United States (and ultimately to support the chain of command that caused them to want to leave the country in the first place). When he realises his fears that his caretaker Dorcas might leave him the way she left her "abusive" husband, Colthirst locks himself in the bathroom. Dorcas says:

> I wasn't going to spend my life in Maryland, and Arkansas was not going to work out. Besides, a big city is better overall. Public transportation, so you never need a car, you never stand out unless you're with a white man on a train uptown, and jobs where nobody asks anything. (562)

When Dorcas suggests that he should leave the apartment because his presence is making her conspicuous, he rejects the proposal and leaves her physical presence only on his terms. Kenneth Colthirst represents the neocolonialist master unwilling to sever the colonial bond with his servant. He is only able to see everyone else as "the abuser", not himself or the privileged white culture he represents.

Weeper also struggles with this, as his cocaine addiction develops at the same time that, as a homosexual man, he is trying to "enjoy his body" (497). Unlike the assassin John-John K who has been contracted to kill him, who is also a homosexual but is less closeted, Weeper routinely worries that his boss Josey Wales will discover his homosexuality. Weeper murders one of his runners who tried to shame him by saying, "I don't take no order from some faggot with 'icky pon 'im neck" (522). Weeper is silent about his role in the assassination of the Singer, and indeed James only referred to him in passing up to the third book. Weeper's narrative in this novel up to this point has been told from other characters' points of view; he is known for having a potent cocaine supply – according to Demus's earlier narrative, Josey Wales blames Weeper's cocaine for Demus not fatally shooting the Singer, instead of his own oppressive abuse of Demus. Only in the fourth book can we read his own narrative, when we witness how he is one of the casualties of the crack epidemic. Even Weeper's death is told from the point of view of his assassin. When John-John K tells him that he was sent to murder him, Weeper chooses to die not by gunshot but by an injection of the cocaine that defined much of his life. He tells his assassin John-John K: "If you going take me out, at least make me go out pan de sky, no man?" (596). The assassination of one Jamaica-born homosexual by a US-born homosexual for the use instead of sale of cocaine supply mirrors the neocolonial relationship between both countries, where Jamaicans like Weeper become subject to the neocolonialist master when they are unable to use knowledge of their own history for self-development. From the first book, Bam-Bam has stated that Weeper is only interested in "free C" and never interrogates where it comes from. He therefore becomes an ideal selection for Josey Wales to maintain his relationship with the CIA by continuing the sale of cocaine in the United States. Just as the commodities of sugar and rum from the Caribbean aided the commerce of chattel slavery, the commodity of cocaine, sold by gang members who take no interest in its origin nor its results, aids the function of neocolonialism.

The final narrative of this fourth book is by Jennings who tells the reader how the memory of the Singer was appropriated by the hegemony to continue its racism, imperialism, and the US neocolonial rule of Jamaica: "A fire that lights

up Zimbabwe, Angola, and Mozambique and South Africa doused out by two letters O and M" (599). James, through Jennings, shows how the neocolonial state silences the revolutionary message of the Singer by honouring him after his death with an Order of Merit.

In the fifth and final book set on 22 March 1991, James presents the last conversation with Josey Wales who helped deliver the Copenhagen City community to the JLP and facilitated their 1980 and 1984 electoral victories in Jamaica. By this time Josey Wales is in prison for his shooting rampage in a Brooklyn crackhouse. Doctor Love visits him in a Jamaican prison and eventually kills him.[27] Millicent Segree, the third incarnation of Nina Burgess, sees a television report with the headline "Josey Wales Found Burned to Death in Prison Cell" and vomits her food. While the television did show Josey Wales as a dangerous drug lord, it did not show the role of the CIA in promoting neocolonialism, racism and US imperial rule in Jamaica. Doctor Love, who represents the forces of imperialism and neocolonialism, is apparently based in part on the CIA-trained counterrevolutionary Luis Posada Carriles who in October 1976 bombed a Cuban airliner over Barbados, killing all seventy-three people aboard.[28] Josey Wales is loosely based on the actual JLP drug lord, Lester Coke.

This neocolonial rule of the United States that allows terrorists like Luis Posada Carriles to walk the streets, recruit children and gang members in order to instil fear into Jamaican citizens to vote for a particular party, continues today. WikiLeaks cables recently revealed that former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton gave orders to the Jamaican government to extradite the son of Lester Coke, Christopher "Dudus" Coke. By the time the police finished raiding Tivoli Gardens in (futile) search of Coke, upwards of seventy citizens were murdered.[29] James's *Brief History* sheds light on the US neocolonial rule of Jamaica of the 1970s that still occurs.

The CIA was founded in 1947 and, according to its highest-ranking whistleblower Victor Marchetti, was led by WASPs (White Anglo Saxon Protestants) from the wealthiest families.[30] Their objective was and is to suppress popular resistance movements such as those that Marcus Garvey inspired and movements they feared Marley would inspire. We recall the verbal warning delivered by CIA director Richard Lansing's son Mark Lansing to the Singer on behalf of the CIA: "Stop trying to reach mainstream America." The economic system, represented by Lansing, that employed Doctor Love, Barry DiFlorio, Josey Wales, Papa-Lo, Bam-Bam, Demus and Weeper to murder the Singer, is the same economic system that murdered each of those it employed. The economic system murdered

each and every Jamaican man because of their choice to cooperate with the system.

None of James's characters undertakes collective organised action against the Jamaican neocolonial state. None of James's characters displays any awareness of wider geopolitical implications of the events described in the novel, or of connected regional events taking place during the time span of the novel. None of them, for example, mentions the significant 1979 Grenada revolution or the 1983 US invasion of Grenada; none mentions the 1979 Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua or the 1980s US intervention to crush it, an intervention which was supported by the cocaine drug sales in the United States. James's characters reflect the actual, real-life lack of interest in popular resistance movements historically demonstrated by many Jamaicans, such as in those movements inspired by Marcus Garvey in the early 1910s along Honduras and the late 1910s in Africa.[31] Historian Tony Martin wrote that in September 1919 the Washington counsel for the United Fruit Company wrote a letter to the secretary of state and enclosed sample copies of Garvey's *Negro World* newspaper. The letter explained that Garvey "left Limon in 1912 and that he is a typical noisy Jamaican, and if allowed to go on as he has been doing, there is a possibility of his attempting to repeat the French experience in Haiti".[32] None of James's characters could be described as being "noisy". Garvey also was very involved in the African diaspora and organised an extensive network of distribution of his *Negro World* newspaper in order to communicate to the diaspora. James's characters, conversely, are so preoccupied with being and working within the economic order, that their only interest in the diaspora is in its links for the drug trade. His characters are pawns who follow the neocolonial order and their stories are cautionary tales about the dangers of doing so. Overall, the novel is a cautionary tale about internalising hegemonic narratives that teach us to conform to an economy that profits from gun sales and drug addiction in order to create what Bob Marley has described in "Redemption Song" as "mental slavery".[33] Ultimately, while indirectly, this novel asserts that the first step to avoid neocolonialism is to expose and reject such narratives that diminish the life of a fellow human being.

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NOTES

1. Addison Gayle Jr, Preface, in *Black Expressions: Essays By and About Black Americans in the Creative Arts,* ed. Addison Gayle Jr (New York: Weybright & Talley), xiv–xv; repr. in Nathaniel Norment Jr, ed., *The Addison Gayle Jr Reader* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 2010), 210.
2. Marlon James, *A Brief History of Seven Killings* (New York: Riverhead, 2014). All subsequent page references to this novel will be cited parenthetically within the text.
3. Joe R. Feagin, Hernan Vera, and Pinar Batur, *White Racism: The Basics* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 3.
4. Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism: The Last Stage of Capitalism* (1916; New York: International, 2002), 25.
5. Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (New York: Panaf, 1974), xv.
6. Jakob Johnston, "Partners in Austerity: Jamaica, the United States, and the International Monetary Fund", Report, *Center for Economic Policy and Research*, April 2015, http://cepr.net/documents/Jamaica_04-2015.pdf (accessed 18 September 2016).
7. *Jamaica Observer,* "US Black Caucus Helped Jamaica Obtain IMF Agreement: PM", 25 March 2015, http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/US-Black-Caucus-helped-Jamaica-obtain-IMF-agreement—-PM (accessed 18 September 2016).
8. The character Sir Arthur George Jennings seems loosely based on a former Jamaican government minister of communication and works named Kenneth Jones, who was believed to be pushed off a balcony in 1964.
9. Marlon James, interview by Rhone Fraser, 22 January 2015, http://rhone.podomatic.com/entry/2015-01-22T17_53_27-08_00
10. My assumption here is based on the account of journalists John Potash and Lee Lew-Lee. See, for example, John Potash, *The FBI War on Tupac Shakur and Black Leaders* (New York: Progressive Left Press, 2012). In my interview with James, he said that this novel was inspired by stories he heard growing up and by journalists' accounts.
11. Stanley Reid, "An Introductory Approach to the Concentration of Power in the Jamaican Corporate Economy and Notes on Its Origin", in *Essays on Power and Change in Jamaica*, ed. Carl Stone and Aggrey Brown (Kingston: Jamaica Publishing House, 1977), 2.
12. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* trans. Richard Philcox (1963; New York: Grove Press, 2004), 100.

13. Peter Nasser, according to Marlon James (as stated in his interview with me), is loosely based on JLP politicians Edward Seaga and Ferdinand Yap.
14. Reid, "An Introductory Approach", 15.
15. Tony Martin, *Caribbean History: From Pre-Colonial Origins to the Present* (New York: Pearson, 2012), 246.
16. Saundra Towns, "Addison Gayle: Interviewed by Saundra Towns", in Norment, *Gayle Reader,* 379.
17. Stanley Reid documented these twenty-one families in 1977 as the Abrahams, Ashenheims, Brandons, Browns, D'Costas, Desnoes, Fletchers, Geddes, Grahams, Harts, Hendricksons, Henriqueses, Issas, Judahs, Lais, Lakes, Matalons, Mahfoods, Nuneses, Rousseaus, and Stones (Reid, "An Introductory Approach", 37).
18. Laurie Gunst, *Born Fi Dead: A Journey Through the Jamaican Posse Underworld* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2010), 73.
19. Stone and Brown, Introduction, *Essays on Power and Change,* 1.
20. Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1985), 115.
21. John Potash, *The FBI War on Tupac Shakur and Black Leaders* (New York: Progressive Left Press, 2012), 186; see also, Alex Constantine, *The Covert War against Rock* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2000), 136.
22. John Henrik Clarke, ed., with Amy Jacques Garvey, *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2011), 90.
23. One of the Jamaican women who have published books about their efforts to alleviate the problems of neocolonialism is Beverly Anderson Manley. In *The Manley Memoirs* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2008), she writes about her disappointment in her ex-husband Michael Manley's fateful negotiations with the IMF that led to the deflation of the Jamaican dollar and the imposition of harmful austerity policies on the Jamaican state that furthered its neocolonial relationship with the United States and Europe.
24. Don Taylor, *Marley and Me: The Real Bob Marley Story, Told by His Manager* (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books, 1995).
25. Ibid., 169.
26. Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St Clair, *Whiteout: The CIA, Drugs, and the Press* (New York: Verso, 2014), 9.
27. Josey Wales manages to grab his arm, and threatens to sever it with a machete, but then desists. In James's novel *The Book of Night Women* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009) his most powerful black male character Bacchus is unable to show successful physical resistance against his white counterpart. James repeats this dynamic in this novel.
28. According to Martin Koppel and Mary-Alice Waters, "In a *New York Times* interview, Posada Carriles bragged about his involvement in a series of bombings in Havana hotels in 1997, including one that killed an Italian-Canadian visitor. Today Posada Carriles walks freely in the streets of Miami and Washington has refused the Venezuelan government request for the extradition of Posada Carriles." See Martin Koppel and

Mary-Alice Waters, eds., *The Cuban Five: Who They Are, Why They Were Framed, Why They Should Be Free* (New York: Pathfinder, 2012), 59.

29. Marko Papic, "Re: S3 – US/Jamaica – Coke Extradited to US", *Wikileaks: The Global Intelligence Files,* 27 February 2012, https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/18/1821946_re-s3-us-jamaica-coke-extradited-to-us-.html (accessed 17 April 2016).
30. Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence* (New York: Dell, 1974), 44–46, 266–69.
31. Here it is important to recognise, other than Marcus Garvey, native-born Jamaicans like Amy Ashwood Garvey, Amy Jacques Garvey, Claudius Henry, and Beverly Anderson Manley, all of whom, unlike James's characters, have undertaken efforts to challenge the colonial and neocolonial order from the United States and Europe.
32. Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Dover, ME: The Majority Press, 1976), 98.
33. Bob Marley, "Redemption Song", *Uprising* LP, Tuff Gong, 1980.