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Representations of Homophobic Violenceⁱ in Anglophone Caribbean Literature

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Abstract

Diasporic writers in England, Canada and the United States who have explored the theme of alternative sexuality, realistically portray how homophobic violence in the Caribbean region arises from heterocentric and heterosexist attitudes that are ingrained in institutionalized discourses of Church, home and school. Representations in the literary discourse show how these agents of socialization bear culpability for the ways in which they influence society's silences, adherence to doctrine, masculinist views, patriarchal hegemonies and peer pressure that contribute to the persecution of the male homosexual. The paper mainly explores depictions in prose fiction of the homosexual *youth* being the victim of effeminophobia and homophobia, and the dire consequences that ensue. *Aelred's Sin* authored by Trinidad and Tobago's Lawrence Scott is a focal text under analysis, along with his short story "Chameleon". Works by his compatriot, Shani Mootoo, and also by H. Nigel Thomas and Patricia Powell—writers originally from St. Vincent and Jamaica, respectively—give support to how gender-based violence occurs against *non-heterosexuals* in the Anglophone Caribbean, an aspect that is usually overlooked in discourses on domestic abuse, for example. Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night* and "Lemon Scent"; Thomas's *Spirits in the Dark*; Powell's *A Small Gathering of Bones* and *The Pagoda* are explored in the paper, along with a short story "Baby" by another writer originating from Jamaica, Makeda Silvera, who portrays Caribbean-born characters in a foreign setting. Vraisemblance and irony regarding the topic of homophobic violence are seen to be evident in these selected novels and short stories.