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James Baldwin and Jorge Amado

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Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between violence and masculinity in the fiction of American author James Baldwin and Brazilian author Jorge Amado, focusing on four novels: *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), *Another Country* (1962), *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* (1958), and *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos* (1966). Drawing on an intersectional theoretical framework, the study explores how physical, psychological, and institutional forms of violence inform and shape conceptions of masculinity across two distinct mid-twentieth-century cultural contexts—the United States and Brazil. The analysis is organized around four thematic axes: violence as a masculine institution, violence and masculine honor, conflict versus brotherhood, and violence and masculine sexuality. By reading both authors comparatively, the thesis argues that violence functions not merely as a narrative motif but as a constitutive mechanism through which masculine identity is constructed, tested, and destabilized. The research further demonstrates how Baldwin's psychological realism and Amado's carnivalesque aesthetic, though formally divergent, each mobilize violence as a lens through which race, class, territory, and patriarchal power can be critically interrogated.

Abstract

Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht das Verhältnis zwischen Gewalt und Männlichkeit im erzählerischen Werk des amerikanischen Autors James Baldwin und des brasilianischen Autors Jorge Amado. Im Mittelpunkt stehen vier Romane: *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), *Another Country* (1962), *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* (1958) und *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos* (1966). Auf der Grundlage eines intersektionalen theoretischen Rahmens wird untersucht, wie physische, psychologische und institutionelle Gewaltformen Männlichkeitsvorstellungen in zwei kulturell unterschiedlichen Kontexten der Mitte des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts—den Vereinigten Staaten und Brasilien—prägen und konstituieren. Die Analyse gliedert sich in vier thematische Schwerpunkte: Gewalt als männliche Institution, Gewalt und männliche Ehre, Konflikt versus Brüderlichkeit sowie Gewalt und männliche Sexualität. Im komparativen Lesen beider Autoren wird argumentiert, dass Gewalt nicht bloß als narratives Motiv fungiert, sondern als

konstitutiver Mechanismus, durch den männliche Identität hergestellt, erprobt und destabilisiert wird. Darüber hinaus zeigt die Arbeit, dass Baldwins psychologischer Realismus und Amados karnevalesker Stil—trotz ihrer formalen Unterschiede—Gewalt jeweils als Prisma nutzen, durch das Rasse, Klasse, Territorium und patriarchale Macht kritisch hinterfragt werden.

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1. Introduction

Responding to the escalating violence of the 1968 student rebellions, Hannah Arendt wrote the influential *On Violence* (1970), her critical meditation on a phenomenon that, according to the philosopher, proves too pervasive in society to be disregarded: “No one engaged in thought about history and politics can remain unaware of the enormous role violence has always played in human affairs” (1970: 10). In this work, renowned for its examination of the evolving relationship between power and violence throughout history, Arendt foregrounds how violence, as a practice, invariably functions as a means to an end, being ultimately “distinguished by its instrumental character” (1970: 46). Although her argument principally addresses violence within the political sphere, Arendt’s characterization of its instrumental nature equally illuminates how violence operates on more intimate and symbolic registers—for instance, as a mechanism through which men endeavor to reassert or enact masculinity.

The relationship between violence and masculinity has been an established part of discussions about gender for a long time, not rarely playing a central role in attempts to define social conventions behind what it means to be a man. Pierre Bourdieu, for instance, outlines the concept of manliness as both a “sexual or social reproductive capacity” and “the capacity to fight and to exercise violence” (2001: 50–51), in an interplay of duties that by itself makes it clear the importance of the physical domain in the imagery of masculinity. Similarly, Raewyn Connell reminds us that “there is a widespread belief that it is natural for men to be violent. Males are inherently more aggressive than women, the argument goes” (2000: 215). Male identity, therefore, seems to be—at least in the conventional sense—strongly tied to the notion of aggressive behavior and physical harm, highlighting, at the same time, its design as a product of multiple social interactions and its value as a belief system.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that violence—both as an expression of and as a confirmation of masculinity—has occupied a prominent position within cultural productions. Literature, in particular, not only reflects these cultural codes but also participates in shaping them, rendering it a crucial site for examining how violent masculinity is constructed and contested. Martial prowess and physical dominance, for instance, prove essential to the characterization of epic heroes and continue to inform

subsequent cultural models of masculinity, such as the figure of the American cowboy—a mythic archetype that emerged in nineteenth-century literature as “rough, uncouth, shaggy, and dirty, whose behavior was violent, barbarous, and rowdy” (Kimmel, 2005: 29). Ultimately, male bodies are, more often than not, culturally positioned as sites wherein masculinity is affirmed through conformity to expectations of violence.

When the intersectionality of masculinity is examined, however, the relationship between male identity and violence becomes considerably more complex, since gender, as Connell argues, is “a way of structuring social practice in general, not a special type of practice” (2005: 75). Recognizing the multiple dimensions that emerge from its interaction with race, class, nationality, and other social categories allows for a more nuanced understanding of masculine violence—one that highlights, for instance, the differing cultural and social meanings attached to the violent behavior of a White man and that of a Black man. Given that literature has long served, and continues to serve, as an outlet through which such issues are explored, it grants the subject of masculinity and its relation to violence a significant place within cultural representation.

This dynamic finds particularly rich expression in the works of the American and Brazilian authors James Baldwin and Jorge Amado. Both writers, each from his own historical and cultural context, demonstrate a sustained interest in portraying masculinity as a phenomenon “produced through a complex process of growth and development involving active negotiation in multiple social relationships” (Connell, 2009: 31). In Baldwin’s fiction, masculinity is inextricably bound to race, sexuality, and the moral struggles of Black men navigating both internal and external forms of violence in pre- and post-Civil Rights America. Amado, meanwhile, turns his attention to Brazil’s Northeast, depicting men whose identities are shaped by regional, social, and national tensions, and whose virility is often measured through power, eroticism, and physical assertion. In both cases, violence functions not merely as a narrative motif but as a mechanism through which masculine identity is constructed, tested, and even undone.

Yet, the comparison between Baldwin and Amado goes beyond a shared thematic concern. Their contrasting literary methods reveal how the representation of violent masculinity adapts to distinct ideological and aesthetic purposes. Baldwin’s psychological realism and moral intensity situate violence within an intimate struggle for self-definition and spiritual survival, as expected from a figure who “was actually at the very center of

mid-twentieth-century debates over the meaning and intersection of art, race, and politics” (Elam, 2015: 2). Amado’s later, more humorous and carnivalesque style reimagines violence and masculinity within the collective life of the people, using irony and sensuality to question hierarchies of class, gender, and power in a type of work that “represents a kind of neo-proletarian realism, written in simple and even vulgar language, and supposedly addressed to ‘the people’” (Vincent, 1972: 191). Reading their works together, therefore, illuminates how violence operates not only as a marker of masculinity, but also as a lens through which broader structures of race, nation, and belonging can be understood.

Accordingly, the main purpose of this thesis is to examine the many instances in which violence is used as a token in Baldwin’s and Amado’s portrayals of masculinity, hoping to identify how both authors foreground the male identity as inextricably linked to violent structures and experiences, expressed through recurring motifs such as institutional oppression, physical aggression as a means of asserting identity, and interpersonal rivalries between male characters. In this light and focusing on Baldwin’s *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953) and *Another Country* (1962), alongside Amado’s *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* (1958) and *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos* (1966), the main research question is the following: How do the multiple forms of violence—physical, psychological, institutional, etc.—inform and shape specific conceptions of masculinity in the novels? The selected corpus allows for a comparative study of two distinct cultural and historical contexts—mid-twentieth-century United States and Brazil—where religious, colonial, and patriarchal legacies converge in the representation of masculinities strongly tied to concepts of race and territory.

The thesis is structured by offering a broad overview of the subject, which is achieved by focusing on four aspects that happen to be integral parts of all four novels in the corpus: (1) violence as a masculine institution, (2) violence and masculine honor, (3) conflict vs. brotherhood, and (4) violence and masculine sexuality. The analysis itself is supported by an opening theoretical framework centered both in an intersectional approach to masculinity—that aims to highlight the configuration of gender as a notion that interacts with ideas of race, class, territory, and national identity—and in the presence of violence in social relations both in Brazil and in the United States. By doing so, the research proposes an interpretative model that links the aesthetics of violence to the performative and

institutional dimensions of masculinity, offering new insights into how gender, race, territory, and power intersect in both literatures.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Race, Class, Territory, and Gender: An Intersectional Approach to Masculinity

In the essay *Gender: An Intersectionality Perspective* (2008), scholar Stephanie A. Shields states that “intersectionality first and foremost reflects the reality of lives” (2008: 304). This idea—although perhaps too broad at first glance to capture the concept’s full complexity in relation to the issue addressed in this research—points to the definition of gender as a configuration that emerges not autonomously, but as a product of the relationships among different spheres of people’s social existence. Shields further argues that “the intersectionality perspective reveals that individuals’ social identities profoundly influence their beliefs about and experiences of gender” (2008: 301). In other words, gender cannot be conceived as a constant or uniform category across groups, since it is shaped by their affiliations to other social dimensions such as race, class, and nationality.

This approach to gender as a configuration derives from the academic feminist tradition that sought to illuminate the different forms of discrimination encountered by women across diverse social backgrounds. In the influential essay *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex* (1989), feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw—credited with establishing the concept of intersectionality—demonstrates, for instance, how anti-discrimination advocacy must account for the overlapping variables that ultimately differentiate the oppressions experienced by White and Black women:

The point is that Black women can experience discrimination in any number of ways and that the contradiction arises from our assumptions that their claims of exclusion must be unidirectional. Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination (1989: 149).

In many respects, intersectionality came as an answer to a mainstream version of identity politics that “frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences” (Crenshaw, 1991: 1242), especially in the context of violence suffered by those in the lowest ranks of gender politics’ spectrum. That being said, intersectionality goes beyond a revisionist approach to identity politics; it reconfigures our very understanding of gender. Rather than treating

gender as a stable or self-contained category, intersectionality reveals it as a relational construct—one that emerges through the interplay of axes of social differentiation. In this sense, gender ceases to be a fixed identity and becomes a dynamic position within intersecting systems of power.

Regarding the central concern of this thesis, the most direct outcome of such an understanding is the recognition of masculinity as a multifaceted reality. Rather than speaking of masculinity in the singular, the notion of *masculinities* should be embraced. However, acknowledging this diversity is not sufficient as a methodological approach, even less so if the notion of violence is adopted as a foregrounding aspect in the portrayal of masculinity in literary works. As Connell points out, “we must also recognize the relations between the different kinds of masculinity: relations of alliance, dominance, and subordination” (2005: 37). There is, therefore, an inevitable and tangible hierarchy of masculinities supporting a social system that privileges certain configurations and, ultimately, “underpins the conventions applied in the enactment and reproduction of masculinities (and femininities)—the lived embodied patterns of meanings” (Messerschmidt, 2018: 13).

The intersection between gender and race provides a crucial point of departure for a more profound analysis of this issue. As theorist bell hooks observes, for instance, the historical reality of slavery profoundly shaped the construction of Black masculinity, disrupting any assumption that the experiences of Black and White men could be equated: “When we read annals of history [...], it is revealed that initially Black males did not see themselves as sharing the same standpoint as White men about the nature of masculinity” (2004: 2). Since the markers of manhood in the era of slavery were tied to financial independence, sexual agency, and the very notion of freedom, Black men were confronted with an impossible contradiction: either to conclude that they were not men at all, or to recognize gender as a highly variable and context-dependent construct—the latter being a far less accessible perspective at the time.

Gender identity, however, as Connell suggests, “includes our ideas of what that belonging means, what kind of person we are, in consequence of being a woman or a man” (2009: 6), and in result of arrangements that better allocate us as recognizable individuals. Along these lines, Black men could not be forever negated from their masculinities; they could, instead, be informed of the inferior position of what their version of male identity

meant, set apart by markers that not only elevate White masculinity to a higher status, but also reaffirm the idea that gender configurations contain sociopolitical meanings. That is why it is common to find textbooks on masculinity that will insist on a definition of Black male identity as a violent one. As hooks points out, “the authors may or may not agree that Black male violence is justified [...], but they do agree that Black men as a group are out of control, wild, uncivilized, natural-born predators” (2004: 44).

This type of oppressive relationship between hierarchically distinct masculinities fosters a limited range of possibilities for the gender practices available to marginalized groups, such as Black men. In other words, racialized masculinities can either adapt to or resist the dominant norms established by their White counterparts, but they can never simply reproduce them. Since financial success is regarded by Black men as a masculine trait largely inaccessible to them—at least not in the same way it is to White men—“measures of masculinity based on other traits such as physical strength, aggressiveness, dominance, sexual conquest [...] and so on” are developed (Franklin, 1984: 58). As a result, a subculture of gender norms arises, attesting to a certain necessity of adaptability that, in turn, happens to also highlight the importance of an intersectional approach to discussions about masculinity.

Similarly, class operates as a social category that mediates masculine identity by establishing a marked contrast between, for instance, bourgeois and working-class gender norms. Although, as scholar Julia Wildberger reminds us, “the hypermasculine wailings of manosphere stars are far removed even from the most patriarchal and sexist ideas of ancient Stoicism” (2021, 98), the Senecan ideal of emotional restraint has evolved into an alternative means of asserting masculinity among men in situations of economic precarity. For many working-class men, the refusal to speak about emotional or psychological struggles functions as a symbolic currency of manhood, signifying an emotional independence that symbolically substitutes what would otherwise be material provision and financial autonomy. By contrast, bourgeois masculinity has historically been associated with a greater openness to the domain of emotions and sentimental values, as artistic movements such as Romanticism have shown.

As class struggles determine both physical and symbolic regional boundaries in urban contexts, their complexities also allow for an extension of the intersectionality concept to the realm of territorial identities. As Connell affirms, gender does, indeed,

“interact with nationality or position in the world order” (2005: 75), and, regarding masculinity, this assumption can be supported by the way male identities from the Global North and the Global South are organized, both as a way to reflect material and geopolitical conditions and consequent cultural deficiencies. The concept of *machismo*, for instance, originates in the Latin American context, “encompassing positive and negative aspects of masculinity, including bravery, honor, dominance, aggression, sexism, sexual prowess, and reserved emotions, among others” (Nuñez et al., 2015: 204).

Although intersectionality exposes the multifaceted nature of masculinity and the diverse relations among its various forms as they intersect with other social spheres, it is important to note that, in the dynamics between male and female identities, mechanisms of dominance often operate irrespective of social difference. As James Messerschmidt in the influential *Masculinities and Crime* (2018) points out,

Hegemonic masculinities do not discriminate in terms of race/ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, and nationality, and hegemonic masculinities do not represent a certain type of man; instead they personify and symbolize an unequal relationship between men and women, masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities that is widely dispersed and operates intimately and diffusely (2018: 14).

The concept at stake here is that of *hegemonic masculinity*—a term that, although frequently misappropriated as a product of intersectional approaches to gender, refers to structures sustained by social institutions that both foster and reinforce a paradigm wherein masculine dominance is normalized. This does not mean, however, that the masculinity occupying a hegemonic position is necessarily the most visible or the one that benefits most directly from gendered power dynamics. As Connell, the scholar who introduced the concept into gender studies, explains, hegemonic forms “need not to be the most common form of masculinity, let alone the most comfortable. Indeed, many men live in a state of some tension with, or distance from, the hegemonic masculinity of their culture” (2000: 11).

The relations among different models of masculinity allow rather for the identification of what are normally called *dominant masculinities*—that is, those that are “not always associated with and linked to gender hegemony but [which] refer fundamentally to the most celebrated, common, or current form of masculinity [...] in a particular social setting” (Messerschmidt 2018: 16). In this context, I refer to a White, bourgeois, heterosexual, and imperialist masculinity: one that, although not necessarily

aligned with the direct domination of men over women, nonetheless establishes the normative tone that produces and sustains anxieties within gender relations. It is this version of masculinity that, for instance, a Black man from the Global South living in economic precarity looks at, only to realize that his only option is, as already established, a position of constant resistance and adaptation.

Violence, as a concept deeply intertwined with various models of masculinity, operates simultaneously as both a foundation and a consequence of those dominant and hegemonic gender structures. While it is often discussed primarily as a means through which men assert power and their sense of belonging—particularly over women—its relation to masculinity is far more intricate. Violence not only reaffirms masculine authority but can also destabilize and even constitute it, revealing masculinity itself as a fragile and performative construct, uncovering many layers of social configuration. As the following section will illustrate, this complexity becomes evident in the ways different forms of violence intersect with our broader understandings of selfhood, social order, and the world, which, in turn, regularly find in literature and other cultural instances a site to be explored and discussed.

2.2. From American Aggression to Brazilian *bovarismo*: A Discursive Analysis of Violence

In the introduction to the highly influential *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (2007), social anthropologist Veena Das articulates the sense of frustration she experienced in writing about violence: “I felt that every time I succeeded in saying something, I was left with a sense of malaise, a disappointment with what I had said” (2007: 2). According to the author, unlike topics that the “obviousness of anthropological writing” can readily address (2007: 3), the subject of violence often engenders a feeling of bewilderment in the face of the multiple perspectives through which one might approach it. As the reductive deployment of qualifiers such as ‘physical,’ ‘institutional,’ and ‘psychological,’ among others, might suggest, inadequate discursive approaches to violence tend either to become mired in the multifaceted and intrinsic nature of the subject or to disregard the layers that stratify the concept across different intellectual dimensions.

It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that many foundational texts that we have on violence are inclined to be written from a revisionist viewpoint, oftentimes highlighting the importance of both including new concepts in the discussion about the topic and rejecting approaches that seek to conclusively define it. That is, for instance, what Walter Benjamin does in *Critique of Violence* (1921), an essay that opens with a direct condemnation of the notion that “violence can first be sought only in the realm of means, not in the realm of ends” (2004: 236). Similarly, Slavoj Žižek wrote *Violence* (2008) upon the premise that “we should learn to step back, to disentangle ourselves from the fascinating lure of this directly visible ‘subjective’ violence, violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent” (2008: 2). In many respects, violence, as a discursive topic, is more often than not explored by means of ideologically disclosing its complexity in connection to human affairs.

One of the most direct results of such an attitude is the suppression of violence’s association with physical aggression and bodily harm as a necessary correlation in attempts to establish a definition. Instead, what we found in discussions about violence is a recognition of its increasingly complex and systematic dimensions, which can be seen by the way the concept is treated as a continuum that functions both visibly and invisibly in society. In his seminal typology of violence, for instance, scholar Johan Galtung offers a definition that encompasses its systematic nature:

Violence is here defined as the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is. Violence is that which increases the distance between the potential and the actual, and that which impedes the decrease of this distance. Thus, if a person died from tuberculosis in the eighteenth century it would be hard to conceive of this as violence since it might have been quite unavoidable, but if he dies from it today, despite all the medical resources in the world, then violence is present according to our definition (1969: 168).

Galtung’s argument brings attention to the question of how *direct* an act of violence can be, i.e., how much “the means of realization are not withheld, but directly destroyed” (1968: 169). The approach dialogues with Žižek’s later conceptualization, which seeks to highlight violence’s intrinsically symbolic nature. According to the author, there are (1) *subjective violence*, which is “seen as a perturbation of the ‘normal,’ peaceful state of things”; (2) *objective violence*, which is “inherent to this ‘normal’ state of things” and, therefore, somewhat invisible; (3) *symbolic violence*, the one “embodied in language and

its forms”; and (4) *systematic violence*, “the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems” (2008: 1–3).

As it happens, the symbolic character of violence is perhaps the most highlighted feature in discussions that seek to explore the subject by bringing to light the role played by language in the legitimization of a structure that, to use Galtung’s terminology, denies and destroys means of realization. Bourdieu’s *Masculine Domination* (1998), for instance, conceptualizes symbolic violence by describing the subtle ways through which coercion is established in gender relations, approaching systems of domination not as ahistorical, but as “the product of an incessant (and therefore historical) labour of reproduction, to which singular agents (including men, with weapons such as physical violence and symbolic violence) [...] contribute” (2001: 34). There is, therefore, a consensus that, although violence is more clearly visible when in its direct form, a strong symbolic order makes it intelligible and accessible to both individuals and institutions.

If we direct our attention to the specific context of this thesis—Brazil and the United States—we can see that, although the systematic nature of violence is recognized in both countries, the ways in which its agents of reproduction operate are closely tied to each culture’s position within the world order. For instance, as anthropologist Margaret Mead notes regarding American aggression, there is a widespread belief that acts of violence committed by the United States are always “a response, rather than primary behavior” (1965: 151). What American identity reveals through episodes of violence is, therefore, something that “can never be shown, except when the other fellow starts it... which is so unsure of itself that it had to be proved” (Mead, 1965: 167). In this sense, the symbolic order that sustains American forms of violence is—as in all cases—continuously shaped and reinforced by discursive practices that uphold the country’s global position.

What the symbolic order that legitimizes American violence abroad also does is to permeate its internal social dynamics, as the same discourse logic that frames the United States as a rather reluctant wielder of force reshapes domestic forms of violence. That is particularly clear in acts of violence directed at racialized and marginalized communities, which happen to be encompassed by a widespread narrative of self-defense that was historically used to justify, for example, a culture of racial lynching. As hooks reminds us, “most Black men were lynched as retaliation for their assaults on White men. However, in the public imagination, both in the past and in the present, lynching is associated with

sexuality” (2004: 64), as the practice was seen as a tool of social terror that came in reaction to the rape of White women. In other words, White Americans based their actions on a narrative that would convey the necessity of their conduct and, therefore, maintain their sense of moral superiority.

Similarly, this reality can also be found in the discussions surrounding the United States’ culture of everyday life’s militarization, in which narratives created to remind us about the possibility of one’s suffering an act of violence are the backbone of pro-firearm possession’s rhetoric, as the country’s Bill of Rights establishes: “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed” (U.S. Const. Amend. II, 1791). Once again, the legitimacy of a decision that could result in a violent outbreak rests upon the sole reality of violence as a threat to one’s well-being. In this sense, internal violence does not qualify as a deviation from the United States’ external posture, but rather as an extension of it, for it is a continuation of the same belief that harm and aggression are permissible, even necessary, when deployed to maintain a particular order. American practices of violence function, therefore, as a continuum, shifting from the international arena to the domestic space, but fostered by the same justificatory frameworks of protection, righteousness, and moral superiority.

On the other hand, if American violence is articulated through narratives of protection—whether of national borders or domestic order—Brazilian violence, by contrast, is primarily internal and historically tied to the management of its population, especially those from marginalized communities. As scholars Heloisa Murgel Sartling and Lilia Moritz Schwarcz describe it in *Brazil: A Biography* (2015),

The logic and language of violence are deeply embedded determinants of Brazilian culture. Violence has characterized Brazilian history since the earliest days of colonization, marked as they were by the institution of slavery. This history of violence has permeated Brazilian society as a whole, spreading throughout, virtually naturalized. Although slavery is no longer practised in Brazil, its legacy casts a long shadow. The experience of violence and pain is repeated, dispersed, and persists in modern Brazilian society, affecting so many aspects of people’s lives (2015:15).

More pronounced than in many other countries, the symbolic dimension of violence in Brazil is closely tied to its cultural identity and global position. The “amalgam of colors and customs, the mixture of races” (Schwarcz & Starling, 2015: 15), central to the nation’s self-image, was not the product of social harmony, but of the violent and forced

importation of peoples on an unprecedented scale. Yet, internal discourse often disregards this legacy of slavery, a phenomenon scholars describe as both collective amnesia and self-deception. The Brazilian historian Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, in the seminal *Raízes do Brasil* (1936), refers to this tendency as *Bovarismo nacional*¹, borrowing from the French novelist Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856) to describe a habit of inhabiting a world of imagination rather than concrete action. This inclination fosters passivity and a reluctance to confront social and political realities, indirectly enabling the persistence of violence, as structural inequalities, arbitrary power, and coercive practices remain unchallenged.

Another consequence of this passive and dismissive stance toward the country's entanglement with violent practices is the space granted to discourses that focus exclusively on forms of violence that directly threaten material well-being or personal security. Contemporary systems of violence in Brazil function both by undermining institutions capable of exposing its symbolic and structural dimensions and by reinforcing those that capitalize on the spectacularization of more immediate events, such as crime. That is what scholar Jessé Souza says in his work centered on the concept of the Brazilian rabble, *Ralé Brasileira* (2009): “*Essa é a nossa verdadeira ‘luta de classes’ intestina, cotidiana, invisível e silenciosa, que só ganha as manchetes sob a forma ‘novelizada’ da violência transformada em espetáculo*” (2009: 24).

Unlike what prevails in the contemporary United States, public discourse in Brazil is less concerned with the instrumental value of violence. Whereas American aggression is framed and promoted through notions of protection, order, and the preservation of security, Brazilian national identity tends to cast violence primarily as something endured rather than enacted—a portrayal made possible by overlooking the country's long history of population management through violence. If American narratives tend to connect violence to stability, what Brazilian narratives do is to link it to endurance, openly choosing to celebrate the past, rather than critically revise it and recognize its enduring impact. Consequently, the cultural works performed by violence in each national context differ: one legitimizes it as a means to an end, while the other subsumes it into a tragic yet constitutive dimension of everyday life.

¹ Buarque de Holanda, Sérgio: *Raízes do Brasil*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1995, p. 85–87.

As I intend to discuss in the following comparative analysis of the four novels in the thesis's corpus, the narratives of violence embedded in each national context play a decisive role in how the subject of masculinity is imagined, negotiated, and ultimately troubled in the works of James Baldwin and Jorge Amado. Both authors write from cultural landscapes in which violence is not only an event but also a principle that rules over different sectors of society, such as gender. The masculinities presented in all four novels inform and are informed by social hierarchies, racial dynamics, and lived experiences of people that are in some shape or form affected by the notion of violence, which, in turn, makes it impossible to comprehend it as an isolated motif; rather, violence mobilizes masculinity as a critical lens through which its contradictions, vulnerabilities, and performative demands are exposed.

3. Comparative Analysis

3.1. Violence as a Masculine Institution

3.1.1. Masculinity by Design: The Military, Religion, and the Male Ideal

In the rather short history of gender studies, few topics have been as central to heated debates both in and outside the field as the importance given to the human body in the construction of gender identities. Although discussions about human anatomy have only recently entered mainstream gender politics, the centrality of the body has always played an important role in the field, ultimately dividing the academic community into two separate groups: those who recognize the body as the space from which gender identity proceeds (sociobiological approach), and those who see the body as a rather passive agent in gender configurations (social constructionist approach). As Connell sets out the main differences between the two viewpoints,

Social constructionist approaches to gender and sexuality underpinned by a semiotic approach to the body provide an almost complete antithesis to sociobiology. Rather than social arrangements being the effects of the body-machine, the body is a field on which social determination runs riot. This approach too has its leading metaphors, which tend to be metaphors of art rather than engineering: the body is a canvas to be painted, a surface to be imprinted, a landscape to be marked out (2005: 50).

Although offering a definitive answer to the question imposed by such a debate is not a goal that this thesis is actively dealing with, what the discussion showcases is how the body “is inescapable in the construction of masculinity” (Connell, 2005: 56). Either seen as the conceiver of a masculine identity, or as the product of the complexities surrounding the idea of manliness, the body consists of a space in which we recognize gender practices that reveal what being a man means in different contexts. As Bourdieu put it, “the social world constructs the body as a sexually defined reality and as the depository of sexually defining principles of vision and division” (2001: 11). In other words, the body is never negligible regarding masculinity, for it possesses a symbolic force associated with sex, health, strength, and movement that shapes what we understand as male, regardless of its position as an active or passive agent in gender configurations.

Similarly, what bodies also do is to reflect the power that institutions have over our notions of what masculine identity is. For instance, as historian George L. Moose says about masculinity throughout history in the seminal *The Image of Man* (1998), virtues reminiscent of militaristic traditions have always been present in the construction of ideas surrounding how a man should act and physically appear: “The military, once universal conscription began, had co-opted the neoclassical ideal of the male body as formed, for example, through gymnastic exercise” (1998: 109). Perhaps more than any other established institution, the military has a long history of shaping both the bodies and the minds of men, which happens to establish the idea of violence—the military's most distinctive concept—as a notion that encompasses masculinity. Ultimately, men should not only look like someone able to commit an act of violence when necessary, but also conduct themselves in life as such.

Among the four novels considered in this thesis, the one that most directly presents a version of masculinity highly informed by such a standard is *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*. Set in 1920s Ilhéus, in the southern region of the state of Bahia, the novel can be described as a commentary on the crisis of militaristic masculinity that for centuries has served as the backbone of Brazil's *Nordeste* (the Northeast). As scholar Durval Muniz de Albuquerque Júnior put it, “o Nordeste é uma região do país onde o ser masculino é definidor não só da identidade de gênero de seus habitantes, como um importante elemento na definição da própria identidade regional” (2013: 22–23).

Centered on the struggle for the political control of Ilhéus, *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* provides in its plot a contest of narratives concerning power and masculinity, with particular emphasis on the strategies through which these are asserted. For instance, the male characters in the novel either came to power or had their privileged social and political positions stripped through the usage of force, thereby exposing the ways in which militaristic values and a culture of martial prowess are constructed as normative masculine ideals. This dimension becomes clear in the novel by the way most of these characters are described as carrying marks of their combat experiences, which functions as currency for their status as manly. That is the case of the character Amâncio Leal, whose body denotes his manhood by the way it is composed of scars from his time as a combative soldier, as the following dialogue shows:

— Os meninos mais moços estão chegando na idade de colégio e não quero que fiquem ignorantes como os mais velhos e como o pai. Quero que pelo menos um seja doutor de anel e diploma.

— Além do mais — considerou o Doutor — os homens ricos da região, como você, têm obrigação de concorrer para o progresso da cidade construindo boas residências, bangalôs, palacetes. Veja o palacete que Mundinho Falcão construiu na praia: e isso que ele chegou aqui há um par de anos e, ainda por cima, é solteiro. Afinal de que vale juntar dinheiro para viver metido na roça, sem conforto?

— Por mim, vou comprar uma casa é na Bahia. Levar a família para lá — disse o coronel Amâncio Leal, que tinha um olho vazado e um defeito no braço esquerdo, recordações do tempo das lutas.” (Amado, 2024: 35)

The dialogue among the men of Ilhéus could be thought of as composed with the aim of highlighting how the contestation of narratives in the story can be characterized as a dispute between intellect and physicality. Although militaristic values were paramount in determining which men of Ilhéus merit such designation and warrant positions of power, the emphasis placed upon formal education in the male socialization of younger generations is evident. In numerous respects, the dialogue represents an acknowledgment that, ultimately, scars and other vestiges of turbulent times must be superseded by markers of intellectual aptitude, such as the *anel* (graduation ring) and *diploma*. The concept of progress—a notion of singular importance in the novel—signifies a transformation in the town’s identity, wherein martial prowess and other militaristic values play an increasingly diminished role.

The war of narratives that defines the novel, however, exposes the difficulty of relinquishing traditional forms of masculinity, particularly when frameworks analogous to institutions of great significance, such as the military, occupy a central role in sustaining them. Although, as Kimmel explains, what defines the crisis of masculinity at the turn of the century is that “the meanings that had constituted traditional gender definitions were challenged” (2005: 73), this process of dismantling encountered numerous obstacles, as it demanded a thorough reconfiguration of power structures that had long sustained the privilege of certain groups. What *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* depicts is precisely the reaction that ensued, given that most of the men in Ilhéus resisted allowing their ways to fade into history: “*Ia se perdendo, no passar dos tempos, o eco dos últimos tiros trocados nas lutas pela conquista da terra, mas daqueles anos heróicos ficara um gosto de sangue derramado no sangue do ilheenses*” (Amado, 2024: 14).

Essentially, the military as a paradigm of masculinity is presented in Amado's novel as something rather incompatible with the natural development of society. Since Ilhéus is presented as town going through the process of modernization—regarding both its economic dependence on the cacao crops and its sociopolitical organization centered on the power given to rural patriarchs that came to power via violence—, its dynamics ultimately characterize the city as a macrocosm in which the military's outdated practices are exposed. In a similar manner, James Baldwin's *Another Country* explores military culture by portraying it as a setting in which a Black man cannot see himself, for the only version of institutionalized violence he is allowed to partake in is the one in which he is the victim. After all, Rufus, the novel's mostly absent protagonist, has a military past that profoundly shaped him as both a violent and a distrustful man, but only because he was at the receiving end of the institutionalized violence that the military represents:

He remembered, suddenly, his days in boot camp in the South and felt again the shoe of a white officer against his mouth. He was in his white uniform, on the ground, against the red, dusty clay. Some of his coloured buddies were holding him, were shouting in his ear, helping him to rise. The white officer, with a curse, had vanished, had gone forever beyond the reach of vengeance. His face full of clay and tears and blood; he spat red blood in the red dust. (Baldwin, 2001a: 22).

The striking use of the colors red, white, and black in the passage above reveals Baldwin's central thesis in his portrayal of violence and masculinity: the violent oppression endured by a Black man carries layers of meaning that go beyond simply establishing violence as a masculine imperative. In this scene, Rufus's experience cannot be understood as something that any soldier might undergo; it cannot be approached in a colorblind way. The contrast between the color of his skin and both his uniform and his superior's presence gives the situation a new, racialized significance, highlighting how the institutional framework of the militaristic setting enables and shapes violence. In the space where he finds himself, violence is not only normalized but expected, as the lack of contrast between the red soil and his blood suggests.

In many respects, the novel underscores how Black men cannot find in the military an ideal to emulate or fully belong to. As the attention that the text gives to the color of the uniform seems to propose, there is a fundamental element of differentiation that ultimately signals to Rufus—a man of color—that he is welcomed not as an equal subject, but as an object to be exploited in the ways that a violent institution like the military allows. What Black men quickly come to understand once inside the military is precisely what hooks

observes: “Cultures of domination, like the United States, are founded on the principle that violence is necessary for the maintenance of the status quo” (2004: 45–46). For Rufus—a very violent man himself—, his time in boot camp makes clear that maintaining this status quo means that Black and White do not, and cannot, go together, which also means that they cannot have the same ideals of what a man is.

Although Baldwin might hint towards a rejection of the notion that Black men can uncritically adopt militaristic ideals to shape their masculine identity, his novels frequently highlight other institutions that play a central role in guiding men of color in their understanding of gender, as seen in the following example from *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, centered on Gabriel—the protagonist John’s father and figure whose violent behavior in many ways encompasses a search for spiritual guidance:

Then his father raised his belt, and it fell with a whistling sound on Roy, who shivered, and fell back, his face to the wall. But he did not cry out. And the belt was raised again, and again. The air rang with the whistling, and the *crack!* against Roy’s flesh. And the baby, Ruth, began to scream.
‘*My Lord, my Lord,*’ his father whispered, ‘*my Lord, my Lord.*’
He raised the belt again, but Aunt Florence caught it from behind, and held it. His mother rushed over to the sofa and caught Roy in her arms, crying as John had never seen a woman, or anybody, cry before. Roy caught his mother around the neck and held on to her as though he were drowning (Baldwin, 2001b: 56–57).

Just as Baldwin constructs Gabriel—and, indeed, the majority of his male characters—as a figure for whom religion serves as an essential guiding force, so too does Christianity stand as the institution that perhaps most profoundly shapes Black Americans’ moral frameworks and communal norms. In a context of masculinity where “slavery produced a White supremacist relational and discursive social structure that declared the physical, intellectual, and moral superiority of Whites over Blacks” in the earthly plane (Messerschmidt, 2018: 25), many Black men have turned to divine scriptures as a source of guidance in defining who they are as males. The nature of such guidance in many ways encompasses the maintenance of violent structures, thereby providing Baldwin with one of his most urgent critical targets: a masculinity that, in seeking refuge from racial oppression, reproduces that oppression’s logic within the domestic and spiritual spheres.

Although both Gabriel and Rufus are violent due to unresolved trauma, their responses differ sharply. Gabriel finds in religion a sense of purpose that helps him endure the hardships of being a Black man, while Rufus, unable to live under those conditions, kills himself. What religion also does for Gabriel is to validate his violent actions, as he

sees his behavior as the correct one for a man of faith, shedding light into the complexities surrounding both his approach to the Gospel and what religion, as an institution, can really do for him. In many ways, as critic Andrew Connolly argues, Baldwin “does not portray Gabriel simply as a villainous character who commits emotional and physical violence against his family, but as a committed participant in a religious system that fails him” (2015: 120–121). In the novel, what Christianity does for Gabriel is to make promises of salvation that it cannot honor, only to promote a change in which the violence that before his baptism was seen as a sin becomes an expected norm.

Essentially, religion functions as an institution that offers the violent male the rather comfortable position of being perceived as a man in search of salvation. Specifically in the relationship between Gabriel and John, religion also operates by offering the father a language of violence that he can use against the boy who is, in fact, not his biological child, but a product of his wife’s time as a woman of the world. Passages in which Gabriel acts as or says that he is “going to beat sin out of him [John]” (Baldwin, 2001: 228) are common in the novel, for its purpose is to convey the rather negative role religion plays in the socialization of Black males in the United States.

As critic Michael F. Lynch says, Baldwin has a “fundamental problem with Christianity,” which happens to be conveyed in many of his novels by the way religious characters are portrayed as “life-hating,” in contrast with nonreligious ones, “who are loving and much healthier psychologically” (1993: 162). What *Go Tell It on the Mountain* specifically does is highlight the space of the Black Christian church as a locus where the community that was supposed to function solely as a refuge from racial violence and dispossession becomes, simultaneously, a site of psychological repression, patriarchal control, and spiritual coercion. Regarding men's identity, the church functions as a principal site in which a rigid and often destructive model of Black masculinity is produced and policed, one that demands dominance in the domestic sphere as compensation for the emasculation suffered in the racial one.

Additionally, the ‘life-hating’ aspect of Gabriel’s character can also be found in the way he eventually resorts to the church to change his ways regarding his sexuality, operating in search of a version of masculine identity in which his sinful desires can be properly controlled. He was a lustful man and found in the Gospel a way to suppress the cravings that he blamed his life’s ruins on, which, if we consider how “a fresh, virile,

sexually potent image” (Franklin, 1984: 52) has been for a long time the Black male ideal in the United States, can be interpreted as a form of emasculation. The Gospel is thereby presented as Gabriel’s essential tool in his life goal of becoming a man that can control the craving that ultimately would condemn him to an eternity of damnation—though Baldwin makes clear that it is precisely this relentless war against his own desires, rather than the desires themselves, that renders Gabriel spiritually hollow and incapable of genuine love.

On the other hand, what we see in Amado’s *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* is the characterization of the Christian faith in the city of Ilhéus as a fundamentally feminine—and, therefore, incompatible with the male identity—institution:

O seu rico andor bordado de ouro, levavam-no sobre os ombros orgulhosos os cidadãos mais notáveis, os maiores fazendeiros, vestidos com a bata vermelha da confraria, e não é pouco dizer, pois os coronéis do cacau não primavam pela religiosidade, não frequentavam igrejas, rebeldes à missa e à confissão, deixando essas fraquezas para as fêmeas da família:

— Isso de igreja é coisa para mulheres (Amado, 2024: 22).

As Kimmel observes, this attitude toward religion proves to be commonplace within the values surrounding traditional forms of masculinity: “This resistance to feminization [...], against those cultural qualities of modern life that spell enervation and feminization (religion, education, doing 'brain work') is what I call masculinism” (2005: 21). Religion, in this regard, is approached by the men of Ilhéus in a decidedly masculinist manner, wherein the institution of Christianity not only offers nothing in terms of male identity construction but also incorporates an element of emasculation that must be abandoned. It is only when another dimension of gendered social structuring is affected—the characteristically masculine domain of finance—that the men in *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* feel compelled to attend church, as they resort to prayers beseeching the weather that would ensure profitable yields in their agricultural enterprises. There is, therefore, a utilitarian value in the Gospel: “*Naquele ano, em vez de ficarem nos bares bebericando, estavam todos eles na procissão, de vela em punho, contritos, prometendo mundos e fundos a São Jorge em troca das chuvas preciosas*” (Amado, 2024: 23).

Ultimately, whereas Gabriel seeks refuge in the Gospel as a way to reform his conduct regarding the sin of lust, the men in *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* accept the emasculation represented by the church only when another crucial aspect of their masculine identity is threatened: their financial autonomy. If Baldwin uses Gabriel’s arc to “explore how the mixture of religious guilt and racial stereotypes surrounding Black

sexuality can have a disastrous impact on Black males” (Connolly, 2015: 122), Amado, in turn, illustrates through the masculinist dynamics of Brazil’s *Nordeste* the hierarchy of social institutions involved in constructing a masculine ideal. In Ilhéus—as is true in Brazil as a whole—there is what Kimmel calls *marketplace manhood*, a term used to describe the man “who derived his identity from success in the capitalist marketplace, from his accumulated wealth, power, and capital” (2005: 38). It is, therefore, not only the military that foregrounds the idealized images of masculinity for the men in *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, but also capitalism.

This connection between financial success and masculinity engenders violent behavior when aggression becomes a means of attaining material wealth. This is exemplified in the striking scene from Amado’s *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos*, wherein Vadinho strikes his wife, Flor, to obtain her money and sustain his gambling habits:

Foi ela quem bateu primeiro: arrancando-se dele e não querendo deixar-se agarrar novamente, socou-lhe o peito com os punhos fechados, com a mão aberta atingiu-lhe o rosto. “Sua puta, tu me paga!”, disse Vadinho, enquanto dona Flor gritava: “Me deixa, desgraçado, não me bata, me mate logo, é melhor”.

[...]

Lá estava ele com o dinheiro na mão e um ar perdido, o cabelo revolto, olhando num espanto para onde dona Flor jazia caída, a gemer baixinho, num choro manso (Amado, 1966: 178).

Vadinho’s outburst—“*Tu me paga!*” (“You will pay for that!”)—in response to Flor striking him astutely captures his anger not only at the physical affront itself but also at the fact that it is a woman who has denied him money, thereby exposing the extent to which his masculine self-conception is bound up with monetary acquisition and control. The exclamation thus crystallizes, in a single moment, the deep entanglement between capitalism’s imperatives and traditional constructions of masculinity. The scene further reveals his profound discomfort with the inversion of gender roles that Flor enacts by positioning herself as both provider and aggressor. While his gambling has already compromised the masculine ideal of financial dominance over the household—and, by extension, his claim to superiority over his wife—Vadinho’s physical advantage affords him an alternative register of power. Through force, he makes unambiguously clear that Flor’s recourse to violence is both futile and self-defeating. That this same aggression ultimately secures the money he sought completes what the novel presents as the expected cycle of patriarchal behavior: when economic authority falters, bodily coercion steps in to restore the masculine order.

What the examples examined in this section reveal is how both authors demonstrate profound investment in portraying masculinity as shaped by the power that social institutions exert over cultural conceptions of manhood, albeit often indirectly. However, as the following section will demonstrate, institutions such as those foregrounded above can also assume a crucial role in constructing a masculine ideal centered on the male body as one that withstands acts of violence. Across all novels within this thesis's corpus, masculinity emerges as a product of suffering and institutionalized oppression, forged through an interplay of infliction and endurance that positions violence as a constitutive dimension of masculine formation. In many respects, to inhabit the category of man necessitates being both perpetrator and recipient of violence.

3.1.2. Violent and 'Violenced': The Wounds That Shape Men

In a televised conversation for the PBS series *SOUL!* (1968–1973), later transcribed into the book *A Dialogue* (1973), American poet and activist Nikki Giovanni famously challenges James Baldwin on the mistreatment of Black women by their male partners. Baldwin responds defensively, insisting that “the standards of the civilization into which you are born are first outside of you, and by the time you get to be a man they're inside of you [...]. If you're treated a certain way, you become a certain kind of person” (1973: 51–52). The remark crystallizes a central concern that runs through Baldwin's work on masculinity, positing Black manhood as fundamentally shaped by an oppressive network of power structures that constrain and distort it. Within this context, a degrading act by a Black man—for instance, an eruption of violence—appears less as an inexplicable cruelty than as the outcome of a subjectivity contorted by sustained exposure to domination and dehumanization.

It is clear that what Baldwin means by being treated ‘a certain way’ has everything to do with racially motivated violence Black men incur in the United States, as it becomes evident in the portrayal of Black suffering that one finds, for instance, in *Another Country*'s Rufus. Baldwin is deeply concerned with a representation of Black masculinity that encompasses the historical reality of systematic oppression as an important aspect in the construction of gender identities, which explains how, as critic Matt Brim puts it,

“Rufus’s experience of being an expendable commodity in the White man’s world references the African American slave trade and also echoes with the threat of a modern-day lynching” (2014: 98). Essentially, being a Black man in the United States means being on the receiving end of some sort of violent oppression, which, in turn, fosters a violent behavior that is often redirected toward Black women.

Additionally, the subject of police brutality is powerfully explored in Baldwin’s *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, specifically in Richard’s arc—the protagonist John’s biological father, who kills himself before his son’s birth in the aftermath of being falsely accused of stealing, arrested, and beaten by White policemen. As the following scene illustrates, the novel delves into the psychological implications of surviving such an act of violence, working with specific notions of masculinity to highlight the profound trauma Black men must endure:

But Richard was not sent away. Against the testimony of the three robbers, and her own testimony, and, under oath, the storekeeper’s indecision, there was no evidence on which to convict him. [...] And there—she was never all her life long to forget it—he threw himself, face downward, on his bed and wept. She had only seen one other man weep before—her father—and it had not been like this. She touched him, but he did not stop. Her own tears fell on his dirty, uncombed hair. She tried to hold him, but for a long while he would not be held. His body was like iron; she could find no softness in it. [...]
He fell asleep at last, clinging to her as though he were going down into the water for the last time.
And it was the last time. That night he cut his wrists with his razor and he was found in the morning by his landlady, his eyes staring upward with no light, dead among the scarlet sheets. (Baldwin, 2001b: 201–202)

Similarly to Rufus, Richard’s arc is a tragic story of a man driven to suicide by the hardships of racial oppression in the United States. However, Rufus embodies a version of Black male suffering that, as Baldwin suggests in response to Giovanni, turns one into a violent person, whereas Richard’s sorrow leads him to suicide almost immediately, cutting short a life of potential destructive behavior. Richard, after all, is described as a character who refuses to let the oppressive tyranny of whiteness shape him—“I just decided me one day that I was going to get to know it better than them, so could no white son-of-a-bitch *nowhere* never talk *me* down” (Baldwin, 2001b: 194)—, framing his suicide also as an act of courage rather than simply a failure to cope with the oppression he was expected to endure as a Black man. Rufus, on the other hand, by accepting the paradigm that “showing aggression is the simplest way to assert patriarchal manhood” when White supremacy

impedes one's right to it (hooks, 2004: 46), carried on the cycle of oppression that only prolonged his suffering.

The description of Richard crying is also important, for it illustrates an instance in which Black masculinity is affected by White oppression that strongly contrasts with the tragic outcome of suicide. If we consider that, in a more conventional sense, “masculinity is often interpreted to mean that emotions should not be displayed” (Franklin, 1984: 13) and that Richard, as a character, has a strong moral sense in regard to not allowing White people to make him feel less than himself, the episode of him weeping in front of his girlfriend represents a breach that has strong implications for his position as a man. That is perhaps why “his body was like iron,” not allowing his girlfriend to assume the position of a caretaker, as any “softness” would just deepen his ruin as a man. By killing himself, what Richard does—besides not allowing oppression to change him even more significantly—is to reveal that, ultimately, he is unable to “bear the weight of a psychohistory that represents Black males as castrated, ineffectual, irresponsible, and not real men” (hooks, 2004: 82–83).

Whereas Baldwin focuses on police brutality and other forms of violence directed at Black men in the United States to portray the system of domination that deeply informs racialized notions of masculinity, Amado relies on the culture of *cangaço* in his explorations of the wounds that shape the men in *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*. As historian Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz explains the way the Brazilian Northeast's phenomenon came to be,

O termo é antigo, pois nessa região já tem 1834 se dizia de certos indivíduos que eles “andavam debaixo do cangaço”, designando particularmente os que ostensivamente se apresentavam muito armados [...]. Mais tarde, o mesmo termo passou a designar grupos de homens armados liderados por um chefe, que se mantinham errantes, isto é, sem domicílio fixo, vivendo de assaltos e saques, e não e ligando permanentemente a nenhum chefe político ou chefe de grande parentela. Estes bandos independentes viviam em luta constante contra a polícia, até a prisão ou a morte. (1997: 15).

This form of banditry has played a crucial role in constructing a *nordestino* (northeastern) identity fundamentally tied to traditional notions of masculinity, often compared to the cowboy culture in the United States². Just as the cowboy “was fierce and brave, willing to

² The comparison was made famous by Brazilian anthropologist Luís da Câmara Cascudo in the 1939 book *Vaqueiros e Cantadores*: “O cangaceiro conhece armas automáticas moderníssimas. Gosta de meias de seda, perfumes. Alguns têm unhas polidas... Quase todos usam maneios de ‘cowboy’, chapêlo desabado,

venture into unknown territory, a ‘negligent, irrepressible wilderness,’ and tame it for its less-than-masculine inhabitants” (Kimmel, 2005: 31), the *cangaceiro* was known for his ability to withstand the harsh northeastern climate and for his readiness to resort to violence in order to prevail, frequently associated with a culture of ruthless killings, rapes, and the pillaging of towns. The men of the *cangaço* were also known for their short lifespans, since the activities in which they engaged typically placed them on the receiving end of brutal acts of violence. As the phenomenon became a key element of regionalist discourses that sought to distinguish the *nordestino* from other Brazilian males in terms of masculine identity, a willingness to suffer and to die became central to prevailing conventions of what it means to be a man.

In *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, Amado explores this dynamic in his portrayal of Fagundes, who is described as struggling to accept his fear of suffering violence after failing to kill a political rival of the wealthy farmer who hired him:

Queria morrer de descarga de bala, de uma vez, sem sentir. Se o pegassem vivo, iriam judiar... Estremecia, arrastando-se dificilmente pelo chão. De morrer não tinha medo. Um homem nasce para morrer quando seu dia chega. Mas, se o pegassem vivo, iriam judiar, matá-lo aos pouquinhos, querendo o nome do mandante. Uma vez, no sertão, ele e uns outros haviam matado assim um trabalhador de roça, querendo saber onde estava escondido um cujo qualquer. Picado de faca, de punhal afiado. Cortaram-lhe as orelhas, arrancaram os olhos do desgraçado. Assim não queria morrer. Tudo que desejava agora era uma clareira onde os pudesse esperar, de arma na mão. Para matar e morrer. Para não ser judiado como aquele infeliz no sertão (Amado, 2024: 353).

The description of the agony Fagundes feels at the prospect of being tortured is particularly intriguing, as it reveals the discrepancy between the *cangaço* culture’s willingness to kill and to die. Precisely because he has been cruel to others and committed many merciless acts of violence, Fagundes dreads the consequences of capture and punishment. Earlier, however, the character is depicted as part of a group of drifters, wandering from city to city in search of food or employment, and ultimately resorting to the *cangaço*—a common path for men in extreme poverty at the time. With Fagundes, Amado distances himself from a portrayal of the *cangaço* that is too quick to convey an image of the *cangaceiro* either as a ruthless savage, or a romanticized folk hero, as popular culture of the period commonly did. Rather, what we find in Fagundes is a man that, moved by the need to both survive and

revólveres laterais, lenço no pescoço. O lenço no pescoço, como os artistas cariocas ‘representando’ matutos do Nordeste, é uma influência puramente teatral.” (2010: 9–10).

have something to reaffirm his masculinity, partakes in acts of cruelty that shape his male identity as both violent and vulnerable to violence.

Although *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* is commonly seen as part of Amado's second phase as a writer, "when the ideological message of his earlier novels seems to have disappeared, and he tends to glorify the life of the people and customs of his beloved city" (Nunes, 1973: 90), its exploration of identity and belonging is closely tied to recognizing the power of oppressive systems over social conventions. Like Baldwin, who examines notions of masculinity linked to the racialized existence of African American men, Amado operates on the premise that male identity in Brazil's Northeast is deeply tied to the idea of territory. The male characters in *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, for instance, are not just men; they are men from Ilhéus—a city depicted as one where violence serves as currency of masculinity, profoundly shaping how we perceive their identities.

This component of Ilhéus's gender configurations is explicitly articulated in Mundinho Falcão's narrative arc, as the character—although essentially embodying a version of masculinity that privileges intellectual cultivation over the valorization of violence as a currency of manhood—recognizes that the willingness to confront danger constitutes an integral element of masculine identity in Ilhéus, as the following dialogue demonstrates:

Depois contou de Ilhéus, das lutas passadas, do banditismo, das terras conquistadas, a bala, do progresso atual, dos problemas.
— Quero que me respeitem, que me mandem falar em seu nome, na Câmara. Que me adiantaria se vocês me metessem numa chapa? Para representar a firma, basta Emílio. Sou um homem de Ilhéus.
— Política de lugarejo. Com tiroteios e banda de música — sorriu Emílio, entre irônico e condescendente.
— Para que correr perigo quando não é necessário? — perguntou a mãe escondendo o temor.
— Para não ser apenas o irmão dos meus irmãos. Para ser alguém." (Amado, 2024: 60).

What is particularly striking about the dialogue between Mundinho and his family is that it reveals gender identity as perhaps the most defining and inescapable aspect of how the men of Ilhéus come to understand themselves as human beings and as social subjects. Mundinho's decision to live in constant danger by aligning himself with the culture of violence that defines the town and its men is portrayed not only as a necessary step toward his socialization as a male, but also as a crucial means of asserting his validity and worth as a human being within that community. In the intricate interplay of beliefs surrounding

gender, territory, and belonging, the character's arc ultimately exposes a profound existential dimension of gender constructions in Brazil's Northeast: to become someone, one must first become a man; and to become a man, one must be willing to endure violence and, ultimately, to risk—and potentially lose—one's life.

This primordial role played by a masculine identity in the regionalist culture of Brazil's *Nordeste* can also be seen in the way such a premise is also used to define the women. As De Albuquerque Júnior points out, “*o nordestino é macho. Não há lugar nesta figura para qualquer atributo feminino. Nesta região até as mulheres são macho, sim senhor!*” (2013: 18). Femininity is perceived as so profoundly incompatible with the *Nordeste* that women of the region are expected to behave not as the opposite of men, but as milder versions of them—a form of femininity that, when compared to expressions of masculinity elsewhere (e.g., Brazil's South), appears strikingly masculine, especially when it comes to their adherence to a culture of violence. As masculinity becomes an integral element of regionalist discourses seeking to distinguish Brazil's Northeast from the rest of the country, the boundaries between gender and territorial expectations blur, deepening the region's underlying existential tensions.

As previously discussed, existential struggles also preoccupy James Baldwin in his portrayal of the interplay between racial and gender identities. In *Another Country*, however, one observes a deliberate attempt to examine masculinity beyond its complexities within racialized communities—an effort that becomes evident in the depiction of Vivaldo. A White man grappling with inner conflicts regarding both his sexual identity and his role in the downfall of Rufus, whom he regarded as his closest friend, Vivaldo embodies the difficulty of navigating racial and gender expectations within a world still governed by a culture of oppression and despair. As the following scene suggests, the character is presented as a man driven by a need for danger, which reaffirms his masculinity while also responding to more immediate existential anxieties, such as White guilt:

He had felt more alive in Harlem, for he had moved in a blaze of rage and self-congratulation and sexual excitement, with danger, like a promise, waiting for him everywhere. And, nevertheless, in spite of all this daring, this running of risks, the misadventures which had actually befallen him had been banal indeed and might have befallen him anywhere. His dangerous, overwhelming lust for life had failed to involve him in anything deeper than perhaps half a dozen extremely casual acquaintanceships in about as many bars. For memories, he had one or two marijuana parties, one or two community debauches, one or two girls whose names he had forgotten, one or two addresses which he had lost. He knew

that Harlem was a battlefield and that a war was being waged there day and night—but of the war aims he knew nothing (Baldwin, 2001a: 135).

In many ways, Vivaldo's search for danger reveals how aware he is about the paradigms that guide the notion of masculinity he feels the need to adhere to, which happens to characterize him as a man seeking alternative, starker standards. Being attracted to other males and fully aware of the consequences of this reality for one's identity as a man, he artificially resorts to attitudes that would reaffirm his manliness, such as having casual sex with women, leading a Bohemian life, and, more importantly, going around places where violence and a sense of danger are palpable, as Harlem was known to be in 1950s New York City. In a movement that reveals that having heterosexual sex is not enough, Vivaldo turns to violence as a more effective currency of masculinity, but not as the one who inflicts it; rather, as the one who suffers, as being a victim of a gang attack, for instance, is a wound that shapes men.

Ultimately, the version of masculinity Vivaldo seeks is one deeply rooted in a culture of violence—a culture that, for instance, treats battle scars and combat injuries as visible tokens of masculine superiority. In the context of American society at the turn of the twentieth century, Kimmel notes that “war and imperialistic adventurism were increasingly valorized” within traditional ideals of manliness (2005: 81), to the extent that figures such as the poet Maurice Thompson could claim that “the greatest danger that a long period of profound peace offers to a nation is that of [creating] effeminate tendencies in young men” (1898: 68). This logic resurfaces in the novel's recurring description of Harlem as a kind of battlefield, a space in which Vivaldo can pursue his desire to be wounded and thereby fashion himself into the man he believes he must become.

However, Harlem is not any battlefield. As Baldwin himself said about the neighborhood in the influential essay *Fifth Avenue, Uptown: A Letter from Harlem* (1960), it is at the same time “an invincible and indescribable squalor” and “the very centre of the revolution now occurring in the world” (2022: 56). It is the place where Black people go to be among their own after their shifts working for “the Man”—the American Black expression that “fuses White masculinity and institutional power” (Connell, 2005: 75). A White man himself, Vivaldo knows his position in this place: he embodies what Black men most strongly resent and, at the same time, what they are structurally compelled to aspire to in terms of masculinity. For those who are unaware of his internal struggles, his decision

to seek danger in Harlem, when he has the privilege of resorting to dominant measures of masculinity, renders him simultaneously a grotesque intruder and a perverse imitator of the very men whose reality he can never fully share.

Similar to what Amado achieves by rooting his portrayal of Ilhéus in the culture of violent masculinity that defines Brazil's Northeast, Baldwin operates in *Another Country* on the premise that territory forms an inescapable element of gender dynamics in American society—especially when concepts of belonging blur the lines between identity and exclusion. These paradigms exert a tangible influence on individual perceptions of what it means to be a man, as the process of gender socialization draws on concepts rooted in ideas of protection and, ultimately, violence. As the next section will highlight, there exists a clear path to manhood—one that positions violence as a rite of passage and hinges on the notion that true manhood demands a deliberate toughening of the self.

3.1.3. Toughening the Boy: Violence and the Path to Manhood

Following the widespread acclaim of his novel *Mar Morto* (1936), Jorge Amado published *Capitães da Areia* (1937), a work that would become one of the cornerstones of Brazil's modernist literature. Described as “a shocking chronicle about the life of street children in Salvador, Bahia” (Rodwell & Cavalcanti, 1998: 29), the novel was among the first in the country to spotlight Brazil's glaring social inequalities, centering on a self-sustaining band of orphaned youths who resort to theft for survival. Its unflinching political critique led to swift condemnation as communist propaganda: under the Estado Novo dictatorship, the book was banned and publicly burned—around 800 copies incinerated in Salvador in 1937—and it endures today as “a literary work of resistance to orthodoxy and 'performative discourse'” (Valle, 2024: 29).

Though masculinity is hardly the dominant theme in *Capitães da Areia*, the novel's portrayal of childhood—and especially its raw tone—reveals Amado's concern with the socialization of boys in Brazil's Northeast. Three decades later, long after he had shed the overt militancy of his early career, this preoccupation persisted in subtler forms: the backstories of his most carnivalesque characters, such as Dona Flor's roguish husband Vadinho in *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos*, invariably foreground violence as the defining

crucible of their coming-of-age. As conveyed in the following scene, where a teenage Vadinho hits his much older lover, the willingness to use violence is a fundamental element in the sex-role socialization in the world described in the novel:

Não quis Vadinho ouvir a promessa, estava possesso de ira e de vexame, fora ludibriado. Sem levar em conta a proximidade dos cornos do comerciante, agarrou a madame pelos cabelos longos e oxigenados, aplicou-lhe uns tabefes na cara, gritou-lhe nomes, num esbregue de tamanhas proporções a ponto de reunir, em animada assistência, não apenas o esposo e os criados, mas também os vizinhos do elegante largo da Graça. Segundo o testemunho ulterior de Vadinho, naquele dia se fizera homem, e homem para sempre escarmentado.

Pela mão desse escândalo penetrou Vadinho na vida noturna da cidade, rapazola de dezessete anos, ao qual se afeiçoara Anacreon, batoteiro afamado, carteador de fino estilo. Ninguém melhor para revelar ao moço inexperiente as sutilezas e as finuras da ronda, do vinte-e-um, do bacará, do pôquer, para introduzi-lo na dialética das mesas de roleta e na mística dos dados, pois Anacreon não era apenas competente, era também um coração leal, de frente para a vida, um tanto quixotesco (Amado, 1966: 116–117).

The passage clearly establishes a connection between becoming a man and resorting to violence in a conflict. Inevitably, by achieving a position of manhood through such means, Vadinho becomes, as the novel describes, a “forever wary man” (*“homem para sempre escarmentado”*), which once again brings up the question of how masculinity is constructed through hardships. In many ways, painful experiences, such as heartbreak, have a pedagogical value to a boy who has no option but to become a man. As Franklin explains about male socialization, “boys are expected to conform to the norm of responsibility for learning how to maintain and perpetuate the society” (1984: 31), and Vadinho’s understanding of his place in the world as a man conveys to the reader the notion that being wary and always willing to commit an act of violence is part of the process in maintaining societal paradigms.

The description of Vadinho’s emergence as a man also highlights the role played by older males in the process, which might be considered an example of what is categorized in discussions about male socialization as ‘instrumental friendship,’ i.e., one “based not on emotional expressiveness,” but rather on the goal of stimulating a masculine development (Franklin, 1984: 119–120). Interestingly enough, as the character’s name already suggests, Anacreon’s role in Vadinho’s process of becoming is outlined as making reference to the ancient Greek tradition of male socialization through symposiastic pederasty. Similar to how aristocratic men would, in the wine-drinking context of the ancient Greek symposium, mentor a younger adolescent male by fostering virtues such as courage, reason, and civic

integrity, Anacreon inserts himself in Vadinho's life to introduce him to a bohemian life of gambling and drinking that gradually comes to define his character and the version of masculinity that he represents.

What the novel ultimately conveys is that Vadinho's formative years were defined by a culture of violent and uncouth behavior that led him to become a man whose most noticeable features are to be condemned as examples of what a 'bad' version of masculinity looks like. Differently from what he does in *Capitães da Areia*, however, Amado does not describe Vadinho simply as a victim of his circumstances; rather, the character's *Gestalt* is related more to a perspective that does not believe in the idea of male socialization as a self-contained, inevitable event in the process of becoming a man. Much in accordance to what Connell believes, Amado seems more inclined to the idea that the "[gender] socialization model was right about the importance of the family, the school, and the media in children's lives, but failed to recognize the internal complexity of these institutions" (2009: 99). In other words, Vadinho cannot be seen as a passive participant in his development as a man, since the experiences he was subjected to could be interpreted in ways that would make him, for example, reject a violent lifestyle, as other characters in the novel did—e.g., Flor's second husband, Teodoro.

On the other hand, the male socialization model, especially regarding the notion of mentoring, is an important element of James Baldwin's take on the coming-of-age side of masculinity, as it is seen in *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, in the example of John and his slightly older friend from church, Elisha. Additionally, as a novel that expands the African American coming-of-age narrative by "rearticulating the meaning of love, removing it from the romantic ideology of the heteropatriarchal household [...] and placing it outside the framework of rational heteronormative regulation" (Ferguson, 2004: 107), Baldwin's work offers a literary depiction of bonding between boys that does not steer away from a homoerotic subtext. As the following scene illustrates, this approach is also designed by highlighting the role of violence as a foreground element of masculinity:

Elisha let fall the stiff gray mop and rushed at John, catching him off balance and lifting him from the floor. With both arms tightening around John's waist he tried to cut John's breath, watching him meanwhile with a smile that, as John struggled and squirmed, became a set, ferocious grimace. With both hands John pushed and pounded against the shoulders and biceps of Elisha, and tried to thrust with his knees against Elisha's belly. Usually such a battle was soon over, since Elisha was so much bigger and stronger and as a wrestler so much more

skilled; but to-night John was filled with a determination not to be conquered, or at least to make the conquest dear. [...] (Baldwin, 2001b: 103).

The physicality of John and Elisha's wrestling is essentially rendered with a tension between innocence and maturity, as John engages in this act not merely as play, but as a means of proving his desire to become a man. However, Elisha is the one to whom he specifically wants to prove his eagerness, for his friend occupies a crucial position in his eyes: young enough to remain approachable, yet old enough to represent an emerging, less oppressive form of Black masculinity, in contrast to the rigid authority embodied by John's father, Gabriel. Yet, John's way of expressing this aspiration remains firmly rooted in what a boy his age knows best: through innocent play. Only when the violence becomes a harsh reality to be faced—and not played with—will he be able to become a man. This might prove difficult, given the caring and compassionate nature both he and Elisha seem to have stubbornly retained, as the dialogue following the playful wrestling match between them suggests:

'I didn't hurt you none, did I?' Elisha asked.
John looked up. 'Me? No, I just want to catch my breath.'
Elisha went to the sink, and splashed cold water on his face and neck. 'I reckon you going to let me work now,' he said.
"It wasn't me that stopped you in the first place." He stood up. He found that his legs were trembling. He looked at Elisha, who was drying himself on the towel.
"You teach me wrestling one time, okay?" (Baldwin, 2001b: 104).

Although both boys are close in age, the relationship between John and Elisha exemplifies what Franklin describes as the privileged role of older Black men in the socialization of younger Black males: "Young Black males [...] spend a good deal of time in the company of older Black males. These older Black males teach younger ones the nuances of Black male masculinity" (1984: 54). One such nuance, as the passage above illustrates, is the complex interplay between violent assertion and compassionate care. Elisha's actions are immediately followed by concern. Here, violence emerges not simply as aggression but as a performative marker in the transition to manhood, underscoring how Black male identity is often shaped through gestures that oscillate between force and care. This performativity renders masculinity a lived, bodily experience, an identity forged through the very tension between societal expectations and intimate bonds.

In the same vein, violence as an instrument of pedagogical value is a notion considered in Amado's *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* as well, since the novel engages with

debates on competing models of masculinity and addresses the impact that a culture of violence may have on subsequent generations of men. Figures such as Mundinho Falcão exemplify a culture in which masculine virtues can be transmitted through a pedagogy grounded in nonviolent communication and alternative forms of male socialization, whereas the ideologically more conservative group of characters in the novel embodies a “reassertion of traditional masculinity [that] resonated with anti-urbanism and the reactivated martial ideal that characterized a strain of antimodernist sensibility at the turn of the century” (Kimmel, 2005: 33). For the latter, education in a broader sense—for instance, moral and social formation—is thought to be more effectively achieved through the use of physical punishment, as the following dialogue suggests:

- Pode ser tudo que vocês quiserem. Para mim, para ensinar o bê-á-bá, não tem ninguém como dona Guilhermina. Mão de ferro. Filho meu é com ela que aprende a ler e contar. Isso de ensinar sem palmatória...
- Atraso, coronel — sorria João Fulgêncio. — Esse tempo já passou. A pedagogia moderna...
- O quê?
- Que a palmatória é necessária olhem que é...
- Vocês estão atrasados de um século. Nos Estados Unidos...
- As meninas boto no colégio das freiras, está certo. Mas os meninos é com dona Guilhermina...
- A pedagogia moderna aboliu a palmatória e os castigos físicos — conseguiu explicar João Fulgêncio.
- Não sei de quem você está falando, João Fulgêncio, mas lhe garanto que foi muito malfeito. Se eu sei ler e escrever... (Amado, 2024: 36–37).

One of the dialogue’s most interesting implications is the fact that the resistance put up by Ilhéus’s traditionalist group—who not only runs the town, but also happens to be an integral part of its identity—comprises a conscious effort to block the influx of new ideas that, among other consequences, would implicate a reconfiguration of gender dynamics. As De Albuquerque Júnior explains, this resistance is part of a defense against democratizing tendencies in society that have the feminist movement as one of their defining agents: *“Estes discursos de explícito conteúdo autoritário e conservador consideravam essas tendências de democratização da sociedade e da política brasileira como exóticas [...], não fazendo parte das tradições nacionais, que precisavam ser defendidas”* (2013: 28). Countries such as the United States, as mentioned in the dialogue, represent this new, exotic, and dangerous culture in which men do not possess an elevated status in society, and violence is no longer considered to be a valuable asset in pedagogical efforts in male socialization.

In many ways, this conservative notion of manhood implies that male identity constitutes “a critical threshold that boys must pass through testing” (Gilmore, 1990: 11). In this view, violence is both pedagogical—for its presumed effectiveness in defining legitimate and illegitimate forms of masculinity—and probative, since a man deemed worthy of the title must be capable of enduring the realities of violence. This tradition holds that the path to manhood involves a process of hardening, a belief particularly resonant in cultures with histories of resilience under oppression, where endurance is understood as a vital virtue amid perpetual hardship. In *Ilhéus*, after all, most men acquired their land through force and live with the constant awareness that it could be taken from them, in a perpetual interplay of physical and financial power that structures the town’s gender dynamics.

Similarly, as hooks says about African American communities, “the image of emasculated and castrated Black males is so embedded in the cultural imagination that many Black parents feel it is crucial to train boys to be ‘tough’” (2004: 81). In *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, this reality can be seen in the way Gabriel, as a father, unconsciously operates by making sure his sons fully comprehend that being violent is both the product of a life of constant oppression and the only tool that their kind—Black and in financial precarity—can work with. In other words, Gabriel is a father that acts, more often than not, motivated by “a sense of guilt and fear, combined with a growing sense of disappointment” (Connolly, 2015: 121). The behavior ultimately represents a form of gender socialization that can be described as an unending cycle of violence, for his way to guide his sons involves subjecting them to physical harm, as the following scene describing the aftermath of Roy, John’s younger brother, being attacked by a group of White boys, shows:

‘He better take it like a warning?’ shrieked Aunt Florence. ‘He better take it? Why, Gabriel, it ain’t *him* went half-way across this city to get in a fight with white boys. This boy on the sofa went *deliberately*, with a whole lot of other boys, all the way to the west side, just looking for a fight. I declare, I do wonder what goes on in your head.’

‘You know right well,’ his mother said, looking directly at his father, ‘that Johnny don’t travel with the same class of boys as Roy goes with. You done beat Roy too many times, here, in this very room for going out with them bad boys. Roy got hisself hurt this afternoon because he was out doing something he didn’t have no business doing, and that’s the end of it. You ought to be thanking your Redeemer he ain’t dead.’ (Baldwin, 2001b: 54).

Interesting about the dialogue is the position defended by Aunt Florence, who, being Gabriel’s sister and biggest disputer in the novel, cannot see her nephew as a passive

participant in the events that got him wounded. The opinion, alongside the way John's mother differentiates the behavior of her two sons in terms of the inclination to embrace a reckless life, brings attention to a sentiment that, again, the male socialization model does not comprehend the complexities of masculine coming-of-age, especially regarding its connection to violence. Although Roy and John were socialized in the same manner, their dispositions in reaction to the acts of violence they both witnessed at home are fundamentally different, which underscores Connell's position that institutions, such as family, "do not mechanically determine young people's learning," even if they "shape the consequences of what young people do—the risks they run, the recognition they get, the networks they gain access to, the penalties they pay" (2009: 100).

One of the central struggles John confronts in the novel is his inability to perceive his father as either a model worthy of emulation or a source of support for the kind of man he aspires to become. Given that "adult masculinities are produced through a complex process of growth and development involving active negotiation in multiple social relationships" (Connell, 2000: 31), John's process of masculine development exemplifies the difficult reality of potentially compromising the values transmitted during his upbringing in favor of conforming to a conception of male identity predicated on violence. Similar to his biological father, Richard, John's greatest moral strength lies in his capacity to resist conforming to prescriptive notions of masculine behavior that are incompatible with his values. He neither embodies the violence exemplified by Gabriel nor aspires to do so, and a crucial dimension of his maturation into manhood involves recognizing that he must put aside any inherited belief that such violence constitutes a necessary component of male identity.

As previously established, *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*'s Mundinho Falcão attempts to transform the violent masculinist culture of Ilhéus by embodying a version of masculinity in which intellect serves as its primary currency, though not before adhering to traditional notions of male self-identification in order to gain the credibility necessary to effect change. In contrast, John is characterized as a boy who recognizes his inadequacy in relation to the prevailing notions of masculine identity presented to him, yet lacks the fortitude to construct an alternative conception of manhood for himself. The reason for this divergence is evident: John lacks the privileged upbringing that would provide him with the intellectual tools necessary to comprehend his position and discern available

alternatives. Whereas Mundinho matured with access to the world of ideas that Ilhéus's traditionalists rejected, John possessed only the divine scripture as a moral guide—one that, as Lynch affirms, functions in the novel as a sanctioning force for the notion that one can be cursed by God (1993: 161).

The examples presented in this first section demonstrate that violence constitutes a pervasive reality that penetrates the lives of men in diverse ways, yet with a unified purpose: to function as an institution that conflates the concept of male identity with the assertion of will. Whether manifested as the direct imposition of one's desires (Vadinho's deployment of force against Flor) or as impotence disguised as bravery (Vivaldo's desperate pursuit of danger), violence operates as a foundational element of masculinity not only through its expression but also through the manner in which it subjects men to societal expectations. They are socialized to enact violence, to endure violence, and to employ violence as a response to violence. However, if men are socialized into violence as both perpetrators and victims, how do they navigate relationships with other men that reside in the same violent milieu? The answer, as I intend to explore in the next section, lies in understanding masculinity as fundamentally relational—constructed not only through domination, but also through the complex interplay of rivalry and brotherhood that structures male bonds, whether among peers or within the family unit itself.

3.2. Conflict vs. Kinship

3.2.1. Beating the Other Man: Rivalry as a Masculine Imperative

In the third part of *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, the newspaper office of one of Mundinho Falcão's political allies is razed in an arson attack orchestrated by his opponents—an act that once again lays bare the expectations of violence that structure social and political life in Ilhéus. In keeping with the town's prevailing masculine code, Mundinho is expected to retaliate in the same manner—yet he refuses, arguing that such methods belong to another era, one in which force was the sole available currency of political dispute, as the following scene illustrates:

— Seu Mundinho, foi malfeito queimar o jornal. Não aprovo, não. Mas já que eles queimaram, então o senhor estava na casa do sem-jeito. Como Jesuíno. Ele queria matar a mulher? Não queria. Mas ela lhe meteu os chifres, ele teve que matar senão ficava mais desmoralizado que capão de terreiro, boi de carro. Por que vosmicê não queimou o jornal deles, não os números, mas a casa, não rebentou as máquinas? Me desculpe, era o que vosmicê tinha que fazer senão ficam dizendo que vosmicê é muito bom e tal, mas pra governar Ilhéus e Itabuna é preciso ser macho, não baixar a cabeça.

— Coronel, não sou covarde, pode crer. Mas como o senhor mesmo disse esses métodos correspondem a um tempo passado. É exatamente para mudá-los, terminar com eles, para fazer de Ilhéus terra civilizada, que me meti em política. Além do mais, onde ia arranjar os jagunços, não os possuo...

— Ora por isso não... Vosmicê tem amigos, gente decidida como Ribeirinho. Eu mesmo preveni uns homens, pensando: quem sabe seu Mundinho vai precisar, manda me pedir emprestado... (Amado, 2024: 253).

Mundinho's decision not to respond to an act of violence with retaliatory force is regarded as not only anomalous in a town whose defining characteristic is the prevalence of violent conflict, but also incompatible with his role as a man. As will be discussed later in this thesis, the perceived aberrance of his conduct upon having the newspaper's office set ablaze stems from an unwritten code of masculinity that, among other prescriptions, mandates the deployment of violence as the sole appropriate response to any form of threat. In many respects, being victimized constitutes an imperative for a man to reassert his masculinity before other men, which resonates with Franklin's observation that "males tend to give their most dramatic masculine 'performances' in social situations where other males are present" (1984: 98). As Mundinho refuses to adhere to such conventions, declining to engage in an exaggerated performance of masculinity, his masculine identity becomes subject to interrogation, which, within the world of the novel, equally casts doubt upon his legitimate place within Ilhéus.

However, by being a man who believes in intellectual debate as a more adequate arena in which to both reaffirm his masculinity—proven by his dismissal of violent acts—and navigate the rivalries that his position in the town entails, Mundinho has identified in the prominence of violence within Ilhéus's social relations a discursive flaw to be strategically exploited in his favor. As Connell explains, "violence is part of a system of domination, but is at the same time a measure of its imperfection. A thoroughly legitimate hierarchy would have less need to intimidate" (2005: 84). Were Mundinho to resort to violence and prevail by such means, he would have, according to the town's prevailing moral codes, confirmed his identity as a man—but at the cost of accepting a position of leadership built upon uncertain and fragile foundations, one as vulnerable to violent

dispossession as it was to violent acquisition. To him, therefore, the only legitimate path to a durable authority in Ilhéus is to repudiate the until-then enforced principles of masculine honor and political leadership and introduce—aided by the new, 'exotic' discourses of progress already fashionable in Brazil's South—a culture in which bullets are replaced by speeches.

The juxtaposition between Mundinho's and his opponent's modes of self-assertion is equally revealing for what it suggests about the relationship between traditional constructions of masculinity and the concept of rivalry, whether political or otherwise. In many respects, the political coalitions depicted in *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* bear a striking resemblance to gang culture, insofar as the definition of one or more rival groups and the targeting of those groups through violence emerge as a structuring principle of collective identity. This parallel is not merely analogical—it points to a deeper truth that Amado's novel seems invested in exposing: that politically sanctioned violence and its criminal counterpart are, at their root, animated by the same masculine imperatives.

In the book *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang* (1955), criminologist Albert K. Cohen presents an in-depth study on the phenomenon he calls 'delinquent subculture'—a way of life centered in the nurturing of "boys' gangs that flourish most conspicuously in the 'delinquency neighborhoods' of our larger American cities" (1971: 13). The research presents a series of arguments intended to answer the question regarding the motivation behind the decision of both boys and adult men to live a life of collective violent behavior, positing sex role anxieties and frustrations as one of the main drivers of delinquent conduct (1971: 178). In this sense, as previously established, men ultimately resort to violence when other markers of achievements concerning the establishment of a masculine identity, such as financial autonomy, cannot be achieved, which happens to signal violence's instrumental value in gender dynamics across different cultures.

Essentially, rivalry—here understood as a competitive opposition between two or more individuals striving toward the symbolic goal of being perceived as more masculine—functions as a central organizing principle of the interpersonal disputes that characterize both juvenile delinquency and patriarchal politics, as *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* compellingly illustrates. Mundinho's deliberate rejection of violence, however, articulates an alternative mode of engaging with political rivalry and, in doing so, foregrounds one of the novel's most pressing questions: whether violence is a legitimate

and sustainable means of asserting and maintaining one's position or whether its dominance in Ilhéus represents an order that is not only morally bankrupt but also historically exhausted. Mundinho thus embodies the possibility of sociopolitical transformation in Ilhéus—one that is met with suspicion and resistance, perceived as a radical and unacceptable departure from the local established codes governing ideological conflict and political rivalry.

In terms of gender relations, such a shift in the town's culture would also mean a change in the social aspect of masculinity as a frame of reference. For instance, it would affect a concept that Franklin calls 'male commitment to masculinity,' which refers to "the degree that a male's relationship to specified sets of others depends on being a 'societal' male" (1984: 80). Since the majority of relationships between the men of Ilhéus comprise political ties that could be described either as alliances or as rivalries, which by themselves represent a gender dynamic intrinsic to the town's codes of masculinity, a culture in which those relationships do not exist—or, at least, do not have the same significance—represents a break in the instrumentality of male social connections. In that sense, the performative aspect of having a rival and resorting to violence as a mode of communication in that relationship might still exist, but would no longer represent a foundational element in the process of achieving a masculine identity, resulting in a different type of commitment, coming from men, to social relations based on violent conflict.

Ultimately, all four novels in this thesis's corpus depict man-on-man violent conflict to explore how "violence can become a way of claiming or asserting masculinity in group struggles," along a continuum that extends from "the gang violence of inner-city as assertion of marginalized masculinities against other men" to "the assertion of masculinity in sexual violence against women" (Connell, 2005: 83). Both Baldwin and Amado are invested in an exploration of the relationship between violence and masculinity that lays bare its consequences for the social configurations of the male world. Yet, while *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* examines rivalry among men and its entanglement with gender dynamics primarily through the lens of local politics, male-on-male conflict as a foundational dimension of masculine identity also manifests in less overtly public registers—among them, sexuality.

In Baldwin's *Another Country*, for instance, the divide between heterosexual and homosexual men is central to understanding how the male characters in the novel resort to

conflict also as a way to reaffirm themselves as such. In the following scene, Rufus is seen struggling to reconcile his desire for Eric—who is in love with him—and his need for a male identity that cannot be questioned, eventually retreating to a violent attitude against the figure who represents such a problem:

He walked over to Eric and put his hands on Eric's shoulders. He did not know what he was going to say or do. But with his hands on Eric's shoulders, affection, power, and curiosity all knotted together in him—with a hidden, unforeseen violence which frightened him a little; [...]

And when Eric was gone, Rufus forgot their battles and the unspeakable physical awkwardness, and the ways in which he had made Eric pay for such pleasure as Eric gave, or got. He remembered only that Eric had loved him; as he now remembered that Leona had loved him. He had despised Eric's manhood by treating him as a woman, by telling him how inferior he was to a woman, by treating him as nothing more than a hideous sexual deformity. But Leona had not been a deformity. And he had used against her the very epithets he had used against Eric, and in the very same way, with the same roaring in his head and the same intolerable pressure in his chest. (Baldwin, 2001a: 53–54).

Rufus's impulse to put himself in opposition to Eric as a means of combating his own desires evolves into hatred, revealing, once again, a reliance on conflict that not only distances him from what he refuses to become but also reaffirms his identity as a 'true man.' After all, Eric's homosexuality, within the traditional code of masculinity that Rufus believes himself obligated to uphold, renders it impossible for Eric to be granted a legitimate male identity. If Rufus is to preserve his tenuous position as a man—already subject to interrogation due to his race and economic status—his only recourse is not merely to reject Eric's advances but to become the agent who, through violence, declares him to be "nothing more than a hideous sexual deformity." In many respects, Rufus recognizes that, within the society he inhabits, "immigrant men, homosexual men, and Black men were all tainted with the same problem: they are not properly manly" (Kimmel, 2005: 10). He is already Black and endures its consequences daily; to be both Black and homosexual would constitute an unbearable compounding of marginalization, which compels him to repudiate, by any means necessary, every instance or agent that evokes such a possibility.

Another issue that the relationship between Rufus and Eric introduces to the former's position as a man is how much of his own desires and struggles were communicated in moments of bonding. As Franklin points out, "it must be remembered also that males tend to reveal only partial information about themselves to other males, for homophobic and homosexist reasons" (1984: 135), which explains, for instance, why a

configuration centered in mutual dislike is more expected for men than one of true bonding. In an interplay of stoic expectations and internalized homophobia, Rufus's emotional connection to Eric, even if it had not developed into a sexual relationship, represents a dangerous dynamic to his masculinity. Even in his most intimate friendships with other males, he is expected to keep the moments of social interaction as shallow as possible regarding his emotional challenges, especially because part of his status as a man can be secured by the performative display of self-control.

In many ways, the assertion *Another Country* makes through Rufus's example is that, for a man grappling with his precarious status as such, "sexuality—succumbing to the lustful temptations of the body—would ruin everything" (Kimmel, 2005: 27). Eric simultaneously embodies for Rufus both a source of the affection he has perpetually desired and a threat to his already fragile masculine identity, making it impossible for him to conceive of any response to his friend's presence that would yield a favorable outcome. By excluding Eric from his life, while the performative dimension of such rejection might temporarily provide the self-reassurance he requires that he is, indeed, a legitimate man, Rufus would inevitably return to the empty, isolated, and affectionless existence he so desperately seeks to transcend. On the other hand, if he accepts Eric's love, he enacts what he perhaps fears most profoundly: validating the White patriarchal logic that a Black man such as himself cannot be accorded the status of manhood, for he represents not only a purportedly inferior race but also a sexual aberration.

The subject of sexuality is also presented in *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos* as an element of great importance in the establishment of a specific version of masculinity. As a man known for his sexual prowess, Vadinho points to his ability to fulfill his wife's physical needs as the feature that proves the superiority of his masculinity over Teodoro, Flor's second husband and Vadinho's inevitable rival. As the following dialogue between Flor and Vadinho shows, he cannot understand Teodoro's morals regarding sexuality, not only pointing out the differences between them, but also questioning his manhood:

— Pois houve muita mulher atrás dele e ele, nem te ligo...

— Mulher tanta assim? Não exagere, meu bem, foi uma só, e era Magnólia, a maior vaca da Bahia, e ele fez um papelão. Onde já se viu um homem de maior, doutor e tudo, ficar que nem donzelo, com medo de mulher, só faltou pedir socorro. Uma vergonha... Você sabe o nome que puseram nele depois desse fiasco? Doutor Cristel, meu bem...

— Vadinho, pára com isso. Se quiser conversar direito, muito bem, mas vir aqui para mangan de meu marido, isso não... Fique sabendo que eu gosto muito dele, aprecio demais a maneira como ele me trata, e nunca irei desonrar seu nome...

— Quem puxou a conversa foi você, meu passarinho. Mas, fale a verdade: de quem é que você gosta mais? Não minta... É de mim ou dele?...

Deitara a cabeça no colo de dona Flor e ela mexia em seus cabelos. Cismarenta, não respondeu à pergunta comprometedora.

— Nunca vou enganar ele, Vadinho, ele não merece...

Vadinho respirava de leve, um sorriso inocente de criança. Dona Flor tomou-lhe o peito, mata de pêlos loiros, doce tepidez. Ele disse e era uma afirmação, não mais uma pergunta:

— Tu gosta mais de mim, meu bem. Tenho certeza” (Amado, 1966: 436).

Vadinho’s opinion about Teodoro’s conduct is expressed most noticeably as an attempt to inform Flor—who has her own questions about what her second husband can sexually do for her—of problems with the version of masculinity that Teodoro evokes. He is a loving, respectable man, one that would never hit Flor, as Vadinho did, but he lacks the sexual prowess that would offer more assurance to his position as a man. As Franklin reminds us, “males in our society are expected to be interested in sex, have a greater need for sex, and to know about it at a relatively early age” (1984: 154), setting forth as defective men with traits such as Teodoro’s, who not only reject sexual advances from women, but are also content with not having sex with their wives regularly. That is perhaps why Vadinho is so certain that Flor sees him as a better partner and man than Teodoro; although he was a drunk and a gambler who often asserted dominion in their marriage through violence, his sexual appetite was in conformity with his wife’s.

Additionally, the rivalry between Teodoro and Vadinho proves equally significant to the examination of masculinity, as it can be conceptualized as representing a spectrum of manhood. Whereas Vadinho embodies a ‘negative’ iteration of male identity, grounded in masculinist ideologies of insatiable sexual appetite, the assertion of control through violence, and emotional detachment, Teodoro demonstrates compassion, maintains profound respect for the institution of marriage, and, most significantly, regards Flor as his equal, rarely positioning himself as the ultimate authority within the relationship. Unlike the dynamic observed in *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, however, the novel does not frame these two manifestations of masculinity as necessarily engaged in perpetual contestation over the authentic meaning of masculine identity. Indeed, as evidenced by Flor’s decision to keep both husbands by the novel’s conclusion—one in corporeal form, the other as a

spectral presence—the narrative affirms the legitimacy of both paradigms, positioning masculinity as a fundamentally plural configuration.

Nevertheless, specifically in Vadinho's case, the novel also illuminates the difficulty of reconfiguring gender expectations in regions such as Brazil's Northeast, where its inhabitants are regarded as the final bastions of a declining culture predicated on the supremacy of 'real men.' As De Albuquerque Júnior observes, "*o nordestino é definido como um macho capaz de resgatar aquele patriarcalismo em crise, um ser viril capaz de retirar sua região da situação de passividade e subserviência em que se encontrava*" (2013: 150). Although Vadinho does not adopt a combative stance regarding his masculine identity—as the men in *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* do—his conduct is accepted by Flor and numerous others because it aligns with gender norms intrinsically linked to Bahia's celebrated cultural identity as a locus of authentic masculinity. Even if, theoretically, Flor ought to gain greater satisfaction from Teodoro and his modern, decidedly Southern approach to treating women, her socialization as a traditional Northeastern woman renders it exceptionally difficult to entirely renounce Vadinho's treatment of her, especially when it comes to sexuality.

In many ways, Vadinho's behavior bears resemblance to Gabriel's conduct during his worldly years in *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. However, as the following scene demonstrates, Gabriel's life of drinking and brawling with other men was accompanied by the recognition—prompted by religious guilt—that he would have to change his manners. Whereas Vadinho, even in the afterlife, never subjected his violent, bohemian existence to critical scrutiny, Gabriel acknowledged that his dissolute behavior was sinful and afforded him minimal satisfaction:

Sometimes Deborah sat with his mother, watching him with eyes that were no less patient and reproachful. He would escape into the starry night and walk until he came to a tavern, or to a house that he had marked already in the long daytime of his lust. And then he drank until hammers rang in his distant skull; he cursed his friends and his enemies, and fought until blood ran down; in the morning he found himself in mud, in clay, in strange beds, and once or twice in jail; his mouth sour, his clothes in rags, from all of him arising the stink of his corruption. Then he could not even weep. He could not even pray. He longed, nearly, for death, which was all that could release him from the cruelty of his chains (Baldwin, 2001b: 107).

The description of Gabriel's reckless conduct is, in many respects, akin to the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency that, as previously established, emerges primarily from gender anxieties, since he exemplifies a figure who, by "engaging in bad behavior, acquires the

function of denying his femininity and therefore asserting his masculinity” (Cohen, 1971: 164). Simultaneously, he remains fully aware of the sinful nature of his actions, revealing the difficulty of adhering to two conflicting moral codes: the religious and the masculine. Gabriel understands that, as Franklin explains, “Black male youth learn [...] that society does not permit Black males to express dominance in the larger society,” and, consequently, “much of the dominance learned during [...] socialization is directed toward others within the Black subculture” (1984: 53). Even if the Bible characterizes such violent conduct toward his own community as reprehensible, he feels compelled to persist, for his identity as a legitimate man, already compromised by his status as Black, proves as essential to his self-conception as his identity as a man of God.

As Gabriel’s case and the other examples examined in this section demonstrate, engaging in conflict with other males constitutes, for many men, a response to persistent anxieties regarding the legitimacy of their manhood. Both Baldwin and Amado operate upon the premise that “males form beliefs about whether they appear to others to be masculine” (Franklin, 1984: 73), positioning rivalry, direct confrontation, and other forms of hierarchical assessment as mechanisms through which men confirm and communicate essential masculine traits. Simultaneously, however, this relational dimension of masculinity also facilitates configurations of male bonding, since, as evidenced by the example of gangs, connections between males are frequently forged through the identification of a common adversary and the collective enactment of violence against that target, as will be explored in the following section.

3.2.2. A Common Enemy: Male Bonding Through Targeted Hate

In the essay *The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy*, published in 1961 in *Esquire* magazine, James Baldwin recounted his first contact with journalist Norman Mailer as an attempt to address Mailer’s characterization of Baldwin as a ‘minor writer’: “We liked each other at once, but each was frightened that the other would pull rank. He could have pulled rank on me, because he was more famous [...] and also because he was White” (2022: 185). Although the essay proceeds to explore the ideological tensions that had, in many respects, strained the relationship between the two authors, Baldwin emphasizes race

as a factor that fundamentally distinguishes the realities lived and articulated by himself and Mailer. After all, as he observes in the same essay, “my experience in this country had led me to expect very little from most American Whites, especially, horribly enough, my friends” (2022: 187).

Baldwin’s pessimistic view concerning White Americans’ ability to truly grasp the magnitude of the oppression faced by people of color in the United States is a conviction easily found in his novels. As critic Sirpa Salenius reminds us about Baldwin’s fiction, “Black and White figures appear in intercommunal tension in specific spaces and environments” (2016: 884). For instance, in one of his lesser-known works, *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974), one of his characters, a Black man who suffers in the novel many acts of racial discrimination, overtly describes the figure of the ‘White man’ as akin to the devil: “The white man’s got to be the devil. He sure ain’t a man. Some of the things I save, baby, I’ll be dreaming about until the day I die” (Baldwin: 2019: 94). As is equally evident in his nonfiction work, the central thesis of Baldwin’s fiction posits that the systemic oppression confronting Black people finds its material expression in White Americans themselves, who embody and enact the structural violence of racial discrimination through both conscious and unconscious complicity.

Nevertheless, this tension between White and Black people in his novels also lends itself to creating scenarios where characters find, in the common ground of having the other race as a sort of rival, a reason to bond. Since, for instance, Black men in the United States know, at least on an unconscious level, that their masculinity is subjugated to a position of constant questioning that comes from White oppression’s impositions, a reality of finding commonality is inevitable. This kinship, however, also plays a detrimental role insofar as it creates an expectation of collective hate towards the White race that establishes as unacceptable—and an instance of treason against one’s own community—a harmonious relationship with a White person. That is precisely why *Another Country*’s Rufus ultimately decides not to introduce his White girlfriend, Leona, to his family—specifically to his sister, Ida—, clearly afraid of being perceived as a traitor of his own race: “But he knew that Ida would instantly hate Leona [...]. She would say, You’d never even have looked at that girl, Rufus, if she’d been black [...]. What’s the matter—you ashamed of being black?” (Baldwin, 2001a: 16).

However, *Another Country* is also a novel that explores interracial connections as loving, albeit fraught due to the reality of oppression rooted in the differences that distinguish the two parties within the relationship. Regarding the subject of masculinity, this dynamic is exemplified most clearly in Rufus and Vivaldo's affectionate yet troubled friendship, which, as Brim argues, conveys how, "for Baldwin, 'the price of the ticket' for living in America is that we must live with our race debts even as we seek to redress them" (2014: 99) As the following scene demonstrates—one in which both Vivaldo and Rufus engage in a violent altercation with other men—the affinity they share is constrained to situations in which their racial difference cannot be perceived as an issue that divides them, a condition that proves exceptionally difficult to achieve in a country such as the United States:

"Man," he whispered, "you got to go to the hospital."
 "That's what I said. All right. Let's go."
 And he tried to rise.
 "No, man. Listen. If I go with you, it's going to be a whole lot of who shot John because I'm black and you're white. You dig? I'm telling it to you like it is."
 Vivaldo said, "I really don't want to hear all that shit, Rufus."
 "Well, it's true, whether you want to hear it or not. Jane's got to take you to the hospital, I can't come with you." Vivaldo's eyes were closed and his face was white. "Vivaldo?"
 He opened his eyes. "Are you mad at me, Rufus?"
 "Shit, no, baby, why should I be mad with you?" But he knew what was bothering Vivaldo. He leaned down and whispered, "Don't you worry, baby, everything's cool. I know you're my friend."
 "I love you, you shithead, I really do."
 "I love you, too. Now, get on to that hospital, I don't want you to drop dead in this phony white chick's bathroom. I'll wait here for you. I'll be all right."
 (Baldwin, 2001a: 18).

Rufus and Vivaldo are both described in the novels as Bohemians and aspiring artists who found in drinking, casual sex, and other rebellious behaviors a way to bear the struggles imposed by life, framing the physical altercation episode as an adequate instance of bonding between them. Rufus, after all, knows that Vivaldo is his friend, as he himself says after sharing the battleground with him as his companion. Although men "tend not to form friendships or spend time with other men they really like," mostly due to the way "cultural norms tend to mitigate such relationships between men" (Franklin, 1984: 138), Rufus and Vivaldo are able to, for the most part, recognize in their connection what can only be described as a friendship. Regarding their gender anxieties, however, the expression of their feelings for each other can only take place in situations where their masculinity has

been, at least temporarily, performatively asserted, as the violent conflict with other men has done.

Yet, what most profoundly impacts their friendship is, once again, their racial difference, which also fundamentally alters the manner in which their masculinity is asserted. Beyond Rufus's race constituting sufficient reason for him to refuse hospital care out of fear of unjust arrest, his involvement in the altercation can function as masculine currency only by reinforcing the racist notion that Black men are inherently violent. Whereas Vivaldo's participation in the conflict merely enhances his already secure status as a man, Rufus must utilize the same act to prove his manhood, rendering the situation one of profoundly divergent meanings. If, as Franklin observes, "Black subculture's socializing institutions teach Black men to inhibit their 'masculine' traits outside the Black subculture and to exhibit them within the Black subculture" (1984: 60), then by associating himself with Vivaldo and interracial social circles, Rufus is divested of most avenues through which to assert his masculine status, perpetually positioning himself as subordinate to Vivaldo according to traditional conceptions of manhood.

What proves particularly significant about the portrayal of Vivaldo and Rufus's connection is the juxtaposition that foregrounds both violent conflict and a demonstration of kinship between two males who, due to their racial differences, would conventionally be expected to position themselves as rivals. In *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos*, Jorge Amado employs a similar premise in an effort to depict Vadinho as a man who, despite his capacity to commit acts of violence against his own wife, demonstrates compassion toward his male friends. In the following scene, for instance, Vadinho shares a sympathetic moment of kinship with his friend Cigano immediately after hitting Flor as a means of extracting money from her to sustain his gambling addiction:

Novamente sentiu-se Vadinho sem ar e sem ação, dia mais nojento, dia mais sem jeito: primeiro Flor com aquela teimosia da desgraça, agora o Cigano a conduzir nas dobras do crepúsculo e a atirar no passeio o cadáver de dona Agnela...

— Mas, como se deu? Ela estava doente?

— Nunca vi ela doente, que me lembre. Hoje, quando saí, depois do almoço, deixei ela no tanque, lavando roupa. Cantando, contente que só vendo... Tu não vê que hoje foi o dia de pagar a última letra do carro, a gente tinha o dinheiro certinho. De manhã a gente ficou, os dois, contando, ela e eu... Ela me entregou o que tinha juntado nesse mês, tudo em nota de dez tostões, dois mil-réis. Tava alegre porque agora o carro era meu de verdade. — Fez uma pausa, esforçando-se para não chorar: — Diz que de repente deu uma dor lá nela, no peito. Que foi só o tempo de dizer meu nome e caiu morta [...].

Sua voz quase em surdina, escutariam as comadres? Mesmo as comadres morriam um pouco na agonia do sol, esbatidas na sombra quando Vadinho entregou ao Cigano aquele sujo dinheiro de violência e seu límpido palpite de vitória.

— É tudo que tenho... (Amado, 1966: 180).

What this moment of kinship between the two friends reveals is that the value system of a man such as Vadinho subordinates a woman's well-being—in this case, his own wife's—to the contentment of a male friend, particularly one with whom he shares common values. Similar to what Kimmel identifies as a dominant theme in American literature, Vadinho's selective allocation of care exemplifies the trope of "male bonding in the escape from women" (2005: 26), framing the feminine as a domain whose flourishing bears little or no relevance to masculine identity. This proves especially evident in Vadinho's case, given his refusal to "assume the provider-protector role within the family" (Franklin, 1984: 75), since he not only rejects the position of financial provider expected of a traditional man, but also perceives his wife as someone who should serve him with what he desires both sexually and economically.

Considering Amado's preoccupation with the subject of progress and its intersections with masculinity, it is also possible to infer that the version of manhood Vadinho embodies is decidedly anachronistic. Although his gesture toward his friend's needs might contribute to a portrayal in which he is not perceived merely as a reprehensible figure, it nevertheless underscores the outdated nature of his masculine paradigm. Even if, unlike the dynamic observed in *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, the values Vadinho represents are not persistently subjected to scrutiny in the face of progress, it remains evident that, as critic Linda B. Hall observes, "Amado is [...] one of the most tender, sensual, and optimistic Latin American authors in his vision of women and of male-female relationships" (1983: 67). This contextualization elucidates why Vadinho can constitute a positive presence in Flor's life only upon his death and spectral return: no longer corporeal, he is divested of the physical and masculinist imperatives that would otherwise manifest in acts of violence against her, thereby framing his masculinity as a relic of the past from which only favorable elements—such as his voracious sexual appetite—can be selectively preserved.

Both *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* and *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos* are novels that foreground masculinity as a central thematic concern in their narratives, yet they differ in

the manner through which the validity of the various versions of manhood presented is interrogated. Whereas *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* explores masculinity by exposing its entanglement with local politics, framing it as a crucial element in a community's development, *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos* concentrates on what masculinity can offer its female protagonist. Although Flor's expectations reflect, in many respects, the simultaneously progressive and traditionalist tensions that characterize Bahia's gender dynamics, her own desires and standards ultimately determine for the reader which aspects of the masculinity embodied by each of her two husbands merit valorization or condemnation. In *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, by contrast, this evaluative function is assumed by Ilhéus's population, which encompasses both male and female voices, progressive and conservative perspectives, thereby situating the interrogation of masculinity and its dynamics at a more communal level.

This dimension of the novel's approach to masculinity is also evident in the manner through which male bonding is depicted, since most instances of kinship described in the narrative serve to convey, as established in previous sections, the instrumental nature of male friendship. For instance, as the following dialogue between Altino and Coronel Ramiro—two staunchly conservative men with a history of conflict—illustrates, alliances in Ilhéus function primarily as a means of forming a united front against the influx of progressive and dangerous ideas entering the city, represented by figures such as Mundinho Falcão, about whom they speak:

— Não falo pra lhe ofender. Sei que o senhor vendeu seu cacau a ele. Não sabia que eram amigos, por isso falei. Mas também não retiro. O que eu disse está dito. Não se compare com ele, coronel, não me compare com ele. A gente veio quando isso aqui ainda não era nada. Foi diferente. Quantas vezes a gente arriscou a vida, escapou de morrer? Pior do que isso, quantas vezes a gente não teve que mandar tirar a vida dos outros? Isso então não vale nada? Não se compare com ele, coronel, nem me compare — a voz do ancião, por um esforço de vontade, perdia o tremor, a vacilação, era aquela voz antiga de mando. — Que vida ele arriscou? Desembarcou com dinheiro, montou escritório, compra e exporta cacau. Que vida ele tirou? Onde foi buscar o direito de mandar aqui? Nosso direito a gente conquistou (Amado, 2024: 267).

Once again, the criterion of comparison employed by Ilhéus's conservative men to assert their superiority over the new, progressive figures encompasses both the longevity of their tenure as the town's political voices and the means through which their positions were secured. Utilizing as a framework the "male sex role that teaches men that the masculine norm is to become a conqueror, a subduer, a forcer, and so on" (Franklin, 1984: 191),

Ilhéus's conservative men prove willing to overlook their history of interpersonal conflicts in order to establish a more formidable opposition to the liberal agenda that ultimately threatens the legitimacy of their dominance. In this context, violence—once successfully deployed to achieve political objectives—is simultaneously regarded as a legitimate method and as currency for a truer, more robust, and culturally appropriate version of masculinity. Essentially, the alliance between men such as Altino and Ramiro constitutes a sturdy defense of authentic masculinity against what they perceive as a counterfeit, effeminate, and foreign-inflected conception of manhood.

In many respects, Altino's and Ramiro's stance toward the arrival of progressive ideas in Ilhéus bears striking resemblance to the behavior characteristic of gang subcultures, in which anxieties regarding masculinity and power serve as catalysts for group formations centered on the expression of collective violence. Just as gangs and similar formations converge in pursuit of an identity deployable in combat against opposing factions, Ilhéus's men unite through their accordance "with anti-urbanism and the reactivated martial ideal that characterized a strain of antimodernist sensibility at the turn of the century" (Kimmel, 2005: 81). As though they possess no alternative but to forge such an alliance, their kinship remains purely instrumental, ultimately revealing the crises confronting traditional forms of masculinity.

Inevitably, *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*'s example—and, indeed, all the passages examined in this section—illustrates how violence constitutes a foundational element of masculinity even within configurations ostensibly characterized by kinship. The male characters across all four novels are unified in the manner through which they either deploy violence to assert their masculinities or are subjected to violent oppression that, consequently, divests them of their status as men. As the following section will demonstrate, this dynamic proves equally salient within familial structures, wherein the paternal figure often embodies a violent and masculinist force that simultaneously shapes masculine identity and perpetuates cycles of domination and subjugation across generations.

3.2.3. In the House of the Father: Family Legacy, Fear, and Masculinity

In the essay *Masculinidade e Virilidade entre Belle Époque e República* (2013), historian Denise Bernuzzi de Sant’Anna delineates the significance attributed to corporal punishment within the Brazilian familial sphere for the moral formation of boys at the turn of the century: “*As surras levadas dos pais eram comumente entendidas como necessárias para formar um caráter reto. Varas de marmelo e chicotes de couro figuravam como serpentes que tomavam vida contra o corpo infantil julgado desobediente*” (2013: 250). To be a child in this context meant possessing no rights capable of safeguarding one from the tyranny imposed by the rigid moral code governing most families, wherein the rules of paternal authority constituted the sole guideline to be observed. As previously established in this thesis, the process of becoming a man would require enduring a series of violent acts predicated upon the notion that one can only learn how to live when shown, through physical disciplinary measures, how not to live.

Although the patriarchal structure that defines this culture of corporal punishment also serves to establish rigid familial roles performed by women in the process of raising male children, the paternal figure has historically functioned as the primary familial paradigm regarding masculinity. As is characteristic of many traditional societies, men’s manhood was equally measured through comparison with the status their fathers possessed, in an interplay of gender expectations and familial bonds that foregrounds the father-son relationship as a primordial association in the construction of masculine identity. This explains why, as historian Mary Del Priore observes, the father has served for centuries in Brazil as a paramount mechanism of mediation between the family and society at large: “*Ele representava uma genealogia, um nome e o sangue, e [...] a influência política de famílias, reunidas em torno de um patriarca mais forte ainda. E, mesmo nas famílias pequenas ou reduzidas, ele era a voz do comando*” (2013: 158).

In many ways, central to the father-son relationship in the masculine formation process is the question of legacy, since male children are presented, from early childhood, with a name and a lineage that precede them and function as foundational elements in their socialization into manhood. In *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, this dimension is exemplified most clearly in Nacib’s narrative arc, wherein the character, who was born in Syria but raised in Brazil, frequently invokes the legend of his father’s upbringing as a traditional, authoritarian Arab man to underscore his own masculine standards. In the following scene, in which Nacib discusses the murder of Sinhazinha Mendonça and speculates how much

more severe her fate would have been in Syria, the figure of his father as a man raised within such a male-dominated and violent milieu proves central to his own status as a man:

E, como sempre, para dizer que na Síria, terra de seus pais, era ainda mais terrível. Parado junto à mesa, de pé, o corpanzil enorme, dominava a assistência. O silêncio se estendia pelas outras mesas, para melhor ouvi-lo:

— Na terra de meu pai ainda é pior... Lá, honra de homem é sagrada, com ela ninguém brinca. Sob pena de...

— De quê, árabe?

Passava o olhar demoradamente pelos ouvintes, seus fregueses e amigos, tomava um ar dramático, avançava a cabeçorra:

— Lá mulher sem-vergonha se acaba é a faca, devagarinho. Cortando em pedacinhos...

— Em pedacinhos? — a voz fanhosa de Nhô-Galo.

Nacib aproximava o rosto balofo, as grandes bochechas cândidas, armava uma cara assassina, torcia a ponta do bigode:

— Sim, compadre Nhô, lá ninguém se contenta com matar a desavergonhada, com essa coisa de dois ou três tirinhos nela e no safardana. Lá é terra de homem macho e para mulher descarada o tratamento é outro: cortar a peste em pedacinhos, começando do bico dos peitos... (Amado, 2024: 151).

As a man residing in Ilhéus who is fully aware of the role violence plays as currency for manhood, Nacib comprehends the significance of possessing a legacy of ruthless masculine assertion within his lineage. Syria is framed by him not only as a place where the violent and masculinist practices that Ilhéus's men employ to preserve their masculine status would be perceived as relatively mild, but also as the ancestral homeland of his father—a locus of violent masculinity that courses through his blood. This accounts for his compulsion to deflect any perception of Syrian culture as excessively authoritarian or violent; he must position himself as an inheritor of that culture in order to command the respect necessary to maintain his masculine standing in Ilhéus, given that he is merely a bar owner and among the few male characters without a history of deploying direct violence to secure his position. In this sense, Ilhéus's men have little choice but to perceive Nacib as a figure who, by virtue of being the son of a man raised within a culture of extreme demonstrations of violent masculinity, has internalized all the masculine fundamentals and now possesses a masculine status that can only with great difficulty be called into question.

At the same time, Nacib's method of masculine assertion proves double-edged, as the lineage he represents is fundamentally foreign and frequently employed to exclude him from deliberations pertaining to Ilhéus's future. Although his father's legacy constitutes valuable masculinity currency, it also functions as a marker of difference that, in a traditional place such as Ilhéus, can be and is perceived as excessively exotic, even though

Syrian values are, according to Nacib, consonant with the town's moral code. This proves particularly relevant to the subject of masculinity, since one of the major reservations that the patriarchal, anti-urbanist ideology defining Ilhéus's culture harbors toward cities such as São Paulo and other emerging metropolises of the period concerns the conspicuous presence of immigrants.

Similar to what Kimmel observes regarding early twentieth-century masculinist movements in the American West, which posited that the West represented the “‘true’ America, far from the feminizing, immigrant-infested cities, where voracious Blacks and masculine women devoured white men’s chances to demonstrate manhood” (2005: 32), the *Nordeste* has historically been championed as a more authentic, masculine, and formidable Brazil, wherein the genuine Brazilian male could be found. Perhaps for this reason, Nacib is also portrayed as someone who perpetually strives to reaffirm his Brazilian identity, carefully navigating the tension between his Syrian heritage and his Ilhéus belonging. Although the rigid Syrian gender dynamics can serve him when invoked as an inherited legacy, he must ultimately be recognized as a man of Ilhéus: “— Na *terra de meu pai*...—*assim começavam suas histórias* [...]. *Porque sua terra era Ilhéus, a cidade alegre ante o mar, as roças de cacau, aquela zona ubérrima onde se fizera homem*” (Amado, 2024: 52)

The double-edged nature of paternal legacy also constitutes an element of paramount importance in Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, although for different reasons. Whereas Nacib deploys his lineage as an asset to his masculine status, Gabriel's presence in John's life is characterized in the novel as a suffocating force from which the child seeks to escape, yet to which he must submit to not only due to his socialization into manhood but also due to his position as a child of God. As Lynch observes, “the biblical idea that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children seems to hold true in several cases in the novel” (1993: 172), framing the father-son relationship—and the notion of legacy as a whole—as a curse from which both Gabriel and John strive to liberate themselves. This dynamic is evident in the following scene, wherein John is portrayed as attempting to disentangle himself from his father's influence and becoming a different version of what it means to be a man:

His father's arm, rising and falling, might make him cry, and that voice might cause him to tremble; yet his father could never be entirely the victor, for John cherished something that his father could not reach. It was his hatred and his

intelligence that he cherished, the one feeding the other. He lived for the day when his father would be dying and he, John, would curse him on his death-bed. And this was why, though he had been born in the faith and had been surrounded all his life by the saints and by their prayers and their rejoicing, and though the tabernacle in which they worshipped was more completely real to him than the several precarious homes in which he and his family had lived, John's heart was hardened against the Lord. His father was God's minister, the ambassador of the King of Heaven, and John could not bow before the throne of grace without first kneeling to his father. On his refusal to do this had his life depended, and John's secret heart had flourished in its wickedness until the day his sin first overtook him (Baldwin, 2001b: 23).

Similar to how God is perceived by most characters in the novel, Gabriel represents for John a source of terror and a figure to whom he must demonstrate his worth both as a man and as a Christian, for Gabriel embodies a degree of masculine and religious authority that cannot be dismissed. Nevertheless, John recognizes that his father operates under divine mandate, positioning Gabriel as merely an instrument of the Gospel. Even if he might experience liberation through severing ties with his father or witnessing his death, the force constraining him from such emancipation, perpetuating the curse that renders him profoundly unhappy, is ultimately divine—against which he stands no chance. This accounts for why, as critic James R. Giles observes, “John knows that he must find some other salvation than that offered either by the church or by Gabriel” (1974: 378), compelling him to attempt—and fail—to reject the norms that designate his desires as sinful, sins that divest him of his status as a man.

What the fraught relationship between John and his father reveals is the fundamental divergence between the moral frameworks that each believes should govern one's conduct. Whereas Gabriel, originating from the Deep South, learned during his worldly years that the Gospel constitutes the sole moral guideline to be observed—openly and ruthlessly designating his former vices as sinful—John is a child of New York City with aspirations of becoming an intellectual, marked by the dawning realization of his homosexuality. Furthermore, John is not Gabriel's biological son, a fact that compels his father to regard him as a cross he must bear as penance for his sinful past, much like the death of his actual firstborn, Royal, who perished violently without ever knowing his father's identity.

In many ways, Gabriel's and John's relationship with each other is characterized by a variety of moral obligations established by religious and masculine codes. Since the family operates upon the traditional assumption that “if a child has no father, that child will

not come to understand masculinity in the culture, and, if it is a boy child, he will have no way to embody or incorporate his own masculinity” (Butler, 2009: 112), Gabriel’s role in John’s life is understood as indispensable. Simultaneously, “as an agent of sex-role socialization, the religious institution in the United States has always played a vital role” (Franklin, 1984: 41), rendering Gabriel’s position as a church minister particularly salient to John’s masculine formation. However, as an aspiring intellectual, John finds himself suspended between two irreconcilable worlds, entrapped in the reality of desiring to embrace ideas of masculinity that are condemned as sinful both by his father and by the institution he represents.

John’s immediate response to his sense of entrapment is to search for something or someone within his own sphere who might offer deliverance, of which his relationship with Elisha, as previously established, provides evidence. As a child, however, his initial impulse is to seek refuge with his mother, who, herself trapped within the patriarchal structure of the church, “can only offer inadequate protection” (Giles, 1974: 378), establishing the mother-son relationship not as antithetical to the one John maintains with his father, but rather as supplementary. If, as hooks observes, young Black males frequently learn at home “that manhood is synonymous with the domination and control over others, that simply by being male they are in a position of authority that gives them the right to assert their will over others” (2004: 83), such instruction proves viable only if the mother performs the submissive role. For Gabriel’s function as an agent of traditional masculine socialization in John’s life to operate effectively, the mother must participate as both frail and passive, embodying the model of what John must not become.

Traditionally characterized as a semi-autobiographical novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*’s exploration of the father-son relationship ultimately illuminates one of Baldwin’s central preoccupations: the legacy of terror and violence that many Black fathers impose upon their sons. As Baldwin famously observes in the highly influential essay *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), “I had declined to believe in that apocalypse which had been central to my father’s vision” (2017: 87), articulating a profound concern with the intergenerational transmission of racial trauma that Black children are compelled to inherit from their fathers—a trauma rooted not in paternal malice but in the brutal realities of anti-Black oppression that shape Black masculine identity. This dynamic is equally evident in Baldwin’s *Another Country*, wherein Rufus frequently experiences himself as

overwhelmed by the psychological burden of his father's worldview regarding the reality confronting Black people in the United States.

In the following scene, for instance, Rufus attributes his troubled relationship with Leona—whom he subjected to repeated violent assaults—to the influence of his upbringing, positioning his father's teachings as central to his responses to racial and gender anxieties:

For to remember Leona was also—somehow—to remember the eyes of his mother, the rage of his father, the beauty of his sister. It was to remember the streets of Harlem, the boys on the stoops, the girls behind the stairs and on the roofs, the white policeman who had taught him how to hate, the stickball games in the streets, the women leaning out of windows and the numbers they played daily, hoping for the hit his father never made. It was to remember the juke box, the teasing, the dancing, the hard-on, the gang fights and gang bangs, his first set of drums—bought him by his father—his first taste of marijuana, his first snort of horse [...]. It was to remember the beat: A nigger, said his father, lives his whole life, lives and dies according to a beat. Shit, he humps to that beat and the baby he throws up in there, well, he jumps to it and comes out nine months later like a goddamn tambourine. The beat: hands, feet, tambourines, drums, pianos, laughter, curses, razor blades; the man stiffening with a laugh and a growl and a purr and the woman moistening and softening with a whisper and a sigh and a cry (Baldwin, 2001a: 7).

The paternal rage that Rufus experienced during his upbringing is positioned as formative to his identity as a Black man in the United States, which, coupled with the empirical evidence of racial oppression stemming from encounters with White policemen and other manifestations of systemic racism, offers him no recourse but to channel his anxieties through violence. Growing up in Harlem within a household permeated by the weight of racial trauma, Rufus has absorbed, simultaneously, a vibrant culture of music and artistic expression that defines his character, and the conviction that “all men living in a culture of violence must demonstrate at some point in their lives that they are capable of being violent” (hooks, 2004: 46). In this sense, the beat that, according to his father, defines the life of a Black man carries multiple significations: it represents, at once, the creative energy that propels a man to produce art and express himself vernacularly, and the volatile tension that compels violent reactions in pursuit of relief from the anguish of existing under constant racial scrutiny.

Also central to Rufus's anxieties and resulting eruptions of violence against Leona is, as previously established, the conviction that he, as a Black man, should not pursue romantic involvement with a White woman, as such a transgression would constitute a form of racial betrayal. This concern is portrayed in the novel as one that similarly

originates within the familial sphere, where both his father and sister regard White people as an antagonizing class. Through his friendship with Vivaldo, however, Rufus demonstrates—much like John’s refusal to embrace his father’s worldview—his willingness to reject preconceived notions that both his family and his experience as a Black man in the United States have instilled in him regarding White Americans. He remains, after all, an isolated figure living in New York City—which Baldwin characterizes as “a lonely city” (2001: 52). In this sense, his decision to live perilously among those who might harm him, defying both his father’s teachings and his own racial trauma, represents not merely a profound act of resistance against an inherited legacy of terror and hatred, but also a desperate search for love—a theme that Baldwin himself identified as the central preoccupation of *Another Country*³.

Nevertheless, as Rufus’s fate demonstrates, the consequences of his decision to sever ties with a legacy of racial terror and hatred proved catastrophic, explicable both by the crushing weight of accumulated racial trauma and by the nature of the love he was able to secure. Eric and Vivaldo’s love for Rufus is ultimately double-edged, representing simultaneously a triumph over his father’s and sister’s ideology regarding interracial relations and his undoing as a man, since homosexual desire is regarded by him—and the masculine framework to which he adheres—as antithetical to his manhood. As Brim characterizes the novel’s treatment of love, “rather than homosexuality functioning as some kind of solution to racial discord, *Another Country* implies that one crossing of lines of identity can motivate and enable another” (2014: 94). In this sense, Rufus’s sole prospect for love and respite from the reality of racial oppression activates new and perhaps more devastating anxieties, positioning his attempt to escape a life of isolation as a futile and self-defeating movement against his own race and family.

What the examples of father-son relationships examined in this section demonstrate is the imposing and unavoidable force that paternal legacy exerts upon masculine identity formation in the familial sphere. Whether deployed as currency that can be leveraged as an alternative to overt expressions of violence, or imposed as a constraining framework for interpersonal relations and masculine conduct, the values transmitted by the father

³ “It is about love. It is about the price of love too.” *Meeting the Man: James Baldwin in Paris*, Dir.: Terence Dixon, USA/Great Britain, 1970.

constitute a stark interplay of expectations and restrictions that socialize the male child into a masculine identity fundamentally predicated upon violence. As the following section will explore in more detail, this legacy extends into relationships with women, as men perpetuate inherited patterns of violence against women rooted in the familial sphere and the lessons of masculine assertion imparted therein. In many respects, the father-son relationship provides a foundational model of what constitutes masculine honor, establishing the conviction that recourse to violence is not merely permissible but morally imperative.

3.3. Violence & Masculine Honor

3.3.1. Being a Man, Doing Harm: The Ethical Logic of Masculinity

In the introduction to Women's Studies International Forum's special issue, *Framing Gendered Identities: Local Conflicts/Global Violence* (2006), sociologist Nira Yuval-Davis draws attention to how "the 'prismatic' effect of violence in diffused relational ways suggests that the lens through which we choose (or are forced) to examine the concept alters our perception and our awareness of it" (2006: 433). This assertion underscores the tendency of numerous discourses on violence to approach the phenomenon by emphasizing its plural and complex nature, which paradoxically results in the obscuring of violence's specific etiologies. For instance, violence's intrinsic connection to masculinity is frequently elided in sociological examinations of the subject, which often treat violence against women as a phenomenon devoid of gender-specific dimensions that would require particular analytical frameworks and interventions. If violence, as it is universally understood, has been historically deployed "by many members of a privileged group to sustain their dominance" (Connell, 2005: 83), then masculinity and its hegemonic position within gender hierarchies must be recognized as intrinsically associated with a culture of violence that positions femininity as its primary target and justification.

Violence, in many respects, constitutes a foundational element of traditional masculinity, representing a reality sustained by rigidly constructed codes of conduct expected of men in gender relations. As Bourdieu observes, for instance, "the

manifestations of virility, whether legitimate or illegitimate, belong to the logic of prowess, the exploit, which confers honor” (2001: 19), positioning masculinity as a configuration wherein violence functions as an instrumental mechanism in sustaining its hegemonic position within gender hierarchies. Additionally, as previously established, hegemonic forms of masculinity derive their significance “in discursive meanings that legitimate a rationale for structured social relations that ensure the ascendancy and power of men as well as specific masculinities” (Messerschmidt, 2018: 12), with rhetorics centered on the deployment of violence constituting one of their most salient manifestations. Violence, therefore, is not only expected from men, but also requested, especially in instances wherein the honor that secures masculinity in a hegemonic position is under challenge.

This ethical logic of masculinity can be seen across all four novels analyzed in this thesis, revealing Amado’s and Baldwin’s understanding of the role played by violence as a foregrounding principle to masculinity. In *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, for instance, the interplay of duties and the honor’s maintenance occupies a paramount role in the novel’s first act, wherein the murder of Sinhazinha Mendonça is presented as an occurrence that, at the same time, outlines Ilhéus’s gender dynamics and moves the characters to critically assess the culture of violence that had been foundational to the town’s social fabric. In the following scene, amid the aftermath of the murder, the characters express respect towards Jesuíno and his decision to seek revenge on his wife by taking her life, framing the crime as expected conduct from a 'real' man:

E toda aquela gente terminava no bar de Nacib, enchendo as mesas, comentando e discutindo. Unanimemente davam razão ao fazendeiro, não se elevava voz — nem mesmo de mulher em átrio de igreja — para defender a pobre e formosa Sinhazinha. Mais uma vez o coronel Jesuíno demonstrara ser homem de fibra, decidido, corajoso, íntegro, como aliás à saciedade o provara durante a conquista da terra. Segundo recordavam, muitas cruces no cemitério e na beira das estradas deviam-se aos seus jagunços, cuja fama não fora esquecida. Não só utilizara jagunços, mas os comandara também em ocasiões famosas, como aquele encontro com os homens do finado major Fortunato Pereira, na encruzilhada da Boa Morte, nos perigosos caminhos de Ferradas. Era homem sem medo e obstinado [...].

A notícia correrá rápida como relâmpago e cresceram o respeito e a admiração que já cercavam a figura magra e um tanto sombria do fazendeiro. Porque assim era em Ilhéus: honra de marido enganado só com sangue podia ser lavada (Amado, 2024: 125–126).

What the widespread consensus that Jesuíno acted within his rights in murdering Sinhazinha reveals is, foremost, the subordinate position to which the women of Ilhéus are subjected within the city’s rigid patriarchal codes. As is characteristic of traditional

cultures, women are expected to engage with masculinity by adhering to a series of strictures whose primary rationale lies in the imperative to preserve a conception of honor understood as intrinsic to male identity. Ultimately, Amado deploys Sinhazinha and Jesuíno's narrative arc as a vehicle to illustrate that "a gender order where men dominate women cannot avoid constituting men as an interest group concerned with defense, and women as an interest group concerned with change" (Connell, 2005: 82). After all, entrapped in a loveless, violent, and controlling marriage, Sinhazinha transgressed prescribed boundaries by seeking affection elsewhere, thereby compelling her husband—who embodies an image of 'authentic,' honored masculinity that defines Ilhéus—to act in accordance with social expectations, that is, in defense of the honor that his status as a man within a traditional culture ostensibly guarantees him.

The series of adjectives ("*decidido, corajoso, íntegro...*") employed to characterize the town's perception of Jesuíno's character after the crime also reveals how, within Ilhéus's rigid culture, masculinity constitutes a status that is predominantly asserted through responses to acts that threaten one's manhood. Although he had already demonstrated his worth as a man by functioning as a leader unafraid of deploying violence to accomplish his objectives, the challenge to Jesuíno's honor posed by his wife's infidelity serves as a fortuitous opportunity to attain an even more elevated position within the masculine hierarchy. If, as Bourdieu suggests, "male privilege is also a trap," bearing as its negative dimension "the permanent tension and contention, sometimes verging on the absurd, imposed on every man by the duty to assert his manliness in all circumstances" (2001: 50), the town's perception is that Jesuíno has succeeded in exploiting the situation to his advantage, thereby elevating his status as an 'authentic' man to one of even greater prominence within Ilhéus's cultural imaginary.

In many respects, the resistance to the influx of progressive ideas entering Ilhéus—which propose as an alternative the contrasting position that Sinhazinha's murder constitutes a crime to be condemned rather than condoned—also represents opposition to the notion that masculinity can be asserted through means that do not instrumentalize the female body as its principal mechanism. Since Ilhéus is portrayed as a locus wherein "male sex-role socialization also teaches men that women are passive acceptors" (Franklin, 1984: 191), progressive ideas emanating from the South pose a threat to a culture that, as Sinhazinha's murder and the subsequent valorization of Jesuíno's manhood demonstrate,

comprehends the feminine body as an object to be systematically exploited in service of men's efforts to preserve their honor. For the men of Ilhéus, violent demonstrations of dominance are seldom recognized as cruel or gratuitous, thereby fostering a culture wherein, for instance, "many men insist that women actually enjoy being raped, being dominated, being subdued" (Franklin, 1984: 192).

The moral code of masculinity constitutes a configuration predicated upon specific roles to be performed when the hegemonic position occupied by men is threatened—a scenario frequently organized around expectations arising from ideologies of monogamy and the institution of marriage. Similar to Amado's treatment of Sinhazinha's fate in *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, Baldwin, in *Another Country*, interrogates the patriarchal culture of defending one's honor through violence by focusing on a case of infidelity, as exemplified by the troubled marriage of Richard and Cass. In the following scene, for instance, Richard strikes his wife upon her confession of an affair with Eric:

"Why?" She did not answer. He came toward her again. "Answer me, baby. Why?" He leaned over her, imprisoning her in the chair. "Is it that you wanted to hurt me?"

"No. I have never wanted to hurt you."

"Why, then?" He leaned closer. "Did you get bored with me? Does he make love to you better than I; does he know tricks I don't know? Is that it?" He wrapped the fingers of one hand in her hair. "Is that it? Answer me!"

"Richard, you're going to wake the children—"

"Now she worries about the children!" He pulled her head forward, then slammed it back against the chair, and slapped her across the face, twice, as hard as he could. The room dropped into darkness for a second, then came reeling back, in light; tears came to her eyes, and her nose began to bleed. "Is that it? Did he fuck you in the ass, did he make you suck his cock? Answer me, you bitch, you slut, you cunt!" (Baldwin, 2001a: 367–368).

One of the most striking aspects of the scene is the escalating sense of menace that Richard's behavior imposes upon Cass. His initial strategy of attempting to extract answers by positioning himself in a diminished role, as the victim, rapidly devolves into aggression, which can be interpreted as a recognition of the transgression against the moral code of masculinity represented by his occupying such a position as a man. Richard, after all, is characterized as a man who appears to subscribe to the notion that manliness, as Bourdieu observes, "is an eminently relational notion, constructed in front of and for other men and against femininity, in a kind of fear of the female" (2001: 53), thereby rendering his violent response to victimization by a woman's actions predictable within this framework. Within the moral code of masculinity to which he adheres, women cannot occupy a role that

encompasses the capacity to inflict harm upon a man, even if such harm is merely emotional.

The fact that Richard interpreted Cass's affair as a deliberate attempt to wound him warrants consideration, as it reveals the extremes to which a traditional man such as himself may go in perceiving a woman's agency. In many respects, Richard appears to conceive of his wife's desires and grievances solely as either serving or opposing his own interests, thereby framing her affair as a calculated effort to inflict harm upon him. The nature of this perceived harm, however, proves most devastating, for, as previously established, it represents a blemish upon the honor of a man who understands sex as an instrument of masculine assertion. Cass, in this sense, violated Richard's honor not only by acting in defiance of what he, as a man, deemed appropriate for the relationship, but also by permitting another man to assert his masculinity with her body as the medium. Moreover, given that marriage constitutes an institution that traditional men believe "relieves them of expressive expectations and requires their wives to surmise that 'he married me and this is proof that he loves me'" (Franklin, 1984: 108), her infidelity represents a rupture in an arrangement predicated upon men's comfort as its paramount concern.

The man with whom Cass conducted the affair also constitutes a significant factor in Richard's violent response. Eric, after all, is a character initially introduced to both the reader and Richard as a struggling actor engaged exclusively in homosexual relationships, functioning as an embodiment of Rufus's conflicted relationship with his own sexual desires. As a man who participates in sexual relations with other men, Eric can be perceived by Richard only as someone who has been stripped of legitimate masculine status, thereby positioning him as inferior to Richard, who is not only heterosexual but has also secured a degree of financial stability central to his conception of masculinity. In this sense, Cass's decision to pursue an affair with Eric—a man deemed 'sexually deviant' and economically precarious—constitutes an affront to Richard's efforts to align himself with traditional modes of masculine assertion and his perceived success in doing so.

What Baldwin achieves through the narrative arc of Richard and Cass is a striking illustration of the nexus between masculine honor, sexuality, and the institution of marriage, a dynamic equally evident in Amado's *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos*. In the latter novel, the code of masculinity to which Vadinho adheres is frequently characterized

through its contradictory nature, defying, for instance, the conventions that violence constitutes a masculine imperative and that “the male body drives and directs action” (Connell, 2005: 45). As the following scene demonstrates, Vadinho is a character who, despite being consistently portrayed through the association of his conduct with a morally reprehensible, anachronistic version of masculine identity, nevertheless comprehends the socially constructed dimensions of gender dynamics, refusing to deploy force against women even when such violence is expected of him:

— Venha, meu bem, sente aqui junto de seu maridinho, já que não quer se deitar, tem medo. Sente para gastar um dedo de prosa, não foi você mesma quem disse que a gente precisa conversar?
— Eu sento e depois você quer me pegar a pulso...
— Ah!, se eu pudesse... Então tu pensa que se eu pudesse te pegar a pulso, sem teu consentimento, eu estava aqui te adulando, perdendo tempo? À força, meu bem, nunca vou te querer: escreva isso que é a palavra de Vadinho...
— Tu tá proibido de me pegar a pulso?
Proibido? E por quem? Não tem deus nem diabo para me proibir seja o que for. Tu não sabe disso ou tu viveu comigo sete anos e não me aprendeu?
— E por quê, então?
— Alguma vez eu te peguei a pulso? Uma só, me diga...
— Nunca...
— E então? Eu mesmo me proibi, nunca precisei pegar mulher a pulso, e uma vez que Mirandão quis agarrar uma negrinha à bruta, no areal do Unhão, eu não deixei... O degas aqui, meu bem, só quer aquilo que lhe dão e quando é dado de boa vontade, de coração. A pulso, que gosto pode ter senão ruim? (Amado, 1966: 433).

Vadinho’s perspective on rape is conspicuously centered on its implications for masculine ego, as, according to him, it signifies incompetence in the art of seduction. At the same time, Vadinho demonstrates awareness that “most men learn that cues associated with permissible sexual arousal also cue the disinhibition of aggression” (McConahay & McConahay, 1977: 136), having observed his peers commit such acts under the rationale that male sexual fulfillment is imperative, thereby positioning violence as an instrument to satisfy this perceived need. Nevertheless, Vadinho emerges as a man who can either engage in critical reflection regarding the boundaries of masculine assertion or identify, within the code of masculinity to which he subscribes, precepts that orient him toward a worldview that, while remaining patriarchal and egocentric, does not instrumentalize violence. Ultimately, for him, rape does not constitute sex, as it lacks the social dimension of seduction that appears central to the gratification he derives from intimate relations.

What proves particularly significant about Vadinho’s account of the sexual violence he witnessed his male peers attempting to commit is his positioning as the agent who

prevented the crime from occurring, acting according to his own moral framework that such conduct should not be permissible. This dimension resonates with Bourdieu's assertion that masculine honor constitutes a reality "that must be validated by other men, in its reality as actual or potential violence, and certified by recognition of membership of the group of 'real men'" (2001: 52). In many respects, Mirandão assumed that the validation he received from his male associates also encompassed acceptance of the premise that he, as a man, could legitimately deploy violence to achieve sexual fulfillment—an assumption that Vadinho refutes through his moral intervention. In this sense, the relational dimension of masculine honor reveals itself as a reality that can be either endorsed or contested by those who participate in its construction, thereby exposing it as a socially negotiated configuration subject to internal dissent despite its superficial homogeneity.

At the same time, Vadinho demonstrates greater preoccupation with the boundaries of masculine assertion within his marriage, insisting upon reminding Flor that he, as a man, has possessed numerous opportunities to commit additional acts of violence against her, yet refrained from doing so according to his conception of righteous masculine conduct. However, largely due to Amado's carnivalesque aesthetic—which presents readers "with a kaleidoscope of visions of women, love, sexuality, and human relationships" (Hall, 1983: 77)—this dynamic is articulated less through confrontational discourse than through a seductive rhetoric characteristic of Vadinho's persona. The nature of the marriage remains, nevertheless, troubled, with the novel framing it paradoxically, for Vadinho constitutes both a morally compromised figure and precisely what Flor requires. After all, as critic Malcolm Silverman observes, "she remains totally satisfied with Teodoro's exemplary love, devotion, and kindness, while somewhat disappointed with his infrequent and monotonous sensual advances, most of which leave her unfulfilled" (1971: 246).

Masculinity's code of honor, as demonstrated in this section, frequently instrumentalizes violence as a mechanism to be deployed in its defense. This accounts for, among other examples, the violent responses that numerous characters in the analyzed novels exhibit, underscoring masculinity's positioning as a configuration intrinsically bound to the perpetual imperative of defense, in opposition to femininity's orientation toward transformation. As the following section will illustrate, the complexities surrounding gendered oppression constitute perhaps the most extensively explored dimension in Amado's and Baldwin's examination of the nexus between violence and

masculinity, foregrounding how patriarchal structures not only subjugate women but also constrain and damage the men who ostensibly benefit from them.

3.3.2. Dominating the Other: Gendered Violence as Masculine Assertion

Frequently regarded as one of the few modernist Brazilian authors to achieve both popular and critical acclaim, Jorge Amado is recognized domestically and internationally for having numerous works “translated into the language of television,” with these adaptations “generating huge success in terms of audience” (Alves, 2013: 2). *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, for instance, has been adapted into highly successful telenovelas on three occasions⁴, which, alongside a popular 1976 film adaptation of *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos*, contributed to establishing Amado’s characters as iconic figures within Brazil’s cultural landscape. This proves especially pertinent regarding his female characters, as heroines such as Gabriela, Dona Flor, and Tieta—from *Tieta do Agreste* (1977)—are frequently perceived as compelling representations of Northeastern femininity, characterized as “beautiful, fascinating, mystifying, [...] and potentially dangerous” (Hall, 1983: 68).

Amado’s female characters are typically portrayed as catalysts for transformation, whether of individual male characters or, in Gabriela’s case, an entire community, which brings about their confrontation with numerous challenges to which their responses prove disruptively radical. Gabriela, for instance, yearns for autonomy, acting solely according to her own desires and rejecting the institution of marriage as a constraining framework incompatible with her inherent need for freedom and self-determination. Similarly, Flor’s need for sexual fulfillment moves her to go against what is expected from a lady of her social caliber. Ultimately, as critic Sudha Swarnakar observes, Amado raises in many of his works “purely female questions, such as abortion, rape, female exploitation and discrimination, and marriage,” usually framing his “heroines as the marginalized or socially excluded” (2014: 17).

⁴ Gabriela, Cravo e Canela, Dir.: Maurício Sherman, Brazil, 1961;
Gabriela, Dir.: Walter Avancini and Gonzaga Blota, Brazil, 1975;
Gabriela, Dir.: Mauro Mendonça Filho, André Felipe Binder, Marcelo Travesso, Noa Bressane, and André Barros, Brazil, 2012.

It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that many of Amado's female characters are victims of domestic violence, frequently as a consequence of their progressive, anti-establishment inclinations that, in turn, are presented in the novels as necessary forces driving the development of either the communities to which they belong or their own lives. In *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, for instance, the protagonist is subjected to physical assaults for exercising the agency to decline sexual and romantic advances from male characters, framing violence, once again, as an instrument wielded by many men in response to the destabilizing reality of being rejected by women who, as males and therefore the agents who dictate the terms of social interaction, are not accustomed to such defiance. As evidenced in the following scene, Gabriela declines Clemente's proposal to take her as his wife, despite the sexual relationship they had previously established:

Outros morreram e os corpos ficaram pelo caminho, pasto dos urubus. A caatinga acabou, começaram terras férteis, as chuvas caíram. Ela continuava a deitar-se com ele, a gerar e a rir, a dormir recostada sobre seu peito nu. Clemente falava, cada vez mais sombrio, explicava as vantagens, ela apenas ria e balançava a cabeça numa renovada negativa. Certa noite, ele teve um gesto brusco, atirou-a para um lado, num repelão:

— Tu não gosta de mim!

De súbito, saído não se sabe de onde, o negro Fagundes apareceu, a arma na mão, um brilho nos olhos. Gabriela disse:

— Foi nada não, Fagundes.

Ela havia batido contra o tronco de árvore junto ao qual estavam deitados. Fagundes baixou a cabeça, foi embora. Gabriela ria, a raiva foi crescendo dentro de Clemente. Aproximou-se dela, tomou-lhe dos pulsos, ela estava caída sobre o mato, o rosto ferido:

— Tenho até vontade de te matar e a mim também...

— Por quê?

— Tu não gosta de mim (Amado, 2024: 112).

Clemente's violent reaction to Gabriela's refusal is underscored by the juxtaposition between his aggressive conduct upon being rejected and the love and affection he harbors for her. In many respects, Clemente's assault upon Gabriela is portrayed as passionate, as a gesture of rebellion against the prospect of not having her in his life, thereby framing Gabriela as a figure who, through her sensuality, drives men to unconscionable acts, such as the exhibition of violent behavior. Ultimately, Gabriela is constructed, as is characteristic of Amado's works, by initially being positioned as the archetype of the temptress, a woman whose beauty "distracts one from a mythic journey, postpones success and glory, and possesses the power to destroy" (Spore, Harrison, Haggerson, 2002: 149). Violence, in this case, is presented as a direct consequence of the disruption of the power

dynamic that had previously defined the relationship between Clemente, as a man, and Gabriela, as a woman.

What proves equally significant about Gabriela as a temptress is the fact that the archetype is typically “seen as representing an alien culture, the outsider, or unknown” (Burrows, Lapedes, Shawcross, 1973: 423). Alongside Clemente and Fagundes, she arrives in Ilhéus as a drifter, seeking employment and shelter, and achieving success in her endeavor upon meeting Nacib, who hires her as a cook and immediately becomes enchanted by her beauty and sensuality. It is only later, when he attempts to impose the social conventions of Ilhéus upon the relationship he rapidly establishes with her, that Nacib comprehends that Gabriela is fundamentally different: she is not seeking commitment and will reject any advances from men who might attempt to constrain her. It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that Gabriela, once married to Nacib, finds herself profoundly unhappy and pursues an affair with one of his clients. Essentially, her most transgressive characteristic is exercising agency over her own sexuality and rejecting the notion that a woman must regard marriage as a life goal, which, predictably, provokes a series of violent reactions in a city such as Ilhéus.

Gabriela’s quiet resistance is ultimately presented in the novel as triumphant, as Ilhéus undergoes transformations that gradually transition the town from a masculinist, patriarchal, and violent culture to one that is progressive and retains violent conflict only as a vestige of its past. In this respect, the nexus between violence and masculinity is portrayed in the novel as a phenomenon facing obsolescence, which, alongside the narrative’s flirtatious and carnivalesque register, serves to frame the story as optimistic and progressive, as would be anticipated from Amado. After all, the final phase of his literary production, of which *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* is representative, is characterized by “colorful concupiscence” and “great range of comic effect” that refined the neo-proletarian realism defining his early novels (Vincent, 1972: 193). This establishes Amado as an author renowned for deploying humor in explorations of significant social issues, reviving “the old romantic plot and invoking action, playfulness, and sentiment” absent from the literature produced in Brazil during the same period (De Assis Duarte, 2012: 384).

On the other side, Baldwin interrogates the subject of domestic violence in a more somber register, framing it, as evidenced in *Another Country*, as among the devastating consequences of racial oppression. Rufus’s troubled relationship with Leona is portrayed in

many respects as a product of both defiance and duplicity, as both characters transgress the codes of racial hierarchy that govern American society, precipitating a trajectory of self-destruction in which violence operates as one of its primary mechanisms. As the following scene demonstrates, Rufus's frustrations regarding his position as a Black man in a relationship with a White woman are translated into violence against Leona, who does not understand the role she plays in his ruin:

One evening Vivaldo came to visit them in their last apartment. They heard the whistles of tugboats all day and all night long. Vivaldo found Leona sitting on the bathroom floor, her hair in her eyes, her face swollen and dirty with weeping. Rufus had been beating her. He sat silently on the bed.

"Why?" cried Vivaldo.

"I don't know," Leona sobbed, "it can't be for nothing I did. He's always beating me, for nothing, for nothing!" She gasped for breath, opening her mouth like an infant, and in that instant Vivaldo really hated Rufus and Rufus knew it. "He says I'm sleeping with other colored boys behind his back and it's not true, God knows it's not true!"

"Rufus knows it isn't true," Vivaldo said. He looked over at Rufus, who said nothing. He turned back to Leona. "Get up, Leona. Stand up. Wash your face" (Baldwin, 2001a).

The justifications Rufus provides for his violent acts against Leona prove symptomatic not only in how they conform to the code of traditional masculinity that construes female infidelity as warranting a violent response, but also in the transparent fact that they are entirely fabricated by him. Rufus, as a Black man in the United States, possesses no viable pathway to embody the masculine ideal he aspires to represent for Leona—the type of man he recognizes she, as a White woman, has encountered previously—compelling him to exist in perpetual fear and frustration. This dynamic, especially concerning its connection with ideas of financial autonomy, resonates profoundly with Baldwin's assertion regarding the burden of Black manhood and household responsibility: "I have to be responsible for that house. If I'm not allowed to be responsible for that house, I'm no longer in my own eyes—it doesn't make any difference what you may think of me—I'm not a man" (1973: 54–55). In this sense, violence becomes a response to his failure to attain masculine legitimacy—a reality of which he is reminded by numerous agents and events in his life, yet he chooses Leona and her White, privileged existence as the target upon which to inflict violence.

Rufus's violent acts against Leona also underscore the necessity of analyzing the subject of masculinity and its connections to violence through an intersectional lens, as the gender dynamics illustrated in their relationship operate in dynamic interplay with race and

class. After all, Rufus's aspirations and resulting frustrations evoke a pre-Black Power movement ethos of defining Black masculinity through a desire for economic autonomy that had functioned as paramount masculine currency across dominant groups in the United States. As hooks observes, "Black men wanted jobs—equal pay for equal work—which was the vision of basic civil rights. They wanted the economic power to provide for themselves and their family" (2004: 15), objectives rendered impossible by economic oppression rooted in White supremacist ideologies regarding the position that Black men should occupy in society. As a Black man experiencing financial precarity while involved in a relationship with a White woman, Rufus finds himself ensnared by perpetual reminders of his perceived failures—as a man, as a provider, and as an ally to his race and community—perceiving himself, as previously established, as a traitor to Black Americans.

In many respects, as holds true for the majority of examples presented in this thesis, violence is deployed once again as an instrument against male frustration, positioning the female body as a site where masculinity can be restored through its abuse. Ultimately, "whatever the roots of Black male rage, it is sexist thinking and practice that teaches them that it is acceptable to express that rage violently" (hooks, 2004: 58), perpetuating a cycle of physical and psychological oppression that obscures the boundaries between agency and reaction. However, far from absolving Rufus of culpability, Baldwin's treatment of the character's violent conduct toward women remains empathetic, thereby reinforcing the proposition that Rufus, like numerous other Black men, is simultaneously a victim of his own rage—a reality rendered evident through his suicide. Ultimately, what emerges in the fraught relationship between Rufus and Leona is Baldwin's "attempt to act as witness to our flawed but common humanity and to articulate the fundamental but not reciprocal interdependence that exists within difference" (Brim, 2014: 97).

On the contrary, the masculine violence inflicted upon women as portrayed in *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos* is presented primarily as an indicator of moral failure, while nevertheless framing violence as an instrument deployed in service of manhood. Whereas Baldwin provides in *Another Country* a backstory that enables readers to comprehend the complex humanity of a character such as Rufus, Vadinho's transformation from a loving husband to a violent one is portrayed as a product of his desire for money, relegating the relationship with his wife to secondary importance, beneath his gambling compulsion. In

the following scene, for instance, Vadinho's rage manifests as a consequence of his financial setback, yet not from any aspiration to achieve an economic independence that would allow him to be perceived as a man, but rather from encountering resistance from Flor, who initially refuses to relinquish her money to him:

Lançava olhares sorrateiros à esposa como a medir-lhe o humor, sua receptividade. Porque vinha para lhe pedir dinheiro, sempre emprestado, é claro, com formais promessas de pagamentos, todas até hoje por cumprir. E ela terminava entregando-lhe algum, por bem ou por mal; em certas ocasiões em doloroso e mesmo sórdido constrangimento. Eram os dias do pior Vadinho, quando ele se vestia de brutalidade e irritação, quando seu encanto e graça davam lugar a uma cruel estupidez.

Dona Flor sabia, antes mesmo dele pronunciar uma só palavra, de suas intenções malsãs. Ele chegava molesto do fracasso na rua, um surdo enfado a marcar-lhe o rosto. Naqueles anos ela aprendera a conhecê-lo nos mínimos detalhes, desde o peso e a cadência de seu passo até o brilho matreiro de seus olhos quando os punha numa fêmea qualquer, nas rumorosas alunas, no decote de dona Gisa, ou, indo com dona Flor pela rua, em quantas encontrava, a despi-las mais ou menos conforme mais ou menos elas o merecessem por bonitas ou feias (Amado, 1966, 143).

Once again, the female figure is construed as an obstacle to a man's objective, which, in Vadinho's case, only reinforces a reading of his character as morally corrupt and fundamentally self-serving. Whereas Baldwin's Rufus, Vivaldo, and especially Gabriel are portrayed as tormented figures ensnared within an intricate web of gender and racial expectations—structural forces that constrain their agency and compel destructive choices—that enables readers to comprehend and empathize with their violent behavior despite its reprehensibility, Amado constructs Vadinho as a character conspicuously devoid of the anxieties, traumas, or systemic pressures that would contextualize or complicate his conduct. Regarding masculinity, for instance, Vadinho is perhaps the character examined in this thesis who least overtly experiences the gender anxieties that plague his counterparts across the analyzed texts, positioning him instead as someone whose violence stems primarily from personal moral failure rather than internalized gender ideology or social alienation.

As previously established, economic precarity, for instance, does not appear to be perceived by him as a blemish upon his manhood, nor does transgressing the patriarchal conventions that prove central to conceptions of masculinity within his context. This likely stems from the fact that Vadinho's most distinguishing characteristic is one that, in early twentieth-century Bahia, represents a vital currency for masculinity: his voracious sexuality. As Bernuzzi de Sant'Anna observes regarding gender dynamics in Brazil during

this period, “*a atividade sexual com mulheres comprovava a masculinidade. Não espantava o fato de homens casados manterem as duas, frequentarem o que já se chamou de zona, lugar do meretrício*” (2013: 255). Simply by embodying the figure of an excessively sexual man who proudly embraces the identity of womanizer, Vadinho feels secure in his masculinity, which accounts for his compulsion to denigrate Flor’s second husband’s legitimacy as a man by mocking the restrained and modest dimensions of Teodoro’s sexuality.

One of the most significant consequences of this approach to Vadinho is that the violent acts to which he subjects Flor can no longer be framed as externalizations of gender anxieties provoked by the female body. Vadinho, in this sense, does not resort to violence due to any inability to locate within himself traces of a respectable masculine identity, thereby aggressively expressing his frustrations. Rather, he possesses such acute awareness of his masculinity and hegemonic position within the gender dynamics that define the institution of marriage that violence becomes a mechanism to remind Flor, when she defies his wishes, that his authority is absolute. In many respects, Flor is the one acting in resistance, for by refusing to take away her money, she rejects the symbolic violence that, as Bourdieu explains, “is instituted through the adherence that the dominated cannot fail to grant to the dominant (and therefore to the domination) when, to shape her thought of him, and herself, [...] she has only cognitive instruments that she shares with him” (2001: 38). What Vadinho responds to, therefore, cannot be construed as gender anxiety, but rather as a perceived breach of patriarchal order that necessitates correction—his violence functioning to reassert to Flor, as a woman, that his desires must invariably take precedence.

The primacy accorded to male desires and objectives permeates all four novels analyzed in this thesis, framing the female experience as one subjected to perpetual subservience to the patriarchal logics of domination and masculine assertion. As the following section will demonstrate, this imperative for domination persists even when the female body is absent from the equation, as territorial disputes, whether literal or symbolic, constitute instances in which the relational dimension of masculinity manifests through conflict and the deployment of violence to claim, defend, and demarcate physical and social spaces as integral to masculine identity. In this manner, violence emerges not merely as a tool of gender oppression but as a fundamental mechanism through which men

construct, negotiate, and sustain their masculine status within both interpersonal relationships and broader social hierarchies.

3.3.3. Marked Ground: Men, Violence, and the Assertion of Territory

The nexus between masculinity and territory has consistently occupied a significant position within gender studies, as evidenced by recent scholarship examining how manhood is conceptualized and enacted in nations with colonial histories⁵. Additionally, numerous male characters analyzed within cultural studies research employing gender and sexuality frameworks prove amenable to approaches that illuminate the intricate interplay of gender, race, and territory that constitutes their identities. This holds true, for instance, in the case of the American cowboy, a figure that, as previously discussed, was constructed as a mythical embodiment of the American West, positioning the territory, through the virile, uncouth, and violent culture he evokes, as a space that offers men manlier and “alternative institutions and experiences—the saloon replaces the church, the men sitting around the campfire is the equivalent of the Victorian parlor, the range replaces the factory floor” (Kimmel, 2005: 32).

In Brazil, this dynamic manifests in the figure of the *nordestino*, as numerous literary works have successfully portrayed men from the Northeast as figures who reject the progress and international influence characteristic of the South in order to affirm themselves as a more authentic and virile iteration of the Brazilian man. This phenomenon has engendered a mentality that positions the Southern man—or a man with Southern ideas—as an adversary to be confronted if necessary, as *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* demonstrates. Masculinity, in this sense, acquires a relational and territorial dimension that evokes an imperative for demarcating one’s domain, positioning men who originate from other regions as threats not only to the space whose characteristics prove foundational to one’s masculine identity but also to one’s self-conception as a man. Ultimately, masculinity is both constructed and negotiated through a Manichaeian approach to the outside world,

⁵ Prianti, Desi Dwi: The Identity Politics of Masculinity as a Colonial Legacy. In: Journal of Intercultural Studies 40/6, 2019, p. 700–719.
Smith, Rick W. A.: Imperial Terroir. Toward a Queer Molecular Ecology of Colonial Masculinities. In: Current Anthropology 62/23, 2021, p. 155–168.

framing men as figures who must defend the territorial spaces that legitimate their claim to manhood.

In Baldwin's works, the notion of territory as a masculinist construct is examined both symbolically and materially, as spheres of social existence, such as sexuality and race, alongside the physical spaces that evoke those domains, are portrayed in his novels as significant dimensions of gender dynamics. In both *Another Country* and *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, Harlem emerges as a territory that embodies a sense of refuge from the oppressive gender and racial structures that have historically subjected Black Americans to pervasive social anxieties, while simultaneously operating as a space wherein a subculture grounded in Black cultural frameworks could exist and be sustained by vernacular institutions. As critic Sidney H. Bremer observes regarding the neighborhood in the early twentieth century, "although seriously compromised by poverty, undependable White patronage, and a colonized color consciousness, Harlem also had its own cultural institutions—political organizations, clubs, theaters, newspapers, and places of worship" (1990: 48). In the most fundamental sense, Harlem functioned as a sanctuary from the oppressive dynamics pervading New York City and, indeed, the United States as a whole.

Regarding the subject of masculinity, Harlem constituted, therefore, a space wherein, for instance, the "masculine traits of dominance and competition" internalized by Black male youth could be safely expressed, given that "they learn simultaneously that these traits are to be exhibited only within the Black subculture" (Franklin, 1984: 54). In this sense, anything perceived as an oppressive force that resides and exercises dominance beyond that space becomes construed as a threat to one's masculine identity, consequently framing Whiteness as an overtly unwelcome presence. This dynamic is evident in the following scene from *Another Country*, wherein Vivaldo is subjected to violence during one of his attempts to establish a place for himself within Harlem by having sexual relations with local prostitutes—an impulse that, as explored in previous sections, reveals in itself the significance of living dangerously to the performative dimensions of White masculinity:

Vivaldo and the man stared at each other and terror began draining Vivaldo's rage out of him. It was not merely the situation which frightened him: it was the man's eyes. They stared at Vivaldo with a calm, steady hatred, as remote and unanswerable as madness.

“You goddamn lucky you didn’t get it in,” he said. “You’d be a mighty sorry white boy if you had. You wouldn’t be putting that white prick in no more black pussy, I can guarantee you that.” [...]

The man lit a cigarette which he held in the corner of his mouth as he deliberately, insolently, began looking through the wallet. “What I don’t understand,” he said, with a fearful laziness, “is why you white boys always come uptown, sniffing around our black girls. You don’t see none of us spooks downtown, sniffing around your white girls.” He looked up. “Do you?” (Baldwin, 2001a: 70–71).

One of the most striking elements of the scene is the depiction of mutual hatred that each man harbors for the other, albeit for different reasons. Although Vivaldo’s terror and rage can be attributed to the vulnerable position in which he finds himself, his perception of the Black man who subjects him to violence is profoundly shaped by his status as an outsider in a space where he is unwelcome. However, as previously established, this danger represents precisely what he unconsciously seeks as a means of validating his manhood, which accounts for his performatively courageous response to the prospect of assault: “So he only said, after a moment, as mildly as he could, ‘Look. I fell for the oldest gag in the business. Here I am. Okay. What do you want?’” (Baldwin, 2001a: 71). The confrontation between the two men, in this sense, constitutes an advantageous occasion for affirming their respective masculinities, for while Vivaldo can frame his experience and the composure he displayed as markers of an authentic, perilous masculine identity, his antagonist performs the anticipated role of protector—not only of himself and the woman accompanying Vivaldo, but also of that vital space for both his masculinity and racial identity.

The invasion that Vivaldo’s presence in Harlem represents is also explored through emphasizing the encroachment inherent in a White person attempting to integrate themselves within Black space. Significantly, this defensive resentment toward a dispossessive threat has, in this instance, the female body and its subjugation to male desires as its central concern. Vivaldo’s involvement with a Black prostitute when he ostensibly could have pursued a relationship with a White woman ignites a sense of protective rage that underscores the significance of heterosexual sexuality to masculine construction. This reaction reveals how the defense of territory becomes inseparable from the control of Black women’s bodies, positioning the Black antagonist as protecting not merely physical space but also the racialized sexual economy that structures masculine identity within that space.

Although male sexuality “consists of affective, cognitive, behavioral, and physiological components that interact, become defined, and are experienced by men as sexual events” (Franklin, 1984: 153), social structures such as race constitute a force that shapes and constrains male desire, resulting in the inscription of profound meaning onto interracial relations for both Black and White men. In other words, while Vivaldo, as a White man, possesses the privilege of engaging in interracial relationships with minimal social consequences, Black men, even when participating in such configurations, cannot express their desires without risking damage to their identities both as men and as Black individuals. In this sense, Vivaldo’s presence in Harlem evokes a series of anxieties that result in a rather violent and protective attitude by those whose identities are sustained by the dynamics and institutions found there.

Harlem functions both in *Another Country* and *Go Tell It on the Mountain* in a manner comparable to Ilhéus in *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, although the racial dynamics that define Harlem’s position do not assume a significant role in Amado’s rendering of Brazil’s Northeast. However, as critic Mary Ann Mahony observes, “although Amado did not always describe his characters in racial terms, he left the impression that most mulattoes and Blacks were agricultural laborers, domestic servants, or sex trade workers” (1997: 60), thereby framing racial dynamics in a less explicit manner than Baldwin. Indeed, Ilhéus and the Nordeste as a whole are portrayed as a more authentic region of Brazil by virtue of encompassing the racial diversity and miscegenation that, despite originating from a brutal history of slave trade and demographic control, purportedly resulted in the creation of the ideal masculine archetype—one characterized as strong, courageous, and, consequently, devoid of any femininity.

The *nordestino* is also characterized as a man who exercises absolute control and authority over his family—an institution that, especially in *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, represents a symbolic territory whose dynamics mirror the imperatives of traditional masculinity regarding the assertion of power. As Del Priore observes regarding the authority exercised by the father within the familial sphere and its importance to the development of his heirs, “*a lei, dentro de casa, era estabelecida por ele. Espécie de chefe grave e austero, a ele era atribuída a transmissão de valores patrimoniais, culturais e o patronímico que assegurariam à criança sua passagem e [...] sua inclusão na sociedade*” (2013: 155). In this sense, any external force that threatens a familial structure maintaining

the father's position as analogous to that which a man is expected to occupy in society is construed as a threat to masculine identity itself.

For instance, in the following scene, Coronel Melk Tavares's hostile response to the discovery that his daughter, Malvina, has been conducting a secret relationship with a man from outside Ilhéus vividly illustrates the nexus of masculinity, territory, and familial authority:

Duro como a pedra mais dura — podia romper-se, não dobrar-se —, seu pai. Menina na roça, ouvira histórias, casos contados. Dos tempos das lutas, das noites nas estradas com cabras armados, seu pai a mandar. Depois ela vira. Por uma tolice, gado fugido rompendo cercas, invadindo os pastos, brigaram com os Alves, vizinhos de terras. Palavras trocadas, vaidades feridas, começaram a lutar. Emboscadas, jagunços, tiroteios, sangue de novo [...].

De Ilhéus só gostava da casa nova, cujo modelo escolhera numa revista do Rio. O pai fizera-lhe a vontade, para ele era indiferente. Mundinho Falcão tinha trazido aquele arquiteto maluco, sem trabalho no Rio, ela adorara a casa de Mundinho. Sonhara com ele também. Esse, sim, era diferente, esse podia arrancá-la dali, levá-la para outras terras, aquelas faladas nos romances franceses. Para Malvina, não se tratava de amor, de paixão a explodir. Amaria quem lhe oferecesse o direito a viver, quem a libertasse do medo do destino de todas as mulheres de Ilhéus. Era preferível envelhecer solteirona, de negro na porta das igrejas. Se não quisesse morrer como Sinhazinha, de tiro de revólver. (Amado, 2024: 280-282).

As holds true for many of Amado's female characters, Malvina is a young woman who does not feel fulfilled by the life that society, or, more precisely, her father, prescribes for her. Although she, unlike Gabriela, aspires to marry at some point and build a life with a man, her discontent stems from her father's insistence upon securing a son-in-law from Ilhéus—that is, one who shares the same values, particularly regarding how women should be treated. By involving herself with a man from elsewhere who embodies the influx of progressive ideas entering Ilhéus, Malvina commits an act of betrayal that provokes her father's fury both toward her, for defying his authority, and toward her lover, whom Coronel Melk Tavares perceives as a menacing intruder. In many ways, Malvina operates as though she has grasped that, as Bourdieu observes, “symbolic power cannot be exercised without the contribution of those who undergo it” (2001: 40), thereby extricating herself, with her lover's assistance, from the oppressive dynamics from which her father's authority so manifestly benefits.

However, what proves more significant for this section is Coronel Melk Tavares's interpretation of events, as the disturbance within his family is characterized by him as an invasion, thereby framing Malvina's actions as a product of external influence. Given that

the familial domain constitutes perhaps the only space wherein he can exercise power unrestrictedly, and that one can only exercise power when subjects exist to be dominated—a role performed by Malvina—, Coronel Melk Tavares fears the prospect of being divested of his position of authority. Moreover, regarding the subject of masculinity, the situation represents a direct assault upon his manhood, since “masculinities are constructed in a field of power: 1) the power of men over women; 2) the power of some men over other men” (Kimmel, 2005: 6). In order to prevent his masculinity from being tarnished, Melk perceives only one recourse: to move against both Malvina and her lover, which he does through the deployment of violence—a thoroughly sanctioned and culturally prescribed instrument within Ilhéus's social order.

As holds true for numerous other powerful men of Ilhéus, Melk must also operate within the imperative of perpetually defending his honor with appropriate force—honor that was secured through a lifetime of violent conduct. One of the most significant consequences of such a burden is the necessity of leading an existence wherein violent behavior constitutes an imperative, revealing masculinity's intrinsic entanglement with violence. More importantly, this dynamic discloses that masculinity, as an identity constructed through relational processes, remains perpetually vulnerable to contestation, always susceptible to being negated or reconfigured. This perhaps accounts for why many men, as depicted in *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, demonstrate such fierce protectiveness of their families against external forces that might destabilize the hierarchies they have established; the familial sphere represents, after all, the sole domain wherein their masculinity cannot be challenged, as their role as patriarchs is universally recognized as embodying absolute authority.

Across all four novels analyzed in this thesis, the territorial approach to masculinity and to domains that prove indispensable to the construction of masculine identity is understood as paramount to the preservation of one's status as a man. Beyond the familial sphere, there exists also, for instance, the domain of sexuality, which is frequently treated by men as a stage upon which they can performatively express their manhood, whether by engaging in heterosexual relationships with women or by establishing rigidly demarcated sexual boundaries. This dynamic is evident in how numerous heterosexual men respond to sexual advances from males who identify as homosexual, as a defensive posture emerges and often escalates into violent behavior—a

reaction comprehensible as resistance to the prospect of having their masculine status called into question. After all, as Franklin suggests, “persons who are homophobic are not really threatened by homosexuality; rather, they are threatened by alterations in the male role that could mean less male dominance, less male power, and so on” (1984: 166–167).

A violent response, in this sense, proves not only intelligible within a culture wherein masculine honor is maintained through the deployment of violence, but also anticipated as constitutive of the perpetual burden of substantiating one’s masculinity. That is what the following scene from *Another Country* shows, as Rufus, already psychologically shaken due to gender and racial anxieties that eventually move him to suicide, is willing to kill a man who expects him to reciprocate the act of giving him food with sexual favors:

The bartender filled a shot glass and placed it in front of Rufus. And Rufus stared into the gleaming cup, praying, Lord, don’t let it happen. Don’t let me go home with this man.
I’ve got so little left, Lord, don’t let me lose it all.
“Drink. It’ll do you good. Then you can come on over to my place and get some sleep.”
He drank the whiskey, which first made him feel even sicker, then warmed him. He straightened up.
“You live around here?” he asked the man. If you touch me, he thought, still with these strange tears threatening to boil over at any moment, I’ll beat the living shit out of you. I don’t want no more hands on me, no more, no more, no more.”
[...]
“What are you, anyway—just a cock teaser?”
“I was hungry,” Rufus repeated; “I was hungry.”
“Don’t you have any family—any friends?”
Rufus looked down. He did not answer right away. Then, “I don’t want to die, mister. I don’t want to kill you. Let me go—to my friends.” (Baldwin, 2001a: 52–53).

The dialogue between Rufus and the man can be examined through multiple analytical lenses, as it reveals an intricate interplay of racial, gender, and sexual anxieties that illustrates, for instance, the profound depth of Baldwin’s exploration of the boundaries defining interpersonal relationships when questions of identity are at stake. Most immediately, however, we must recognize that Rufus, as previously established, is a man who struggles with his own homosexual desires, which renders sexual advances from other men a reminder of what he—and, indeed, homosexuality itself—truly represents according to the framework he feels compelled to uphold: “unnatural and therefore confined to a perverse minority” (Connell, 2005: 45). The impulse to act violently and kill the man emerges, therefore, as resistance to a scenario wherein he might be perceived as such, for

the sexual advance constitutes, after all, an invasion of a boundary that exists to safeguard his masculine status—that is, the sole protection from being categorized as part of a perverse minority.

Additionally, the man is identified as White, which immediately renders the possibility of Rufus attacking him—even in defense of his honor—untenable, as the prerogative to deploy violence represents a masculine currency granted to Black men exclusively within their own subculture. In many respects, by existing outside Harlem, his community's refuge, Rufus can also be understood as the interloper, the alien presence permitted beyond Harlem only insofar as it serves White interests. Rufus, therefore, resists not merely a situation wherein his masculinity is profoundly compromised, but also the prospect of being commodified for a White man's sexual gratification—a figure who already divests him of his masculinity simply through perpetuating a tradition of racial oppression. This perhaps accounts for Rufus's desperate desire to return to Harlem, to be among his own community; although there he experiences the legacy of racial trauma more acutely, at least he cannot be instrumentalized in service of the very group that relegates him to his subordinate position.

Ultimately, Rufus's anguish upon being sexually propositioned by a gay White man illuminates the significance of sexuality and its complex dimensions in the gender anxieties that this thesis has been foregrounding regarding their connections with the deployment of violence. Indeed, specifically in the case of Black masculinity, as hooks observes, "sexuality remains the place where dysfunctional behavior first rears its ugly head," constituting a reality "irrespective of class, status, income, or level of education" (2004: 63). A comparable dynamic characterizes the masculine identity frequently attributed to Brazilian men, who are predominantly portrayed as hypersexual, positioning sexual activity—or its absence—as paramount in assessments of their masculinity. As the following section will demonstrate, when combined with violence's role in masculinity, this configuration may engender a reality wherein violent behaviors become eroticized or conflated with seduction and sexual conquest, thereby framing aggression as integral to normative masculine sexual performance.

3.4. Violence & Masculine Sexuality

3.4.1. Violence as Seduction: The Sexual Scripts of Masculinity

In the highly influential *Three Contributions to the Sexual Theory* (1905), Sigmund Freud posits that “the sexuality of most men shows a taint of aggression,” ultimately comprising “a propensity to subdue” that manifests itself “in the necessity of overcoming the resistance of the sexual object by actions other than mere courting” (1910: 21). Although this assumption has been vigorously contested by subsequent scholars—who argue that “Freud's explanation for the link between sex and many instances of violence in the United States that men direct toward women and other men is couched in biological determinism” (Franklin, 1984: 188)—the theory has remained central to popular discourses on masculinity that characterize rape and other forms of sexual violence as mere manifestations of human sexuality. Violence, within this framework, is construed as intrinsic to masculine sexuality, thereby positioning female sexuality as a configuration predicated upon passively enduring aggression.

This assumption yields numerous significant consequences for the sexual dynamics that define heterosexual relationships, which can be observed, for instance, in the anticipated eroticization of violence within the context of courtship. Men are socialized to demonstrate sexual interest aggressively, ultimately relegating women to a position wherein rejection is construed as an impossibility. After all, as Bourdieu observes, “the sexual act itself is seen by men as a form of domination, appropriation, and 'possession'” (2001: 20), a logic wherein mutual desire or, in numerous instances, consent, is not regarded as necessary, as it would grant women a degree of agency not sanctioned within the gender dynamics that constitute masculinity as a hegemonic construction. In many respects, sex is understood as a masculine domain, as it is initiated and concluded according to the wishes and desires of the male, who dictates the preliminaries, the act itself, and its aftermath.

Within this thesis's corpus, the novel that most vividly illustrates this violent dynamic is *Another Country*, as James Baldwin demonstrates profound concern with the layered meanings attributed to the sexual scripts of masculinity, particularly regarding Black masculinity. In the following scene, for instance, the description of Rufus sexually

approaching Leona is explicitly constructed through the deployment of vocabulary that denotes violence, which, given previous assessments of Rufus's *gestalt*, also conveys the performative nature of his actions:

"Honey," he answered, "I'm doing it," and he pulled her to him as roughly as he could. He had expected her to resist and she did, holding the glass between them and frantically trying to pull her body away from his body's touch. He knocked the glass out of her hand and it fell dully to the balcony floor, rolling away from them. Go ahead, he thought humorously; if I was to let you go now you'd be so hung up you'd go flying over this balcony, most likely. He whispered, "Go ahead, fight. I like it. Is this the way they do down home?"

"Oh God," she murmured, and began to cry.

"Honey, you ain't got nothing to cry about yet."

[...]

He wanted her to remember him the longest day she lived. And, shortly, nothing could have stopped him, not the white God himself nor a lynch mob arriving on wings. Under his breath he cursed the milk-white bitch and groaned and rode his weapon between her thighs. She began to cry. I told you, he moaned, I'd give you something to cry about, and, at once, he felt himself strangling, about to explode or die. A moan and a curse tore through him while he beat her with all the strength he had and felt the venom shoot out of him, enough for a hundred black-white babies. (Baldwin, 2001a, 16–17).

Similar to the scene wherein Rufus is sexually propositioned by a man, his initial encounter with Leona can be examined by foregrounding its connections to racial dynamics in the United States and the implications of being a sexually active Black man. This means that the aggression Rufus exhibits in his courtship and subsequent sexual performance is motivated both by patriarchal conceptions of virility and by expectations imposed upon him due to his race, which may, to some extent, constitute one component of Leona's attraction to him. As hooks observes, there exists a "convergence of racist, sexist thinking about the Black body, which has always projected onto the Black body a hypersexuality" (2004: 63), ultimately framing it as an object of simultaneous fear and sexual fascination. Rufus, as a Black man in the United States, recognizes that he is expected to perform a particular role, which he enacts perhaps more performatively than authentically, as hypersexuality may represent one of the few masculine currencies that White men afford Black males, even if deployed as a means to simultaneously characterize them as violent and inherently threatening to White women.

Central to this interpretation is the recognition that the duality of pain and pleasure constitutes a significant element in the scene, as Rufus's Black, male, and sexual body is positioned liminally between aggression and sexual tenderness. His capacity to make Leona cry is framed as simultaneously sexual and violent, reflecting an interplay of sexual

and racial expectations that shape Rufus's experience as a sexually active Black man. Additionally, if we consider that Leona is a woman from the South—a detail to which the novel explicitly attaches significance, as evidenced by Rufus's friends calling her Little Eva⁶—the complexity of the relationship between the two characters intensifies considerably. After all, as Messerschmidt observes, “White Southerners differentiated themselves from 'savages' by attributing to the latter a sexual nature that was more sensual, aggressive, and beastlike than that of Whites” (2018: 26).

As a White woman born and raised in the Jim Crow South, Leona's act of involving herself with a Black man is fundamentally transgressive, which illuminates much of her characterization, given that she is portrayed as someone fleeing from her past. However, while her intentions may not align with the legacy of racial oppression from which she originates, her Whiteness remains inescapable, rendering her relationship with Rufus perpetually asymmetrical. Rufus's reaction to this asymmetry, as already discussed, is certainly violent, for his most immediate attitude is to attack all the symbols of inadequacy of their relationship—Leona's White, American Southern existence being the most prominent one.

What appears to be a central preoccupation in Baldwin's exploration of interracial relationships in the United States is the seemingly insurmountable impossibility of escaping the legacy of racial oppression that profoundly shapes relations between White and Black Americans. Although both Leona and Rufus consciously attempt to enter their relationship divested of the racial stigmas and frameworks they have been compelled to internalize, their environment and, particularly in Rufus's case, accumulated traumas render such a pristine state unattainable. This dynamic is evident in their initial sexual encounter, wherein the violence of Rufus's sexual conduct carries meanings that reflect the racial expectations that demand he perform both violently and hypersexually—expectations he fulfills through his compulsion to assert his masculinity before a White woman. In many respects, what Baldwin achieves in this scene is an

⁶ Little Eva is the White child character in the influential yet controversial antislavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), by Harriet Beecher Stowe. In the novel, Little Eva forms a Christian friendship with the protagonist, Uncle Tom—an enslaved man—when he is purchased by her father. In the influential essay *Everybody's Protest Novel* (1949), Baldwin characterizes *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as “a very bad novel” (2017: 13), explicitly denouncing Beecher Stowe's failed attempt to create—through Uncle Tom—a character capable of illustrating the full extent of the oppression endured by African Americans.

illumination of how the violent sexual scripts of masculinity become dramatically amplified when race assumes a determinative role.

As previously analyzed scenes centered on sexual violence demonstrate, the nexus between violence and sexual courtship is also discernible in Amado's *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos*. Nevertheless, as expected from this phase in Amado's literary production—when “suddenly there appeared a new lightness in his writing, a fresh wit, an added tenderness, a greater compassion for both his characters and his themes” (Lowe, 1969: 73)—the subject is equally treated in a more carnivalesque register, with the humorous subtlety characteristic of his exploration of social themes. In the following scene, for instance, Vadinho's death occurs during Bahia's Carnival, in the midst of his attempt to seduce a woman, which is portrayed through battlefield imagery that evokes the interplay of sexuality and dominance:

Vadinho, o mais animado de todos, ao ver o bloco despontar na esquina e ao ouvir o ponteador do esquelético Mascarenhas no cavaquinho sublime, adiantou-se rápido, postou-se ante a romena carregada na cor, uma grandona, monumental como uma igreja — e era a igreja de São Francisco, pois se cobria com um desparrame de lantejoulas douradas —, anunciou:

— Lá vou eu, minha russa do Tororó...

O cigano Mascarenhas, também ele gastando vidrilhos e miçangas, festivas argolas penduradas nas orelhas, apurou no cavaquinho, as flautas e os violões gemeram, Vadinho caiu no samba com aquele exemplar entusiasmo, característico de tudo quanto fazia, exceto trabalhar. Rodopiava em meio ao bloco, sapateava em frente à mulata, avançava para ela em floreios e umbigadas, quando, de súbito, soltou uma espécie de ronco surdo, vacilou nas pernas, adernou de um lado, rolou no chão, botando uma baba amarela pela boca onde o esgar da morte não conseguia apagar de todo o satisfeito sorriso do folião definitivo que ele fora (Amado, 1966: 3).

Although Vadinho's approach to the woman he finds attractive does not exhibit aggression to the degree that this section has been foregrounding in other examples, the description of his final moments is explicitly analogous to depictions of battlefield casualties. The Carnival celebration, for instance, is portrayed through emphasis on the strategic positioning of figures in action, framing the occasion within a context of sexual conquest, wherein men, armed with their costumes and seductive personas, operate toward the objective of simultaneously celebrating and conquering women. The outcome of this battle, however, proves fatal for Vadinho, who dies unexpectedly before securing the spoils of this war of seduction—prizes that would hold considerable value for his masculine identity, given that sexual achievements constitute paramount currency in the gender dynamics of Brazil's Northeast. Ultimately, by analyzing how Vadinho is, in his inaugural

scene, introduced as a man who perishes amid the licentious revelry of Bahia's Carnaval, it becomes evident that, as Vincent observes, "Amado's later heroes are all amoral, and the ethical terminus of his novels rests on an appreciation of the peculiar crude morality of the lower class" (1972: 193).

Also significant to the discussion of masculinity is the scene's description of the men's costumes, as Vadinho and his friends choose to dress as women, despite the social pressures one might face within a masculinist culture such as that of Brazil's Northeast: "*O fato de estarem fantasiados de baiana não deve levar a maliciar-se sobre os cinco rapazes, todos eles de macheza comprovada. Vestiam-se de baiana para melhor brincar, por farsa e molecagem, e não por tendência ao efeminado*" (Amado, 1966: 7). The narration's explicit claim that this choice should not be construed as an expression of 'effeminate tendency' proves symptomatic not only of the gender dynamics in Bahia but also of the nature of Carnaval as a celebration grounded in the subversion of societal norms, including those governing gender performance. At the same time, Vadinho is portrayed as brazenly exposing his genitals during the celebration, acting upon the imperative to demonstrate his manhood in the most literal sense, as his phallus is characterized as monumental evidence of his virility: "*Vadinho, inclusive, amarrara, sob a anágua branca e engomada, enorme raiz de mandioca e, a cada passo, suspendia as saias e exibia o troféu descomunal e pornográfico*" (Amado, 1966: 7).

Similar to what critic Mikhail Bakhtin observes about the medieval carnivalesque tradition, wherein "the basis of laughter, which gives form to carnival rituals, frees them completely from all religious and ecclesiastic dogmatism, from all mysticism and piety" (1984: 7), the celebration Amado depicts relies upon the subversion of norms that would, in other contexts, prove paramount to the construction of social configurations such as masculinity. Vadinho dressed as a woman does not constitute a transgression that results in his masculinity being tarnished; rather, it represents participation in a context wherein his masculine identity can be further elevated, as the Carnaval functions as a liminal occasion during which the rules of seduction become even more reconfigured in men's favor—an advantage Vadinho attempts to exploit before his death. Given that Vadinho is a man who exploits every opportunity within the culture to achieve the sexual gratification he pursues, his death proves all the more tragic. Ultimately, on the ostensibly favorable battlefield of seduction that the Carnaval celebration represents, Vadinho exits defeated.

Nevertheless, Vadinho perishes while engaged in what he cherishes most: exploiting his masculine identity's hegemonic position to obtain what he desires—in this case, sexual gratification. That said, his death constitutes one of the few moments in the novel wherein the character is portrayed through imagery denoting suffering, thereby reinforcing the novel's treatment of masculinity as comparatively lighter than other examples examined. As the following and final section will demonstrate, however, several novels within the thesis's corpus foreground the sexual vulnerability men may experience, positioning the reality of occupying a role to which women are customarily subjected as a critical lens through which to examine the connections between masculine sexuality and violent conduct, whether literal or symbolic. This analytical approach needs the exploration of the boundaries men impose upon themselves regarding participation in a culture of violence and an examination of the interplay between terror of emasculation and dread of homosexual desire that shapes a significant portion of men's responses to the paramount role sexuality assumes in the construction of masculine identity.

3.4.2. The Violated Body: Emasculation, Symbolic Violence, and Masculine Fragility

In popular and reductionist discourses on masculinity, the concept of fear occupies a central position, frequently being identified as the driving force behind an entire culture of asserting masculine identity through violence. The standard psychoanalytic perspective, for instance, “holds that men everywhere are defending against castration fears as a result of identical Oedipal traumas in psychosexual development” (Gilmore, 1990: 25), thereby framing masculine ethical principles as defensive mechanisms against such anxieties. The principal argument appears to be that men must perpetually maintain their status as such by deploying any available means, which, in the context of heterosexual relationships, positions violence as the most readily accessible option, as the physical vulnerabilities of the female body present a differential to be exploited. Masculinity, in this sense, seems to only exist when being afforded a hegemonic position, ultimately being “defined collectively in culture, and sustained in institutions” (Connell, 2000: 11).

However, when examined through its internal relational dynamics, masculinity reveals itself as a self-undermining configuration, wherein the logic of domination applied

to interactions with femininity becomes another—and perhaps more acute—source of anxiety when deployed against other men. This accounts for, as previously established, the hostile reaction numerous heterosexual men exhibit toward being desired by homosexual men, given that sex “appears as a social relation of domination [...] because it is constructed through the fundamental principle of division between the active male and the passive female and because this principle creates, organizes, expresses, and directs desire” (Bourdieu, 2001: 21). Ultimately, men experience profound anxiety at the prospect of occupying a position that, within the heteronormative framework, would be assigned to women, positioning the terror of emasculation as a paramount manifestation of masculine fragility. In many ways, part of being a man is hanging in constant fear of not being perceived as such—a reality that portrays the domain of sexuality as a dangerous sphere.

Beyond anxieties concerning violation by the ethical imperatives that govern one’s gendered identity, the novels within this thesis’s corpus explore what transpires when frameworks of sexual expression intersect with competing moral systems. In *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, for instance, Baldwin examines the violated masculine body as a consequence of divine authority, as Gabriel is characterized as a man terrorized by sexual weakness and vulnerability—not through the threat of physical assault by other men, but through the framing of lust as a transgression that fundamentally violates a body consecrated to God. In the following scene, the concept of agency proves central to this analysis, given that Gabriel capitulates to lust upon encountering an older and clearly sexual woman, whom he perceives as a challenge to his commitment to maintaining his body untainted by carnal desire:

Well (walking homewards, cold and tingling) yes, they did the thing. Lord, how they rocked in their bed of sin, and how she cried and shivered; Lord how her love came down! Yes (walking homewards through the fleeing mist, with the cold sweat standing on his brow), yet, in vanity and the pride of conquest, he thought of her, of her smell, the heat of her body beneath his hands, of her voice, and her tongue, like the tongue of a cat, and her teeth, and her swelling breasts, and how she moved for him, and held him, and laboured with him, and how they fell, trembling and groaning, and locked together, into the world again. And, thinking of this, his body freezing with his sweat, and yet altogether violent with the memory of lust, he came to a tree on a gentle rise, beyond which, and out of sight, lay home, where his mother lay. [...] Then, in a moment, there was silence, only silence, everywhere—the very birds had ceased to sing, and no dogs barked, and no rooster crowed for day. And he felt that this silence was God’s judgment; that all creation had been stilled before the just and awful wrath of God, and waited now to see the sinner—he was the sinner—cut down and banished from the presence of the Lord. And he touched the tree, hardly knowing that he touched it, out of an impulse to be

hidden; and then he cried: 'Oh, Lord, have mercy! Oh, Lord, have mercy on me!' (Baldwin, 2001b: 109).

This striking depiction of Gabriel's anguish upon confronting the reality of his transgression centers on the violence inherent in his moral breach, positioning the question of bodily agency as fundamentally incompatible with the moral framework prescribed by the Gospel. Gabriel ultimately interprets his sexual encounter with the strange woman as an act of violence perpetrated simultaneously against God and his own body, which will remain perpetually marked by scars symbolically embodied in the indelible memory of his transgression. As becomes evident following his conversion and life with children, however, Gabriel eventually identifies himself "with an angry, judgmental God and convinces John of his guilt, which can only be met with damnation" (Wilbourn, 2020: 133), constituting a transparent projection of his own past transgressions, when he compromised his soul by permitting his body to succumb to carnal temptation. Although the patriarchal, masculinist framework that presumably motivates Gabriel's transgression would not condemn his action—given that he, as a man, is culturally sanctioned to engage in sexual relationships—the doctrine of Christianity, so rigidly inscribed upon his consciousness, dictates the contrary. Sex, within this framework, represents an act of violence against the self.

In this regard, the Christian framework that profoundly shapes conceptions of masculinity within Black communities in the United States can be characterized as inherently violent, insofar as the wrathful deity that pervades the novel responds to violence through further acts of violence. Indeed, as Wilbourn contends, "the version of Christianity that Gabriel imposes is usefully read as analogous to the kinds of violent anti-Black structures identified as the primary obstacles to self-realization" (2020: 134). Consequently, this religious paradigm functions as an equally alienating and oppressive force, offering Black, impoverished Americans a theological framework that promises salvation only through adherence to rigid and unstable doctrines—doctrines that ultimately reinforce their subordination and perpetual obligation to demonstrate their worthiness.

In *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, the character who embodies the conception of sex as a source of self-inflicted violence and its role in the anxiety of emasculation is Clemente, who, as previously discussed, responds violently to the absence of Gabriela in his life. Following her ultimate rejection, however, Clemente emerges as a man profoundly

wounded by her loss, which engenders behaviors analogous to the trauma responses exhibited by other male characters, such as Fagundes. In the following scene, for instance, Clemente kills a snake described as possessing Gabriela's beauty, an act of violence interpreted as arising from the psychic wound of her rejection:

Uma cobra-de-vidro saiu do mato, correu na estrada. Na sombra difusa, seu longo corpo brilhava, era belo de ver-se, parecia um milagre na noite da roça. Avançou Clemente, baixou a enxada, em três pedaços partiu-se a cobra-de-vidro. Com outra pancada esmagou-lhe a cabeça.
— Por que tu fez isso? Não é venenosa... Não faz mal a ninguém.
— É bonita demais, só com isso faz mal.
Andaram em silêncio um pedaço de estrada. O negro Fagundes disse:
— Mulher a gente não deve matar. Mesmo que a desgraçada desgrace a vida da gente.
— Quem falou em matar?”
Jamais o faria, não tinha coragem, forças não tinha. Mas era capaz de dar dez anos de vida, a esperança de um pedaço de terra, para vê-la mais uma vez, uma só, seu riso escutar. Era uma cobra-de-vidro, não tinha veneno, mas semeava aflições só de passar entre os homens como um mistério, um milagre. Nos tocos de pau, no fundo da mata, o pio das corujas a chamar Gabriela (Amado, 1966: 416).

The symbolic wound inflicted by Gabriela and her rejection is understood as a violation against Clemente insofar as it invokes within him, as a man, a degree of emotional distress incongruent with the stoic, masculinist paradigms of masculinity that inform his assumptions regarding proper male conduct. By permitting Gabriela to captivate him emotionally, Clemente granted her a degree of agency and equality not sanctioned within patriarchal conceptions of heterosexual relations, wherein the female body provides what the masculine subject requires, thereby rendering the notion of damage to the male, whether physical or emotional, an impossibility. Ultimately, Clemente transgressed the prescriptive codes of masculinity that “conflated the effects of political equality and sexual autonomy, casting women as both lustful temptresses and pious guardians of home and hearth” (Kimmel, 2005: 79), as he became fixated upon the prospect of domestic cohabitation with Gabriela, while she reveled in the sexual autonomy she so profoundly embodies.

Emasculation, therefore, manifests itself in Clemente's predicament through the reversal of sex roles so rigidly enforced within Ilhéus's culture. Gabriela, portrayed once more by her suitor as a temptress, wields a stark form of violence, deploying her sexuality as a weapon that, within the scene, is associated with the beauty of the snake Clemente feels compelled to destroy. Once again, violence, even when symbolic, is met with further

violence, which, in this instance, is physical, though directed not solely against what appears to constitute a representation of Gabriela and the potency of her allure. However, as the narration conveys, one of the most profound consequences of being wounded by Gabriela is the depletion of the vitality and power that would otherwise suffice to enable him to genuinely commit acts of violence against her.

Although within Ilhéus's framework of gender dynamics a man killing a woman is deemed understandable, positioning Clemente in a privileged position with regard to the potential deployment of violence, Gabriela has wounded him so profoundly that contemplating such an act becomes impossible for him. In many respects, Clemente's dilemma illustrates the limitations of masculinity's power and, therefore, what certain gender theorists, such as Joseph Pleck⁷, conceptualize as an instance of power women possess over men, namely 'masculinity-validating power.' As Franklin defines, men attribute this power to women "because of their need to have women play certain roles which will make them feel powerful" (1984: 13), which, in Clemente's case, constitutes immediate acquiescence to his proposition of partnership. By rejecting him after initially allowing him to engage with her in a casual sexual relationship, Gabriela wielded this power to her advantage, leaving Clemente's masculinity devoid of the reaffirmation he so desperately requires.

What Clemente's narrative arc—and, in truth, most of the examples analyzed in this thesis—conveys are the imperfections of masculinity when examined as a configuration that must be sustained through the deployment of violence. As I intend to explore in this thesis's conclusion, violence is, therefore, understood as evidence of masculinity's lack of legitimacy as a hegemonic system and the precarious foundation upon which masculine dominance rests, perpetually requiring reinforcement through coercive means. Sexuality, in this regard, appears to constitute one of masculinity's most vulnerable frontiers, representing a domain wherein the same rules and codes that guide manhood toward a position of dominion may be wielded against it, ultimately exposing the fragility of its foundation.

⁷ Pleck, Joseph: The Male Sex Role. Definition, Problems and Sources of Change. In: Journal of Social Issues, 1976, 32, p. 155-164.

4. Conclusion

For all argumentative purposes, the subject of masculinity is an invisible one. As the configuration that occupies a hegemonic position within gender dynamics, the intrinsic features and systems defining masculine identity are seldom put under examination—a circumstance that frequently results in hypervisibility being conferred upon its purported "opposite" configuration. That is why extensive research and discussion on the nature of femininity continue to flourish, demonstrating that, as Kimmel observes, "to see only the subordinate as 'having' a race, a gender, or a sexuality is exactly the process that reminds the superordinate that he has none" (2005: X). Women, therefore, emerge as the primary subjects of scholarly inquiry, as their position as the "other"—the one to the zero—compels attention toward understanding their desires, normative frameworks, and cultural positions.

To critically analyze the representation of masculinity in cultural productions requires, first, recognition of the necessity of treating the superordinate as an active constituent of a system that subjects it to a series of conventions defining what or who the superordinate is, thereby rendering it visible. This entails, for instance, examining scenes in a novel wherein male characters interact with one another as a rich terrain, transforming them into objects of analysis by foregrounding their speech and actions as integral to the system to which they belong, analogous to the manner in which feminist approaches investigate female figures in literary works. Consequently, every action, utterance, and attitude emanating from a male character may reveal insights that illuminate the dynamics and anxieties defining masculinity, as do the context in which these men are situated and the history that brought them to such positions.

In the works of James Baldwin and Jorge Amado, as might be expected from authors who, each within his respective context, wrote with the explicit aim of unraveling cultural mechanisms, there exists a deliberate endeavor to explore masculinity through the revelation of its constitutive features. Violence, in this regard, emerges as one such feature, ultimately presented as an essential component of masculinity's fabric—functioning both as an instrument through which men performatively assert their identity and as an exigent reality men must endure in order to attain the masculine status they so persistently seek. In many respects, masculinity is, therefore, both defined and sustained through violence, positioning aggressive, combative behavior as merely one manifestation of manhood as an

identity and configuration understood as simultaneously containing and being contained by violence.

Nevertheless, what Baldwin and Amado have demonstrated is that violence constitutes, first and foremost, a masculine institution, wherein the boy learns, through both the deployment and the endurance of violence, the signification of manhood. To attain the position from which he may claim the identity of man, he must comprehend the utility of a punch, the value of a scar, and the centrality of perpetually desiring dominion. This is what John in *Go Tell It on the Mountain* uncovers through observing his father's brutal response to the life of oppression he has endured due to his race, or what Mundinho in *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* recognizes in his efforts to establish himself as a male of significance within the violent, masculinist culture of Ilhéus. As the portrayal of institutions governed by masculine ideals—such as militarism and religion—has revealed, violence functions simultaneously as both pedagogy and proof, positioning it not merely as a rite of passage in the maturation process of the male child, but also as a perpetual reality a man must endure to preserve his status as such.

In addition, as a configuration that manifests itself in relation to other social structures—such as race, class, and sexuality—masculinity is also tied to violence insofar as violence may be deployed in response to the anxieties that emerge from subjection to racist, classist, and heterosexist paradigms of manhood. Rufus in *Another Country*, for instance, responds violently to his entrapment within a self-destructive reality, wherein manhood signifies everything he cannot attain, given his position in American society as a Black, impoverished, sexually conflicted male. Analogous to the class of political males in *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, Rufus's anxieties are manifested through the choices he enacts within the social dynamics of masculinity, engaging in violent rivalries and relations of kinship as a means of seeking currencies of manhood that might afford him security in his masculine identity. Violence, in this regard, proves not only necessary, but, at times, the very framework that underlies the relational dynamics among men.

Violence has also been demonstrated to function as a mechanism of maintenance, positioned as a paramount instrument in the perpetuation of masculine honor, thereby reinforcing the conception of violent behavior as both defined by and constitutive of masculinity. Vadinho, in *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos*, for instance, resorts to violence against his wife as a means of reestablishing his hegemonic position when she, as a

woman, entertains aspirations of equality. Similarly, Rufus demonstrates readiness to employ aggression when the symbolic territory of his sexuality is threatened by sexual advances from another man. Violence, therefore, is positioned as men's most prevalent and perhaps most efficacious resource in the process of maintenance that masculinity, as a complex configuration, perpetually demands of them.

Violence is also understood as profoundly intertwined with the codes of masculinity when one examines the dynamics of masculine sexuality, as both Baldwin and Amado demonstrate acute concern with the role sex plays in the articulated notions of manhood. Characters such as Rufus, Vadinho, Gabriel, and Clemente position themselves as sexual subjects insofar as they deploy violence either within the courtship processes of sexual dynamics or in response to the implications of being a sexual being. Nevertheless, the nexus between masculine sexuality and violence becomes men's paramount anxiety when the prospect of emasculation through sexual violation is recognized as a possibility within the self-destructive dynamics of dominion inherent to masculinity. Baldwin and Amado, in this regard, conceive of sexuality, when conjoined with violence, as the genesis and terminus of male identity, interwoven with constructs of embodiment, power, and agency.

Ultimately, the works of James Baldwin and Jorge Amado convey scenarios in which masculinity cannot be comprehended without acknowledging the reality of violence, whether physical, political, systemic, or symbolic. The characters in *Another Country* and *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, for instance, construct notions of male identity by exploring and embodying it in accordance with the violent and oppressive frameworks of racial discrimination in the United States. Similarly, the figures portrayed in *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* and *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos* negotiate the concept of manhood either in conformity with or in opposition to the traditional, violent, and exclusionary Northeastern Brazilian codes of masculinity. All the anxieties and achievements these characters experience regarding their gender identities encompass the concept of violence, functioning either as the agent of their demise, the instrument of choice when their masculine status is contested, or the structure sustaining a culture that confers upon them a hegemonic position in society. In both authors' literary universes, then, to be a man is to deploy violence, endure violence, accept violence, and respond to violence. Violence is, ultimately, inextricable from masculinity itself—even when employed to signify that one is not, in fact, a man at all.

5. Bibliography

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