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Queering the Mask: Performance and Fantasy in Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* and Tahar Ben Jelloun's *Leaving Tangier*

Kanika Bryant

North Carolina A&T State University

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department: English

Major: English and African American Literature

Major Professor: Dr. Faye Spencer-Maor

Greensboro, North Carolina

2013

School of Graduate Studies
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
This is to certify that the Master's Thesis of

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has met the thesis requirements of
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University

Greensboro, North Carolina
2013

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Biographical Sketch

Kanika A. Bryant was born on February 22, 1989 in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. After graduating from Northeastern High School, she attended Elizabeth City State University—a historically black university, which first opened in 1891 as a normal school for black teachers. During her tenure at Elizabeth City State University, she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in English and attained membership in numerous organizations including: Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated, and the National Council of Negro Women. She has been featured in Who's Who among Colleges and Universities and has received various awards such as Blazer Scholar recognition and the Wadaran Latamore Kennedy 4.0 GPA Scholar distinction. She is currently a candidate for the Master of Arts in English and African American Literature degree from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. Her future plans are to pursue a doctoral degree while teaching literature and composition at the collegiate level.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all individuals who are Queer first—those who feel most oppressed by their sexual identities. Here is your voice! Thank you for daring to live, dream, and love through all of the challenges that society places at your feet. You are not alone nor invisible.

Acknowledgements

It is with the utmost gratitude that I write this portion of my text. The individuals who have been proactive in aiding me in my thesis writing process as well as in my graduate study in general are innumerable. Thus, I would like to express my appreciation to all who have touched my life in the past year and half. However, specifically, I would like to first thank my mother and father for their financial contribution to my education, and my mother in particular for instilling in me the momentous value of education and hard work.

I would also like to send an ultra-special thanks to all members of my thesis committee. Dr. Faye Spencer-Maor, my primary advisor and professor, thank you for all of your invaluable advice, patience, and guidance. Likewise, Dr. Michelle Levy, my secondary advisor and professor, I thank you for introducing me to postcolonial literature thereby planting the seed of inspiration for this text, as well as sharing your wisdom and promptly responding to any need that I may have. I would also like to thank Dr. Pauline Uwakweh, graduate chair, for her efforts to always keep me abreast of due dates and policies.

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While I cannot name everyone, anything you have done for me through this process has not gone without notice, thus charge any oversight to my mind and not my heart.

I love you all and I could not have done this without you!

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Abstract

This text juxtaposes Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* and Tahar Ben Jelloun's *Leaving Tangier*, examining the texts' cultural parallels to aid in an investigation and analysis of the queer protagonists in each text in order to show that because these protagonists self-consciously suppress part or all of their sexual identities, the act of temporary and permanent performance or passing becomes a central strategy utilized to navigate through their societal positions. The consciousness studies of both W.E.B. Du Bois and Frantz Fanon, as well as examinations of queer social identities as dictated by queer theory, will enhance the theoretical framework for this phenomenon.

CHAPTER 1

Queering the Mask: Queer Performance and Fantasy in Jelloun's *Leaving Tangier* and Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven*

> Why should the world be over-wise,
> In counting all our tears and sighs?
> Nay, let them only see us, while
> We wear the mask.
> -Paul Lawrence Dunbar

In his seminal work, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois presents his theory of the double consciousness of African-Americans wherein he hypothesizes that all African-Americans have a twoness - that of being black and American- two disparate entities in one body. Frantz Fanon, a Franco-Caribbean psychiatrist, later applies the same idea to the plight of the colonized in *Black Skins, White Masks*. In his comparative analysis of the two works, Marc Black states:

> Within an American context, W.E.B. Du Bois defines double consciousness as blacks being forced to view themselves through white perspectives while maintaining their own self definitions. Works of Frantz Fanon, and other classic writers on colonialism, show evidence that colonized peoples also experience the condition of double consciousness. This similarity of double consciousness between people of color in the U.S. and colonized people historically supports the claim of close connections between racism in the U.S. and colonialism internationally (Black 393).

Henceforth, the commonality between these two men's texts', separated by fifty years, is their examination of the mental anguish that duality of identity may cause in marginalized peoples. Presently, the term double consciousness is defined as the "multiple awareness of the ethnic member of a majority culture"(Childers and Hentzi 88). Similarly, for colonized subjects, the

term may be deployed to describe peoples who may be a part of a cultural majority; however, due to their colonization, a minority rules over them. They are thus rendered subaltern and subsequently, they too, assume multiple awarenesses.

Unfortunately, in an attempt to negotiate this duality, many oppressed individuals resort to passing for the governing body, as evident in many turn of the century African-American fictions and narratives wherein mulatto or light complexioned black characters pass for white. Such performances involve either temporary (situational) passing, wherein an individual may volley between identities, or permanent passing, wherein an individual cannot readopt a former identity without severe life altering consequences. Fanon and Du Bois ultimately conclude that for individuals who suffer from double consciousness or the plight of the colonized to maintain mental stability, they must actively exercise resistance (Moore 755).

Although consciousness is most often discussed with regard to matters of race and gender, sexuality is an aspect of one's identity that also drastically affects one's awareness, specifically when an individual's sexual identity does not correlate with the predominantly heteronormative[1] values of society. Consequently, the consciousnesses of these individuals may be affected, a phenomenon explored in Tahar Ben Jelloun's *Leaving Tangier* and Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven*.

Moroccan novelist Tahar Ben Jelloun's thirtieth novel *Partir* (Leaving) was translated into English (Leaving Tangier) by Linda Coverdale from French; however, written in 2006, it has yet to be even minimally critically reviewed or discussed in the English language, or particularly by Americans. This could testify the continued disconnect between the East and

[1]Heteronormativity dictates that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation, and sexual and marital relations are most (or only) fitting between a man and a woman. Consequently, a "heteronormative" view or value is one that involves alignment of biological sex, sexuality, gender identity, and gender roles.

West. In an interview with Jelloun, the author asserts - "*Leaving Tangier* was well received in countries very different from Morocco, like Finland, Sweden, and Korea, and I hope it will help American readers to better understand what happens, for example, at the Mexican border. The problems are the same; only the countries are different"(Introduction).

Despite Jelloun's hopes, Americans scholars' indifference to this powerful text may underscore their American scholars' inability to draw parallels between the text and Western ideals beyond the latter's themes of diaspora and postcoloniality.

Jelloun's *Leaving Tangier* tells the story of central protagonist Azel, and his sister, Kenza, who fantasize about reinventing themselves in Spain. This is because postcolonial Tangier, the novel's primary setting, reflects drastic economical impoverishment so that even Azel, with a formal legal education, is unemployed and reduced to infrequent menial labor positions for survival. However, when he meets a wealthy homosexual Spaniard he is able to bring his dreams to fruition. At this juncture, Azel leaves his mother, sister, and homeland and moves to Barcelona with Miguel, where Kenza later joins them. While in Spain, both Kenza and Azel realize their true identities as they are stripped of their cultural values in a world of deception and disillusionment. Identity politics is likewise a common theme in Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven.* In this work, the principal protagonist Clare Savage and her family leave their native Jamaica for America when Clare is a child (1960's). In the United States, Clare's father, Boy Savage, passes for white and immediately adopts American customs, to her mother Kitty's chagrin. Kitty eventually chooses to leave Boy and Clare and returns to the island with Clare's younger sister, leaving Clare psychologically damaged by her abandonment. She thus seeks to form her own identity with the influence of her father, her allegiance to Jamaica, and other factors to guide her. A secondary protagonist of the work, and Clare's confidant, is gender

and sexuality androgynous Harry/Harriet, a transgendered bisexual who must choose between his/her two genders in order to survive in a homophobic and intolerant culture.

No Telephone to Heaven, written by Jamaican-American author Michelle Cliff and published in 1987, is a sequel to Cliff's first novel *Abeng*. Unlike Jelloun's text, Cliff's novel has received much attention in America due to its adroit articulation of historical, spacial, as well as identity paradoxes and politics. Many scholars have analyzed *Cliff's No Telephone to Heaven* and discuss her position as a postmodern and postcolonial writer, representing both the third-world (Jamaica) and first world (America/England) as well as Cliff's relation to her protagonist, Clare. The former notion is reflected in "Michelle Cliff and the Authority of Identity, wherein Sally O'Driscoll asserts**:**

> The reception of her work indicates that Cliff herself- her embodiment as an author- has been an important factor in the evaluation and classification of her writing. As author, Cliff stands at the point of connection- or rupture - between two major non-congruent constructions of identity: third-world postcolonial-ist and first-world postmodern. Also relevant are debates about "race" a social construction (and its different operations in an American or a Jamai-can context), and about gender and sexuality as constituent components of identity (O'Driscoll 56).

Although O'Driscoll's claims effectively speak to the authorial voice that Cliff uses in her negotiations of the duality of being for hybridized as well as sexual, racial, and gender deviant persons. But this thesis will focus not on Cliff's own identity and authenticity but on her ability to create a character, unlike herself, who also has extreme identity dividedness: Harry/Harriet. Like O'Driscoll, Suzanne Bost also discusses race and colonization's effect on individual identity in *NTH*; however, she reflects on Clare instead of Cliff: "Although she [Clare] often

feels "split into two parts-white and not white, town and country, scholarship and privilege" (109)-this novel and its sequel, *No Telephone to Heaven*, trace Clare's eventual reconciliation of these two halves" (Bost 681). Here, Bost concentrates on Clare's duality to binary oppositions that plague her, neglecting Harry/Harriet's obvious doubleness due to his/her gender and sexual otherness. But Nada Elia explicitly addresses queerness in Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* in her work "A Man Who Wants to Be a Woman": Queerness as/and Healing Practices in Michelle Cliff's "No Telephone to Heaven". Although we will later see that this essay contains many fallacies and inconsistencies, it nevertheless provokes a number of interesting ideas thus forming a necessary point of reference for my discussion.

Apart from the common theme of identity, *Leaving Tangier* and *No Telephone to Heaven* appear dissimilar. However, Jennie Livingston's ground-breaking documentary *Paris is Burning* provides readers with an unlikely yet potent approach to interpret the active use of performance as/or passing in the texts of Jelloun and Cliff. The main participants in Livingston's film, Dorian Gray, Pepper Labeija, Willi Ninja, and Venus Xtravaganza, are entertainers in the 1980's New York black drag competitions wherein predominantly homosexual or transgendered men and women perform as female and male illusionists embodying the likeness of American celebrities, models, and elite. Various categories also exist for these men, and sometimes women, to perform as soldiers, professional businessmen and women, and academics. These individuals view these "balls" as an escape to a fantasized world where they can be who/what they want to be. This possibility is precisely what the "real world" discourages due to the participants' often low socioeconomic status, racial marginalization, as well as their rejection by a heterosexist

society that classifies these individuals as "other". Like the individuals filmed in the documentary, the queer[2] protagonists of Cliff and Jelloun's texts utilize performance for survival.

This thesis will juxtapose Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* and Tahar Ben Jelloun's *Leaving Tangier*, examining their cultural parallels to aid in the investigation and analysis of the queer protagonists in each text. It seeks to show that due to these protagonists' self-conscious efforts to suppress part or all of their sexual identities, the act of temporary and permanent performance or passing[3] becomes a central strategy utilized to navigate through their societal positions. The consciousness studies of both W.E.B. Du Bois and Frantz Fanon, as well as examinations of queer social identities as dictated by queer theory, will provide the theoretical framework for this phenomenon.

[2] Queer will be used throughout this paper as an umbrella term to describe any individual who defies heteronormative/heterosexist social structures either physically, through sexual acts and gender deviant performance or psychologically.

[3] The terms passing, performing, and performance will be used interchangeably throughout this text.

CHAPTER 2

Cultural Context: Two of the Most Homophobic Places/Cultures on Earth

In order to examine closely the consciousnesses of the queer characters presented in the primary texts, one must first discuss cultural factors that may contribute to or shape the characters' identities. To do this, one should consider the social and cultural contexts in which each work is written, specifically each culture's view of homosexuality, sexuality, and gender otherness. We will begin with Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven*, which is set in postcolonial Jamaica in the 1960's and 70's. Jamaica received full independence in 1962 after centuries of first Spanish then British control.

Since its independence, the Jamaican government has maintained a stark history of criticism for its fervent subjugation of the human rights of its citizens and has since been deemed "The most homophobic place on Earth" by human rights activist and New York Times columnist Tim Padgett. Boasting laws that explicitly prohibit and criminalize homosexual relations between men, Jamaica is a homophobic breading ground. This intolerance is clearly expressed through the insurgence of hate crimes in Jamaica and the blatant denial of human rights for the victims of such crimes. Underscoring this notion, Padgett writes:

> Though familiar to Americans primarily as a laid-back beach destination, Jamaica is hardly idyllic. The country has the world's highest murder rate. And its rampant violence against gays and lesbians has prompted human-rights groups to confer another ugly distinction: the most homophobic place on earth. In the past two years, two of the island's most prominent gay activists, Brian Williamson and Steve Harvey, have been murdered — and a crowd even celebrated over

> Williamson's mutilated body. Perhaps most disturbing, many anti-gay assaults have been acts of mob violence (Padgett).

Similarly, the writings of Jamaican-American author Thomas Glave illuminate the Jamaican culture of homophobic fanaticism. Glave's short story "Whose Song," from his longer work *Whose Song and other stories*, depicts the horrendous raping of a young lesbian. In this text, Glave explores the phenomenon of corrective rape that has become a growing concern in Jamaica and other extreme-heterosexist societies. Glave writes, Yes, now they're waiting to rape her, but how can they know?...They have been taught, have learned well and well….Cassandra, fifteen, in the light. On her way to the forests. In the light. Hasn't known a man yet. Hasn't wanted to. How can they know? She prefers Tonya's lips" (Glave 235). Here, Glave's words imply that hate and intolerance of homosexuals is taught in the Jamaican culture, and while women are often spared their lives because women's homosexuality can be corrected through the notion of corrective rape, gay Jamaican men are not so lucky. These individuals are often raped, brutalized, and horrifically murdered due to their sexual preference, as Padgett's writings exemplify. It appears that Jamaican men's concepts of masculinity, as well as strict Christian and Rastafarian anti-gay sentiments, greatly impact Jamaica's homophobia. Keon West, a contributor to Jamaica's premier newspaper *The Gleaner* writes:

> In the 1970s, Jamaica experienced severe economic decline, reducing men's ability to demonstrate their masculinity through legally attained financial success and achievement. This had profound effects on consequent construction of masculinity in Jamaica. Because of the dearth of legal, legitimate and achievement-based yardsticks of manhood, many young Jamaican men resorted to defining their masculinity primarily through dangerousness and anti-femininity, particularly in the area of sexuality. Consequently, in

> contemporary Jamaica, masculinity has become little more than violence and the total rejection of anything perceived of as feminine or homosexual. In Jamaica, a 'badman' is the ultimate heterosexual male: strong, tough, and sexually successful with women. A 'b-man' is his antithesis; weak, feminine and homosexual. Music and wider culture support this view, discouraging all appearances of homosexuality or femininity, and encouraging violent responses to any male who breaks the societal code by appearing feminine or gay. In Jamaica, real men are soldiers called to defend the borders of masculinity (West).

This anti-gay sentiment prevents such figures as Cliff's bisexual and transgendered Harry/Harriet from safely negotiating his societal position. When Harry/Harriet is first seen but not formally introduced in the text, he is presented as a flamboyant effeminate man. It is not until later in the novel when H/H's character is more fully developed that his/her two-ness is revealed, as well as his childhood rape. H/H states:

> I have been tempted in my life to think symbol—that what he did to me is but a symbol for what they did to all of us, always bearing in mind some of us, many of us, also do it to each other. But that's not right. I only suffered what my mother suffered—no more, no less. Not symbol, not allegory, not something in a story or a dialogue by Plato. No, man, I am merely a person who felt the overgrown cock of a big white man pierce the asshole of a lickle Black bwai—there it is. That is all there is to it (Cliff 13).

Harry/Harriet's myriad indifference to his violation is made clear in his candid description of his childhood rape, what is all too common in Jamaica; however, his sentiment seems to be a skillful and elaborate disguise to pacify his conscious knowledge of his oppressive state as a subaltern member of Jamaican society. This is due to his illegitimacy as the product of his mother's rape by her employer and his transgenderedness. H/H chooses to view his victimization as a mere

incident and not a more significant metaphoric anomaly. However, when later comparing the characterizations of Harry/Harriet and Azel of Jelloun's *Leaving Tangier* we recognize the metaphoric value of rape as each character is literally and figuratively raped by hegemonic power structures.

Now let us consider the cultural context of *Leaving Tangier*. The novel opens in 1990's Tangier, Morocco. While post-colonial Tangier does not have the same reputation for innumerable instances of hate crimes enacted against homosexuals, the Islamic tradition that ninety-nine percent of Tangerines follow does not condone homosexuality (Religion in Morocco). In the article, "Boys Like Scattered Pearls: Morrocan Homosexuality in Multicultural Amsterdam," authors Elidor Mehilli and Rachel Moolenar write:

> Nowadays, for numerous Muslims, homosexuality is symbolic for those aspects of Western societies that are deemed sinful and dangerous. In discussions, homosexuality is often framed as an exclusively sexual activity; void of emotion; an instance of indulgence in perversion and decadence. Even beyond the practice itself, the concept of a homosexual partnership is strictly linked to a liberal Western way of living and thus considered foreign to a Muslim culture. For instance, it is not uncommon to come across comments by first and second generation Moroccans confidently establishing that such conduct does not exist in their home communities (Mehilli and Moolenar).

As a testament to Moroccan Muslims' notions of the veritable non-existence of homosexuality in their culture, Azel's mother, a devout Muslim, denies the nature of Azel's relationship with Miguel. Although Azel never formally explains the sexual aspects of his and Miguel's relationship to his mother, it is brutally obvious that he has entered into a kyriarchal bargaining

system[4]. Ultimately, in exchange for a visa, a place to stay, and reliable work, Azel takes part in a romantic/sexual relationship with Miguel. This relationship has severe ramifications as it drastically affects Azel's consciousness. Azel becomes an extremely hypersexual being as he attempts to maintain his heterosexuality through persistent intercourse with multiple women to outweigh his shameful sexual escapades with Miguel. This is primarily due to the Islamic culture's ideals of masculinity and manhood that Azel adopts. Azel states:

> I was taught that love was something for women. Men, well, they're supposed to be strong, unspeakable, you know, all those clichés. Now I feel guilty: I work for this man during the day, and at night I have to pleasure him. I don't know how long I can hold out. I need to see you more often- I'm so afraid of ending up doubting my own sexuality(Jelloun 82).

Through this quotation, we see that Azel's perception of his manhood has been undermined. Because Azel is forced to subvert his heterosexuality through kyriarchal bargaining, he sacrifices both his sexuality and dignity and eventually loses his manhood, or what he considers to be an essential part of it—his virility, as he is rendered impotent after prolonged usage of Viagra.

In these many instances, one sees that Jamaican and Islamic culture prohibits gender and sexual deviance, and thus causes subaltern Azel and H/H to become victims of their own consciousness as they attempt resistance. More importantly, it is primarily the colonial history of both countries that has resulted in the subalternship of these figures.

Furthermore, Spain, Miguel's native country has its own views of homosexuality.

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[4]Kyriarchy is a neologism coined by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza to describe interconnected, interacting, and self-extending systems of domination and submission, in which a single individual might be oppressed in some relationships and privileged in others. Kyriarchy is not limited to male domination of women.

This is evident as Azel embarks upon a new beginning with Miguel marking the shifting of *Leaving Tangier's* setting from Morocco to Barcelona, Spain. Miguel is a much more sexually liberated character. Written in 2006 but set in the mid 1990's, it is not Miguel's class status alone that allows him to be a much more sexually liberated being than Harry/Harriet and Azel, it is also the Spanish culture from which he hails that permits the adept exhibition of gender/sexual deviant expression. This is evident in writer Alberta Mira's assertions:

> Silence, then, is a central feature of perceptions and articulations of homosexuality in Spanish culture. It is not a total silence, but a strongly focused and discriminating one: representation of homosexuality is acceptable as long as the mode of the enunciation is not pro-homosexual. Treatments of homosexuality towards the end of the 1970s provide an illustration of the way in which such attitudes towards identity become something of a trap for Spanish gay people (Mira 245).

Mira contends that many Spaniards adopt the 'Mediterranean model of homosexuality'. This means that homosexuality is not even used as a discriminatory label as long as the 'active' role in a relationship is adopted. This distinction between active and passive is key to any delimitation of sexual identities; virility depends on the role, and can easily be safeguarded. For those who defend the Mediterranean model of sexuality, this is having best of both worlds: one's desire can be fulfilled without necessarily having the attached stigmatization of a homosexual identity.

CHAPTER 3

Trans-Erasure: Harry/Harriet's Battle with Consciousness and Active Performance to Achieve Totality and Visibility

> For many years I lived a personal hell. Like the great number of lost souls, I inhabited that half-shadow no-man's land which exists between the boundaries of the two sexes. Throughout the world there have been thousands of us furtive humans who have created for ourselves a fantasy as old as civilization itself: a fantasy which enables us, if only temporarily, to turn our back on the hard realism of life. –Gladys Bentley

Transgendered or transsexual by definition indicates a duality or twoness of sex or gender. For individuals who identify as trans, their twoness also exemplifies a duality of consciousness. This duality is manifested in Cliff's characterization of Harry/Harriet which introduces readers to a subaltern, bi-sexual, transgendered/transsexual personage who dismantles binary oppositions of both gender and sexuality. When asked about her creation of Harry/Harriet's caricature, Cliff explains that she wanted him/her to "portray a character who would be the most despised character in Jamaica, and show how heroic he is" (Elia 353). While H/H may be the embodiment of one of the most hated individuals in Jamaica, he also represents a subject who is virtually erased from canonized literature and even American culture. While violence against trans-individuals may be almost expected in the Jamaican and Moroccan cultures, through *Paris is Burning*, viewers learn that cruelty against trans-individuals is even extended to American soil, evident in the tragic rape and murder of transsexual Venus Xtravaganza, a prominent character in the documentary, who is slain before filming ends. In her informative work, *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People*, Viviane Namaste discusses this tragedy through her criticism of Judith Butler's analysis of Venus' death. Butler maintains that Venus' demise is due to her crossing gender lines; thus, living as a woman, she is treated like one—raped and murdered. Namaste refutes this notion;

explicating that Venus is killed because she is a transsexual prostitute, not a woman. She goes on to quote Angie Extravaganza, mother of the house of Extravaganza, and Venus' extremely close friend. Speaking on Venus' death Angie comments, "But that's part of life. That's part of being a transsexual in New York City and surviving" (Namaste 13). This declaration solidifies the invisibility of transgendered peoples. Venus' murderer remains at large, and her family was not even contacted by law enforcement officials, but by her friends.

Furthermore, apart from the heteronormative Jamaican and American cultures, individuals such as Harry/Harriet seem to be non-existent in even queer discourse, because they are often considered not simply sexual deviants as most lesbian, gay, and bisexual figures are characterized, but these figures are often referred to as sexual anomalies. This may be because as queer theoretical texts have substantially increased in the last few decades, lesbigay (lesbian, bisexual, and gay) figures have become more normalized. This normalization has caused great disparities within the now, allegedly widely inclusive, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer/questioning) community, leading to the separation of many transgendered, transsexual, and queer identifying peoples from the greater LGB populous. As a testament to this, Namaste confers that the underrepresentation of such characters is due to the invisibility of trans-peoples in not only literature but queer theory as well, an avenue where one would assume, such voices would dominate the discourse. Namaste states,

> In recent years, the field known as queer theory has witnessed a veritable explosion of essays, presentations, and books on the subject of drag, gender, performance, and transsexuality. Yet these works have shown very little concern for the individuals who live, work, and identify themselves as drag queens, transsexuals, or transgenderists. Although, the violation of compulsory sex/gender relations is one of the topics most

> frequently addressed within queer theory, this body of knowledge rarely considers the implications of an enforced sex/gender system for the people who have defied it, who live outside of it, or who have been killed because of it. Critics in queer theory write page after page on the inherent liberation of transgressing normative sex/gender codes, but they have nothing to say about the precarious position of the transsexual woman who is battered and who is unable to access a woman's shelter because she was not born a biological woman (Namaste 9-10)

In this declaration, Namaste asserts that even when trans-individuals are discussed in queer theology it is to present the collective otherness of such figures and not the lives and problems of the individual(s). Therefore, Cliff transcends this obvious boundary formed in queer theory and literature by vividly depicting the life and difficulties of a transgendered person who must dodge threats of violence daily in a severely homophobic culture, thereby confirming his heroism in his determination to live and even dream in a society that attempts to prohibit him from doing so. Ultimately, Harry/Harriet represents warring identities, but more importantly the presence of multiple consciousnesses that influence his/her choice to perform/pass in order to achieve his fantasy of visibility as well as fulfilling his desire to be whole or complete that he shares with the cast of *Paris is Burning*.

Paris is Burning begins with an unnamed speaker reflecting upon his father's warnings regarding his race and sexuality:

> "I remember my dad use to say you have three strikes against you in this world every black man has two, that they're just black and they're male, but you're black and you're a male and you're gay, you're going to have a hard fucking time, he said if you're going to do this you're going to have to be stronger than you've ever imagined" (Paris is Burning).

In this testimony, the strikes that the narrator speaks of may be compared to Du Bois' theory of double or warring consciousnesses: Du Bois states, "One ever feels his twoness, -- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (Du Bois 215). Each strike in the aforementioned instance serves as a consciousness. For Harry/Harriet, as a poor, culturally unaccepted transgendered and later transsexual person, he is plagued with a male, female, and subaltern consciousness.

Furthermore, as if the mere presence of double or multiple consciousnesses/identities is not enough, many individuals are also forced to privilege one identity over another in any given space, forming a hierarchy. This is evident in Gregory Connerly's assertion that many black lesbigays feel inclined to privilege either their black or homosexual identities. Connerly poses the question: are you black first or are you queer? Utilizing a study conducted by Johnson (1982), Connerly asserts that while a large portion of the African-American community is notoriously homophobic, some black homosexuals still feel most comfortable and at "home" in black heterosexual culture/commune. Speaking of the described black identified gays Connerly states: "They felt their black identities were more important because skin color is more visible than sexual orientation, which they could hide. Hence, they believed skin color had a greater influence on how others interacted with them" (Connerly 8). On the contrary, Connerly suggests that gay identified blacks who primarily function in white gay culture and often have white partners feel it is their sexuality that most oppresses them. Ultimately, all of these individuals who subjugate one identity to privilege another, are in short, passing, thus we will now analyze Connerly's query in relation to Harry/Harriet.

To address H/H's queer versus black quandary, one must divulge into Jamaica's history of extreme pigmentocracy. Cliff describes this phenomenon: "A lesson from the third form on the history of Jamaica sprang to mind: mulatto, offspring of African and white; sambo, offspring of African and mulatto; quadroon, offspring of mulatto and white; mestee, offspring of quadroon and white; mestefeena, offspring of mestee and white" (Cliff 56). Here, one sees that in Jamaica, because virtually everyone who has a drop of African blood is considered black, categories have been devised to stratify individuals into classes. Generally, one's light complexion is an indication of their close relation to British wealth. However, Harry/Harriet, a result of his mother's rape by her Indian employer, does not fit into any of Cliff's defined categorizations, resulting in yet another form of exclusion. It becomes apparent that the luxury of choice and acceptance in one community over another is not extended to H/H. This is because there is no homosexual community for him to seek refuge. Thus, regardless of any ties he may have to Jamaican culture, he is forced by society to be queer first although he has a deep felt love for his people and country. This is because he is still black, despite his father's ancestry, and suffers the subjugation of the colonized; however, his sexuality is what most oppresses him thus separating him from the central Jamaican populous. Moreover, H/H's case becomes even more complex, because he is not merely homosexual, he is bisexual and transgendered. Therefore, he still feels that he must at times privilege or choose one identity, because he cannot safely survive while physically and mentally divided. It is this notion to privilege one or more of his multiple identities that result in Harry/Harriet's numerous performances.

Harry/Harriet's twoness and his first performance are rendered upon his introduction in the text:

> Harry/Harriet puts on a bikini-bra stretched across his hairy, delicately mounded chest, panties cradling his cock and balls—and starts to dance to "Hey, Jude." People laugh but nobody takes Harry/Harriet to heart. "You won't laugh so when I am appearing in London with the Royal Ballet and the Queen come fe see me"(Cliff 21)

In this display, H/H enacts gender deviant performance for a crowd of his family members and peers. His/her seemingly daring choice to don a revealing bikini indicates his transgenderism and his inability to accept socially constructed notions of gender roles and dress suggesting that perhaps his actions denote his "authentic" self; however, we will later see that this act is one of his many performances. Thus, what is most significant here is H/H's decision to perform for this particular group of individuals. It is in this setting that Harry/Harriet is most at home and thus feels safe, comfortable, and least affected by his consciousnesses. Because of this, it is also in this atmosphere that H/H most avidly works to achieve his fantasy of visibility--his desire to be seen and given a voice. Although, H/H knows that due to his low social status which is a direct consequence of his lack of financial resources, education, and otherness, he will never appear before the Queen, he, at this juncture, simply wishes for his family and friends to take notice of him—to be visible to them, and for his own dreams to be taken seriously by his kinsman. However, because these individuals do not "take Harry/Harriet to heart" his attempts are ineffectual. This is founded in Cliff's exclamation,

> Then Harry/Harriet, boy-girl, Buster's brother-sister, half-brother-sister actually, who was always strange, since childhood, they say, but everyone tolerates him, as if measuring their normalness against his strangeness. He is only one, after all, one that nature did not claim. He is vastly outnumbered, will—unless they protect him, because

> he is also one of them, though apart from them, reminding them of their wholeness—he will end up in some back-o'-wall alley in Raetown fucked to death (Cliff 21).

Here we see that despite H/H's feelings of safety amongst his/her family, he remains unsafe, because they too view him as an anomaly, as they attempt to measure their own normality by the tape of H/H's perceived difference. Because Harry/Harriet cannot be protected by his family, his survival is contingent on his ultimate choice to privilege or do away with a part of himself. This is made apparent in his declaration to Clare: "The time will come for both of us to choose. For we will have to make the choice. Cast our lot. Cyann live split. Not in this world" (Cliff 131).

Returning to *Paris is Burning*, Harriet's fantasy seems to parallel the aspirations of fame, notoriety, and distinction that fill Venus, Pepper, Dorian, and the rest of the "children" that participate in the ball scene. In a brief segment with a gay male performer in the ball circuit, the male who remains nameless describes performing in a ball: "It's like the looking glass, wonderland, whatever you want to be you'll be" (Paris is Burning). Harry/Harriet, at times, lives his/her life this way in an attempt to separate himself from his own reality. This is most evident when he invites Clare into his performance as an African King. Harry states:

> 'Yes', extending his hand, rising slightly from his seat, only as far as he imagined a prince of Africa would rise to greet a stranger, 'I am Prince Badnigga, and this my consort, Princess Cunnilinga; we are here for the International Festival of Practitioners of Obeah, my dear Chap…I see you have noticed my eyelid…these are the colors of our national flag…At the first sign of manhood each young warrior in our country must do the same…'(Cliff 126).

H/H's public performance as a King allows him to transcend his subaltern status into a fantasy world of wealth and prestige. Harry/Harriet performs at this juncture for a male and female

couple who are touring the island. Furthermore, as H/H plays into the exoticism of African figures, his otherness (his use of make-up) becomes exoticized and thus accepted versus rejected as gender deviance. Here, the audience for which Harry/Harriet performs is once again tantamount because they are tourist, and more prone to Orientalist views of the islands natives, through this audience's gaze H/H's deviance is appreciated, because tourists often expect and therefore embrace extreme difference too; like H/H's family, the audience measures their own normality against the incongruity of a foreign culture.

Another example of public or social manifestations of identity that shape one's consciousness can be found in the public performance of Harry/Harriet, discussed in the introduction to his character, which does not necessarily evince his private actions. When reflecting on Harry/Harriet's previous performance Clare exclaims, "Harry, how come you talk this way when at the party you were going on about dancing in England before the Queen?" asked Clare. Harry/Harriet's response: "Oh man, girlfriend, is nuh what dem expect from me? Nuhjus give dem what dem expect? Battyman trash. No harm. Our people kind of narrow, poor souls. Foolish sometimes. Cyaan understand the likes of me"(Cliff 127). In this instance, one sees that everyday life becomes a ballroom stage for Harry/Harriet, like the cast of *Paris is Burning*. It seems these individuals feel inclined to appease society by acting as society expects them to at all times. Namaste also addresses this phenomenon. She states,

> Even when nontranssexual women, transsexual women, and males in drag are allowed in gay male establishments, they remain peripheral to the activities in hand. Drag queens, for example, are tolerated as long as they remain in a space designated for performance: the stage. According to Michelle de Ville, interviewed in the fanzine Fuzzbox (circa

1990), “The drag queen in the gay world is meant to be on stage or ‘walking’ the streets. Don’t get off the stage, baby! It’s like the bird in the gilded cage”(Namaste 10-11). Namaste maintains that in social settings where transsexuals or drag performers are permitted they are restricted to the stage and are always expected to perform. Cliff also renders a similar contention, as Clare speaks about Jamaican people: “For her people, but a very few, did not suffer freaks gladly—unless the freaks became character, entertainment. Mad, unclean diversions”(Cliff 171). Performance thus becomes an act of attempted conscious resistance for some against a society that prohibits their very being; however, these performances often only work to reinforce the individuals’ perceived difference. Performance consequently becomes the actors’ identity. This is the same for Harry/Harriet who, after a constant battle with his divided identity, elects to permanently wear “the mask” and live as a woman.

In *"A Man Who Wants to Be a Woman": Queerness as/and Healing Practices in Michelle Cliff's "No Telephone to Heaven"*, Nada Elia writes:“Performance, a practice ever present in queerness, characterizes Harry/Harriet from our very encounter with him/her, and becomes critical for her survival towards the end” (Elia 355). Elia then contends that Harry/Harriet is able to transcend hegemonic binairsm, allowing him to be the only character in Cliff’s text who is made whole throughout the novel and because of this, he is able to act as a physical and psychological savior to main character Clare and others. Although Elia’s arguments prove to be quite thought provoking, Elia’s claim regarding Harry/Harriet’s wholeness is inaccurate. This is essentially because no one should ever be considered whole, specifically, a character as fragmented as Harry/Harriet. Revealing his new identity to Clare and his months of studying to be a healer and nurse Harry/Harriet states: “The choice is mine, man, is made. Harriet live and Harry be no more” (Cliff 168). Unable to afford surgery, Harriet’s choice

to permanently perform as a woman that will jeopardize his/her life, if revealed, simply denotes his/her courage and bravery, not her wholeness. Thus, despite Elia's contention that "H/H's passing allows her/him to like her/his life in the most fulfilling and productive ways possible," Harriet too wears the mask that grins and lies because his mere choice to perform signals his bending to conformity. Two is who he is; his decision to become one does not make him whole, but simply allows him to reduce his many consciousnesses. Through H/H's numerous performances for which he utilizes temporary passing and his final act of permanent passing one sees the significant roles that consciousness and the privileging of identity play in one's choice to perform.

CHAPTER 4

Queer Eye for the Straight Guy: The Consciousness Wars of Azel and Miguel

This chapter's primary title, "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy", is drawn from a popular Australian sitcom wherein gay men offer designing and fashion tips to heterosexual men; however, here, it has been interpreted in a more literal sense. As previously mentioned, in Jelloun's text, the character Azel is portrayed as a heterosexual alpha-male. This is made apparent through his sexual promiscuity and domineering qualities on which he prides himself. However, although Azel identifies as heterosexual, he has a "queer eye", evident in his sexual acts with Miguel, a homosexual man. Such acts drastically affect Azel's consciousness. Likewise, Azel's subaltern status also plays a significant role in his identity.

W.E.B. Du Bois maintains that African-Americans are rendered second class citizens in America, a country in which many of them were forcibly transported to and sold into slavery. Thus, America is not and will never be the African-American's native country or culture, leaving them unable to fully enjoy equal treatment in social, corporate, or governmental sectors as first-class citizens (whites). Similarly, Fanon asserts that colonized individuals are second class citizens even in their own native countries. This is evident through Fanon's assertion:

> As long as he remains among his own people, the little black follows very nearly the same course as the little white. But if he goes to Europe, he will have to reappraise his lot. For the Negro in France, which is his country, will feel different from other people. One can hear the glib remark: The Negro makes himself inferior. But the truth is that he is made inferior (Fanon 149).

As a result of the colonized subject's subalternism or second-class citizenship, that Fanon speaks of, many individuals attempt to mimic their colonizers in hopes of attaining a portion of the

colonizers power. Others simply wish to emigrate from their native lands in an effort to escape their subordinate position. Azel chooses the latter, to achieve his dream of independently becoming successful in Spain; however, his choice to use Miguel to aid him in the realization of his dream results in his temporary donning of a mask and ultimate mimicry. Essentially, the culmination of Azel's subaltern status and his efforts to resist a queer consciousness result in his forced queer performance and his eventual sexual dividedness.

It may be argued that Jelloun's portrayal of Azel may not be suitable for a queer analysis. This is because the term queer becomes problematized when an individual who does not identify as queer is labeled as such. As a testament to this, Azel's queerness is even challenged by Jelloun who maintains that it is not the dividedness of Azel's sexual consciousness that he wished to underscore through his characterization of Azel, but what is most significant to him is Azel's desire at any cost to retreat from his country of birth for a better life. In an interview with Penguin Publishing, Jelloun is asked: Azel's sexuality is a vehicle for power, used both by him and against him. "Do you see his sexuality as something Azel can adapt to serve his goal of emigration, or is his sexuality more a statement on the exploitation of his desperation to leave Tangier? Is this trade of one's own body for opportunity common" (Introduction)? Jelloun's response:

> Azel is a young heterosexual man. He likes to make love to women, but his desire to leave his country and find work is stronger than the assumption of his sexuality. At least in the beginning he thinks he can assume the two sexualities. Soon he realizes that by selling his body, he is losing his soul. He cannot move from the bed of a woman to that of a man; he tries to but ends by failing and

> losing himself. This form of prostitution exists everywhere there is poverty. It is not more common in Morocco than elsewhere (Introduction).

Despite Jelloun's claim, Azel's "loss of himself" is much more closely associated with his sexual practices than the rejection of his culture. Azel is depicted and identifies as heterosexual, although he participates in homosexual acts, bringing one to the question: Is one's queerness determined by "doing" (physical acts) or "being"(identifying as). This phenomenon is explored in Laud Humphrey's 1970 ethnographic study "Tearoom trade: a study of homosexual encounters in public places." In his study, Humphrey's chronicles casual sexual encounters of self-identified straight, bi-sexual, and gay men in men's public restrooms in his attempt to identify and psychoanalyze these men's ability to separate their personal lives from their bathroom meetings. Humphrey's opens his discussion referencing the differing individuals, from business men to filling station operators:

> They have come here not for the obvious reason, but in a search for "instant sex." Many men-married and unmarried, those with heterosexual identities and those whose self-image is a homosexual one—seek such impersonal sex, shunning involvement, desiring kicks without commitment. Whatever reasons—social, physiological or psychological—might be postulated for this search, the phenomenon of impersonal sex persists as a widespread but rarely studied form of human interaction (Humphreys 10).

Humphrey's concludes that many of these men are often very much able to successfully disconnect their casual sexual encounters from their home lives without any affect on their conscious or sexual identities. Nikki Sullivan also tackles the "being" versus "doing" controversy in chapter three of her seminal work "A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory." To

address the being versus doing conundrum, Sullivan, citing David Halperin, begins with a detailed description of the term "queer". Sullivan writes:

> Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without an essence. 'Queer' then, demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative…[Queer] describes a horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance (Sullivan 43).

Utilizing Halperin's definition, for Azel, because he does not identify as queer but participates in homosexual relations with Miguel, he achieves the "doing" without the "being". The aforementioned notion is exemplified in a journal entry that Azel writes:

> I'm ashamed of failing at everything, ashamed of clasping a hand held out to me in a bed where silken sheets gleamed as enticingly as sin; I wanted to convince myself that my manhood was strong enough to satisfy both men and women: what pretension, what folly...At first I told myself it was just an experience like any other, I even remembered doing a few things with Medhi, my cousin who so enjoyed having his buttocks stroked, but with time I discovered that I couldn't tell lies very long, and I lied, masturbating in the dark before reaming Miguel, doing things without pleasure or joy, sometimes laughing at myself, especially when I was on top of him (Jelloun 241).

In this quotation one see's that Azel is unable to realize the emotional detachment from his physical acts as the men in Humphreys' study are able to achieve. Inversely, Azel develops a queer consciousness which results in his mental and emotional anguish. He feels that he is a

failure as a man, because his sexual identity and his conceptions of manhood are dependent upon his heterosexuality. Henceforth, individuals unlike Azel who identify as homosexual, bisexual, or any other sexual heteronormative deviant, by self-declaration, adopts the being portion of this question. Likewise, the majority of these individuals also identify with the "doing" portion of the previously posed question. However in Azel's case the "doing" becomes his performance. Azel enacts one of his many performances when Miguel forces him to dress in women's clothing and perform as bearded woman for a group of his (Miguel's) homosexual peers. When introducing Azel, Miguel states:

> My friends, I'm delighted to present my latest conquest to you: the body of an athlete sculpted in bronze, with a piquant soupcon of femininity. Quite a stud! Educated, but familiar as well the underworld of Tangier, that city of bandits and traitors. Neither bandit nor traitor, of course, Azel is simply a most beautiful object, an object to tempt every eye. Just look at his magnificent skin! You may touch it. Get in line, but don't push, he's right here, he's not going anywhere. Run your hand along his hip, for example, and do restrain your impulses. He belongs to me, and I won't have any fighting over him!"(Jelloun 107).

Miguel's objectification of Azel, in this instance, forces Azel to the confines of the stage like many drag performers including the transsexual characters of *Paris Is Burning*. Through the humiliating act depicted, Azel maintains a spirit of resistance. Azel's resistance is exhibited in his choice to perform for Miguel to give Miguel and his audience "what they want," a sentiment that many queer individuals adopt, and that Harry/Harriet so eloquently relayed in the previous chapter. As the scene continues, as if Miguel has not humiliated Azel enough, he continues to

assert his position of power over Azel, demanding that Azel dance in a specific manner before the agglomeration of onlookers:

> 'Now,' Miguel whispered in Azel's ear, 'you're going to dance. And you'll dance like a whore. You remember the fellow at the fair in Tetouan, the one who sold lottery tickets dressed as a woman? You're that man, a bearded woman!'…Azel began to dance to some Egyptian music, moving his buttocks and thinking about his sister, so talented at Oriental dancing…Azel tried to concentrate, telling himself over and over that he was an employee, working for a lunatic boss."(Jelloun 107)

Azel's performance here renders him helpless and dishonored. Miguel is able to manipulate queer performance that for self-identified queers is a positive fantasy world where most queers experience euphoria into a degrading and humiliating experience for Azel as he forces Azel to become an active participant and performer in his own fantasy resorting in Azel's emasculation. In this example, one also observes Azel's attempt to soothe his warring consciousness by likening his performance to a job that he must execute to maintain the life he desires. Despite his attempt, it becomes apparent that Azel, unlike Harry/Harriet does not receive instant positive reparations for his performances.

Alternatively, Azel also exemplifies his resistance in his denial of Miguel's demands. This is evident when Azel deliberately contests Miguel's requests for monogamy by continuing to maintain both physical and emotional relationships with women when he is outside of Miguel's home. Underscoring this claim, Jelloun writes:

> Azel resolved to go to the brothel at least once a week. This was an important decision for him. He slept with Miguel, but found his own pleasure with women.

> Given that Siham was hardly ever free, Azel felt he absolutely had to keep up his virility with the North African Arab girls he met at the Cafe Casbah (Jelloun 98).

Azel appears to live a separate life outside of Miguel because, to him, his heterosexuality is contingent upon having repeated sexual intercourse with numerous women. The idea of repetition of gender and sexuality will be further explored in the following portion of the text.

Like Harry/Harriet, Azel's warring consciousnesses causes him to actively utilize performance in both public and private spheres. This is apparent when Azel becomes overwhelmingly confounded by his hetero vs. queer consciousness and must reveal his arrangement with Miguel to his girlfriend after concealing his sexual escapades for some time. Her response: "Don't get upset—sexuality's not the only thing in life. To me, you're Azel first of all, the man I loved and still do. Whatever you do to earn your living, I'd rather not think about it"(Jelloun 82). For self-identified lesbian and social theorist Judith Butler, sexuality may not be "the only thing in life" as Azel's girlfriend so eloquently relays; however, sexuality has become a singular identifier for Butler and many other queer individuals. In "Imitation and Gender Insubordination", Butler candidly recounts her conversations with friends before a conference at Yale: "I found myself telling my friends beforehand that I was off to Yale to be a lesbian, which of course didn't mean that I wasn't one before, but that somehow then, as I spoke in that context, I *was* one in some more thorough and totalizing way, at least for the time being" (McKay). This declaration provides the foundation for Butler's theory of gender performativity[5] and also offers an essential theoretical anchor to examine Azel's consciousnesses and use of performance. Freelance writer and blog critic Brian McKay thoroughly explicates Butler's declaration:

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[5] A central concept of Butler's theory of gender performativity is that one's gender is constructed through one's own repetitive performance of gender.

> This [Butler's] is a particularly insightful observation as it reflects a rather important aspect of Butler's argument regarding the performativity of gender. For Butler, sexuality itself is an unstable construct. Her confusion over her self-identification here is comical, but also very representative of the nature of gender relations. The statement that she is going to Yale "to be a lesbian" is humorous to be sure, but the idea itself is quite rich for dissection. "To be a lesbian" is to play repeatedly the performative role of the lesbian as prescribed by heteronormative values: "it is through the repeated play of this sexuality that the 'I' is insistently reconstituted as a lesbian 'I'. By positioning herself socially as a lesbian within the context of the conference, Butler "becomes" a lesbian. (McKay)

Butler asserts that "sexuality is an unstable construct," and it is ultimately this instability that results in Azel's psychosis. Azel's cultural influences suggest that sexuality is a stable construct, because, as previously disclosed in chapter two, some Moroccan's believe that homosexuality is non-existent in their culture. Thus, to Azel, his heterosexuality is static and non-changing; no matter what sexual deviatory acts he participates in—because homosexuality is not an option. However, this is a false perception. Returning to Butler's concept of gender performativity the notion of one's gender being formed or constructed by repetitive performance or (doing) can be applied to Azel's sexuality. It is his constant repetitive sexual acts with Miguel that subverts his own heterosexual identity; therefore, although he attempts to counteract his homosexual relations with heterosexual ones, it is to no avail. Had his sexual acts with Miguel been isolated or reduced, Azel's heterosexual consciousness may not have been as dramatically affected.

Returning to the original question, (is queer an act of being or doing?) through Azel's performances and resulting consciousnesses, one may deduce that queer identity or consciousness and queer or deviatory sexual acts are inseparable entities. Through Azel's

performance, his doing becomes his being. It therefore may be concluded that when one repeatedly enacts queer performance through sexual acts, unwillingly in Azel's case, it becomes virtually impossible to escape mental or emotional ramifications. Thus one's queerness can be determined by one's actions or self-image, whether one enacts the "doing" or "being" he/she is queer by definition because he/she deviates from the norm. Thus, while donning his mask, or without it, Azel is othered, characterized by his subaltern status, and he is also consequently queer.

Because Azel's consciousness and performance are a result of his relationship with Miguel, we will also explore Miguel's consciousness. Unlike the often poor and destitute stars of *Paris is Burning* who dream of fortune, riches, and social acceptance or at least tolerance, Miguel has all of these things but still struggles with his sexual identity due to his own duality of consciousness. He is a gay man with traditional values. The presence of such values is also discussed in Sullivan's text. Referencing Monique Wittig's "The Straight Mind" Nikki Sullivan states:

> The title of Wittig's essay refers to what she identifies as 'the obligatory social relationship between "man" and "woman" and the system that supports and is supported by these ways of being and of knowing. Like Rich, Wittig argues that heterosexuality as an institution is so embedded in our culture, that it has become invisible. The "straight mind" 'envelops itself in myths, resorts to enigma, proceeds by accumulating metaphors, and its function is to poeticize the obligatory character of the "you-will-be-straight-or-you-will-not-be". In other words, Wittig argues that the 'straight mind' is everywhere, that it dominates our

> current conceptual system and thus 'prevents us from speaking unless we speak in its terms' (Sullivan 122).

Like the individuals depicted in Wittig's text, Miguel suffers from society's current conceptual system. He seeks love and devotion, marriage, and children; however, because he is gay, he essentially seems to relinquish his rights to enjoy heterosexual "luxuries". Thus, Miguel's initial admonition of his rights to be a husband and father serve as an expression of his assimilation to the heteronormative ideals that a gay man should not/cannot have children or wed. However, as resistance to these societal ideals, Miguel adopts children who cannot live with him and agrees to enter into an arranged marriage with Kenza. In order to marry Kenza, Miguel must also convert to Islam. Miguel states, "I'm going to be married, and what's more, married fair and square" (Jelloun 120).

Here, although Miguel attempts resistance, societal precepts still consume him. Miguel's words imply that, as a gay man, he cannot not be married legitimately to another man. Thus, Miguel's decision to marry Kenza is influenced by his internal and human longing for legally bound companionship or marriage. At this juncture, Miguel's heterosexual and transcultural performance begins:

> Miguel dressed in white and put on a jellaba. Azel asked him to please tone it down. Miguel took off the jellaba. Miguel usually wore some foundation and outlined his eyes with kohl, but as they were about to leave, Azel asked him to remove his makeup, too…Azel states, 'Your name is Mounir, you love women, and you carry yourself like a man, a real one, virile, and straightforward' (Jelloun 121).

In the previous quotation, Miguel's disrobing of his usual feminine attire and make-up signifies Miguel's performance as a heterosexual male at Azel's request. Through this performance,

Miguel assimilates to the dominant heterosexist society's ideological system as a mode of resistance; this is because his literal costume and masking allows him to be able to deceive numerous individuals to achieve his own desires.

In summation, while performing is not "wonderland" for Azel, his reward for a superb performance will, to him, result in achieving his wildest fantasy—life free of oppression and impoverishment. However, never will he, nor Miguel, have what they crave most, uncontested power-- the power to be whatever they desire to be despite societal or economic constraints.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

In each of these characters' performances we see a commonality-- a form of situational passing. The character dons a mask briefly, but then removes it and returns to his "true" identity. This remains consistent for each character except Harry/Harriet. Elia elaborates on this idea in her text:

> 'The choice is mine, man, is made. Harriet live and Harry be no more' (Cliff 168). And, as Harry gradually transforms him/herself into Harriet, s/he ultimately represents the healthy coming together of diverse elements that would otherwise have led to fragmentation and paralysis. This is a truly subversive act, as it allows her/him to deconstruct dominant ideas of race, sex, and class without substituting new ones that would merely have the effect of creating additional divisive boundaries (Cliff 353).

In this instance we see that of all of the characters who utilize performance for resistant measures, only H/H achieves the closest state of wholeness. For what was once H/H's mask becomes Harriet's face. Harriet chooses permanent passing to ensure her survival and healthy mental state, while Azel and Miguel continue to don their masks temporarily and so will forever struggle with their consciousnesses and dual identities.

To summarize, the groundbreaking documentary *Paris is Burning* (1990) illustrates the conscious performances of drag kings and queens in the N.Y. ballroom culture and thus proves a suitable lens through which to analyze the consciousnesses of the queer protagonists of Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven,* set in post-colonial *Jamaica* and Tahar Ben Jelloun's *Leaving Tangier,* set in post-colonial Tangier, Morocco. Attempting to reveal the similarities of the two works, this text has drawn cultural parallels between the two novels, examined the gender

duality of individuals in drag culture and thus proven that due to these protagonists' self-conscious efforts to suppress part or all of their sexual identities, performance becomes a central strategy characters utilize to navigate their societal positions. This topic needs further exploration because while queer/lgbt scholarship has grown substantially in the last decade, there is little research or discussion of the identities or consciousnesses of the "other" in these communities. I have thus chosen to analyze characters that do not seamlessly fit into the dominant lesbigay discourse: transgendered bisexuality, like that of Harry/Harriet, and queer-heterosexuality, like Azel's, has been marginalized even in queer literature. In "Power and Sexuality in the Middle East," Bruce Dunne describes power and sexuality structures in the middle east that can be applied to each culture represented in the texts herein examined. Dunne states:

> Both dominant/subordinate and heterosexual/homosexual categorizations are structures of power. They position social actors as powerful or powerless, "normal" or "deviant." The contemporary concept of "queerness" resists all such categorizing in favor of recognizing more complex realities of multiple and shifting positions of sexuality, identity and power (Dunne 8).

Dunne's description of 'social actors' relates to the performances of the protagonists in Cliff and Jelloun's novels, characters who have been rendered powerless in some way. Harry/Harriet has been raped and socially vilified due to his gender and sexual deviance. Azel elects to participate in kyriarchal bargaining, thus placing himself in a position of sub-ordinance to Miguel, and finally, Miguel, who, though in a position of power, is reduced to submission due to heterosexist society's denial of his human rights. Because of this, each character utilizes queer performance not only to resist power structures, but also for their own survival.

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