

# **ABSTRACT**

## **CHRIST IN CRISIS? THE AFRICANISATION OF CHRISTIANITY IN JAMAICAN LITERATURE 1954 – 1964.**

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This dissertation examines through the Rastafari and Pukkumina cults in five Jamaican novels the evolution, adaptation and syncretization of Christianity in Afro-Jamaican literature. The Black Christ character and the concepts of messianism and sacrifice as reflected in Roger Mais' Brother Man (1954), Andrew Salkey's A Quality of Violence (1959), John Hearne's Land of the Living (1961), Sylvia Wynter's The Hills of Hebron (1962) and Orlando Patterson's The Children of Sisyphus (1964) will be explored to analyse the impact of a theology of imposition upon the Afro-Caribbean consciousness.

By constantly contrasting and comparing Euro-Christianity and African religion and exploring the distinctive historical, physical and psychological circumstances which shape the protagonists, this research aims to show that through the modification of Christianity the folk community sought to achieve liberation and wholeness. The pursuit of this goal either through religion or politics culminates

in the merger but never the exclusion of both. More often however, there is the strong shift from one to the other.

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This study concludes that West Indian writers while questioning the validity and relevance of Euro-Christianity simultaneously transfer inherited European biases upon the religious cults with which they hope to empathize. In their literary presentation of Afro-Christianity in the West Indian community, Euro-Christian religious elements, symbols, concepts and characters are inverted, transformed, discarded or disguised and new concepts emerge while old ones are re-interpreted.

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