The Triad of Men's Violences in *Time*: A Ghanaian Occult Video Film

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Violence has long been understood as the best way to ensure that others recognize one's manhood publicly. [. . .] Violence is a way to prove masculinity; one is a "real" man, because one is not afraid of being violent. (Kimmel, "Violence" 811)

Occultism in Contemporary Ghanaian Video Films

The two main genres that have dominated the Ghanaian video film scene are family drama and occult drama. The video films dealing with occultism or witchcraft clearly define the dichotomy of what are referred to as the physical and the metaphysical worlds, with the latter commonly referred to as the spiritual world. This demarcation is borrowed from African traditional religious beliefs, which state that although the physical world is visible to the eye, it is largely controlled by the spiritual world. Human life is therefore said to be controlled by unseen spiritual powers that play active roles in a person's day to day activities (Assimeng; Awendoba; Gyekye; Meyer "Make a Complete Break").

Much attention has been drawn to occult activities during the so-called post-colonial period, "precisely in modern sectors of society including politics, sports, new forms of entrepreneurship, and institutions of formal education" (Ciekawy and Geschiere 1). In line with this trend, the emergence of video film production in Ghana has seen many thematic representations that delve into the world of the supernatural. Examples of these include *Abaddon 1 & Abaddon 2: Easy Blood Money; Fatal Decision; Expectations 1 & 2; Stolen Bible 1 & 2; Mariska; Babina 1-3; Time;* and *Accra Killings.* These movies portray individuals becoming rich through the use of demonic supernatural powers. Female involvement with occult powers for money-making is a rare theme; the occult scene would seem to be dominated by men. These video films are very popular with Ghanaian audiences because they enable them to voyeuristically see the world of occult powers; they satisfy their curiosity about the supernatural. In popular Ghanaian video narratives, the perpetrators of evil are prosperous; they live in big mansions with fenced walls, dress flamboyantly in the latest African and Western styles, and have a fleet of expensive cars and SUVs (BMW, Mercedes-Benz) that embody contemporary urban symbols of affluence. However, as the inevitable demise of those involved in occultism is always portrayed as catastrophic, it serves as a caution to viewers. Occult movies normally

carry a moral message that can be traced to Ghanaian storytelling culture (as well as to the guiding principles of the censorship board).

Reasons for making Occult Movies

There are many reasons why filmmakers engage in occult discourses in these video films; for the purpose of this paper I will discuss three. First, as the success of the movies depends on audience reception, producers make deliberate efforts to develop themes that meet their audiences' expectations. Rumours of the occult are quite popular in Ghanaian societies, and the multiplicity of Pentecostal-charismatic churches has increased the popularity of stories about witchcraft and occultism. Meyer suggests that:

> Because of [. . .] closeness to audience expectations, videofilm makers can safely be regarded as mediators of popular views. Fixing and visualizing rumours, videofilms refashion stories circulating in society by adopting a particular narrative form. Therefore the videofilm industry is a fascinating site for cultural analysis. (*Prayer & Guns*)

Occult movies commonly generate lively debates among viewers. Power and money are usually strong accompanying themes, the implication being that while many individuals are confronted with temptations, some actually achieve wealth and power by succumbing to the powers of darkness. Camaroff and Camaroff identify two dimensions of occultism:

> a material aspect founded on the effort to conjure wealth—or to account for its accumulations—by appeal to techniques that defy explanations in the conventional terms of practical season; and an ethical aspect grounded in the moral discourses and (re)actions sparked by the (real or imagined) production of value through such "magical" means. (310)

Occult video films serve to provide explanations for people's sudden and unexpected riches, resulting out of unknown and unseen enterprises. Though occult movies are popular, filmmakers do not actually endorse the practise of occultism for any venture, whether good or evil. Also, occultism is not an attempt to return to traditional African religion; it is a means by which traditional practices are recreated and remoulded to make them more appealing in a contemporary capitalist society.

A second reason for filmmakers' engagement in occult discourses can be deduced from a commentary on truth in oral history—Luise White notes that people do not always necessarily attempt to accurately recount what they saw, but tend to repeat stories that help to support their ideas. She adds that even though experience is considered vital, people do not always speak from experience but often rely on circulated stories. This is not to say that people intentionally promote falsehoods:

> The distinction between true and false stories may be an important one for historians, but for people engaged in contentious arguments, explanations, and descriptions, sometimes presenting themselves as experts, or just in the best possible light, it may not matter: people want to tell stories that work, stories that convey ideas and points. (White 30)

Occult themes in video films might be regarded simply as the way people talk about current societal issues, in order to encourage debate and open discussions. The video films become a platform from which issues that concern the daily lives of the people are addressed. Whether stories of the occult are true or false is not the concern of the filmmakers; these stories attract the people, and thereby the profits. As the producers are not necessarily involved in the presentation of historical facts and data, narrative accuracy is of little concern.

Finally, some producers specialize in video films that depict the traditional cultural practices (and widely-spread rumours) of the lucrative black-market for human tissues and organs. These films portray the ritual murders and sale of human organs motivated by the rules of supply and demand that govern this underground dark economy. Nancy Scheper-Hughes notes that the lag in organ transplant technologies in places like China, Taiwan, India, Argentina, Chile, and Brazil has created a scarcity of important organs, causing sick people to travel the globe seeking proper medical attention. She comments that "markets are by nature indiscriminate and inclined to reduce everything—including human beings, their labour, and their reproductive capacity—to the status of commodities" (193). Global trafficking in human organs is illustrated in the movie *Girl at 18 (1-3),* in which a businessman Black Jaguar and his associates Black Mamba and Maputo buy human beings, kill them, and sell their body parts to international partners represented by their colleague Polo, who lives in Europe. Scheper-Hughes reports that "the flow of organs follows the modern routes of capital: from South to North, from Third to First World, from poor to rich, from black and brown to white, and from female to male" (193). Occult video films are therefore actively engaged in speaking to global issues, as well as to local.

The video film *Time* clearly exhibits men's involvement in occultism and exposes how violence becomes part of masculine culture in the process of wealth acquisition. *Time* is quite different from other movies that deal with occultism, in that it plainly exposes the varieties of violent means by which men often acquire wealth and displays extreme violence perpetrated by men.

Time

Francis is a successful banker occupying a managerial position. He is married to Agatha and they have two children, Fred and Sarafina. Peterson, Francis' brother-in-law, approaches Francis one evening and complains about his business and how things are not going on well for him. Peterson tells Francis that he has some potentially profitable ideas, but needs a loan to implement them. When Francis assures Peterson that getting a loan from the bank is not a difficult task if he has collateral, Peterson admits that collateral will be a problem, and pleads with Francis to use his position at the bank to help him secure the loan. After much deliberation, Francis agrees to help Peterson get the loan without collateral.

In *Time*, Peterson fails to make payments. Consequently, the scheme is exposed; Francis loses his job, and is actually sent to jail.

Despite the turmoil that he has caused his sister's family, Peterson still refuses to pay the money. Francis' car and house are sold in order for him to make bail. Peterson cunningly sends his friend Alhaji to buy Francis' house and car at a very cheap price. After being released from prison, Francis is forced to move with his family to the village. They begin to farm in the village but, unable to bear the humiliation of his new life any longer, Francis plans to commit suicide by hanging.

In a strange turn of events, a hunter dressed as a traditional priest appears from nowhere and speaks with Francis, offering to help him. The hunter orders Francis to follow him to a shrine, where he gives Francis a pot and tells him to break it at the outskirts of the village. Breaking the pot, he informs Francis, will cause Agatha to become ill, and the sicker she gets the richer Francis will become. Francis attempts to resist this temptation but upon the hunter's insistence he breaks the pot. As promised, Agatha becomes sick and Francis' wealth strangely begins to return. The family moves back to the city, and after some time Agatha dies. Francis hides her corpse in a closet in a room in his house, and, in an overtly symbolic cinematic twist, the body continually vomits money. Francis introduces his childhood friend Amos to the shrine and, after killing a pregnant woman and using her unborn baby in an occult ritual, Amos too becomes rich overnight.

Exploring Men's Violences

The video film *Time* focuses mainly on the process by which men attempt to outwit each other in public and in private. The rest of the paper explores the violences perpetrated in *Time* through Michael Kaufman's theory of the triad of men's violences. According to Kaufman's theory, the multiplicity of men's violences comes as a result of the fragility and instability of masculinity itself; men must continually search for new ways to assert it, lest they feel like less of a "man". Historically, men have nearly always been positioned in environments that encourage violence (Chodorow; Kaufman). Kaufman focuses his discussion on "men's violences", which refers to gender, rather than "male violence", which makes only a biological distinction (5). Hearn also finds the term "men's violences" more appropriate because it attributes violence specifically to men, without implicating biological causes (4). Additionally, the term removes any ambiguity that might allow violence to be attributed to being "male", which forms only a fraction of the totality of men's violent behaviours. Finally, the term acknowledges the plurality of men's violence ("violences") (Hearn 4). Men's violences, Kaufman observes, are institutionalised in social, political, and economic life. As these dimensions of violence feed on one another, it is impossible to discuss one apart from the others. Indeed, as men are in large part socially-determined creatures, many men resort to violence as a social means of creating and maintaining their masculine identities.

All of the major male characters in *Time*—Francis, Peterson, Alhaji, and Amos—appear to be grappling with the construction of their masculinities, and in the process resort to violence. The establishment of a masculine identity has become rooted in a specific

social framework, one that includes the ownership of wealth as an integral part of masculinity. Within such a framework women become, to these male characters, commodities to be used in the exchange of wealth.

Violence against Women

Time's plot introduces the viewer to multiple forms of violence against women, the causes of which are intractably interwoven with those of the violence between men. Indeed, as the movie demonstrates, men's battles with one another often have female casualties. For instance, Agatha's character is symbolic of the often silenced voice of women who become commodities in men's quests for masculinity.

As the credits roll, the camera leads us into a board meeting in progress; shuffling among close-up, medium, and long shots, the camera sets the tone of presenting a visual reformulation of male dominance in the movie. The movement of the camera at framing and retelling of this story rooted in occultism foreshows how the occurrences at the work place are directly interwoven with those in the domestic space. The mise-en-scène together with the reaction shots from the board members indicate the secret male rivalry among them and also establish Francis's powerlessness among his colleagues. Francis is accused of approving a loan to Mr. Peterson Ansah without collateral; in an attempt to defend himself, Francis's vulnerability to the opinions of the other men is quite evident. Indeed, a tight frame is used to depict Francis's weakness here, a symbol of constriction. At first he blames the accountant—it must have been an accounting oversight, as he, a professional banker, would never do such a thing. He relies on his sense of masculinity and endeavours to build it up; he asserts his status as a professional, as a "competent man", as though this should be enough to direct the attention away from himself. Of course, the accountant is also a professional, and a "competent man", and is quick to defend his own masculine status by reminding the group of this. Had it not been for the timely intervention of a moderator, the argument might have developed into a physical altercation. The board members ultimately reach the consensus that Francis is at fault and must repay the loan himself or face legal consequences. Francis is defeated; he shamefully admits his fault and promises to pay the money. His powerlessness before his colleagues is obvious.

The camera takes us into Francis's living room in the next scene where he is hurriedly packing his things together with the family to escape. Contrary to the tight frame Francis is positioned in the previous scene, he is moving in a bigger setting in his house and the actions in the present scene obviously indicate that he is in charge of the family. As the sole economic provider and self-declared head of the household, he exercises his authority by commanding his wife and children to pack their belongings and follow him, not allowing for any family consultation on the matter. Luxton explains that "as the wage *earner*, the man is the wage *owner*. He is the property owner in the family; his power is rooted in real property relations" (65). Francis's

dominion over his family clearly has its foundation in his role as financial provider; his actions seem to indicate that he is not otherwise worthy of the authority that he bears. His dominance is short-lived as the scene quickly moves to the first exterior scenes of the movie. The scene itself is symbolic in revealing the reality of Francis's situation to the family as the family watch him taken away in slow motion. Agatha quickly comes in to plead with the police officers who arrive to take Francis away but her plea is dismissed without consideration. Eventually, of course, Francis is apprehended and placed in police custody. Through a flashback, Francis describes his predicament to their pastor while in police custody.

Francis and Agatha's relationship takes a downward turn when Peterson refuses to repay his loan. As Peterson is her brother, Francis pressures Agatha to convince him to repay the debt. Agatha complies, and suffers significant mental trauma as she chases her brother from place to place, harassing him and pleading that he pay back the loan. Agatha becomes a tool that the men use to influence each other; she is caught in a war of competing masculinities. Although there were several obvious methods with which Francis might have persuaded Peterson to repay the loan, he used none of these. He made no attempt to confront Peterson directly, and did not report the default to the police. Francis's hesitation to take either of these approaches might well be explained by his fear of appearing less masculine—his brother-in-law might become angry, and Francis would want to avoid such a confrontation; reporting the case to the police might also be interpreted as a weak move. Somehow, though, when Francis talks of the matter with Agatha, he does his best to present himself as a "man of action", ready to take whatever steps are necessary to resolve the issue (again, a preservation of the masculine image).

Francis's tension from this situation is hidden at work, but released openly at home. The family "becomes the place where the violence suffered by individuals in their work place is discharged" (Kaufman 8). In this case, the pain of Francis's powerlessness at work is transferred directly to his wife. He speaks harshly and condescendingly to Agatha, in much the same way that his colleagues addressed him. Agatha suffers a double agony, as her elder brother is the reason for her husband's agitation, a fact that Francis does not let her forget. Agatha is left with no recourse but to apologize and reassure her husband that everything will be alright. Surely, the home is "one of the only places where men feel safe enough to express emotions. As the dams break, the flood pours on the women and children" (Kaufman 8).

In an effort to preserve male pride, Francis and Peterson force Agatha to act as an intermediary between them. Though masculinity is associated with aggressiveness, this aggression is sometimes misdirected (often at women) in an effort to shield a fragile sense of masculinity from harm. In *Time*, while Francis's position as a banker certainly does not permit him to be physically violent at work, he manages to exert his masculinity by calmly telling his colleagues (all men, of course, except the secretary) that he will come up with the

money himself, before the auditors' reports are presented at headquarters. His frustration must be vented at some point, though, and so private disputes with Agatha become the mechanism for this release. Somehow, Francis is still able to feel that his sense of masculinity can be maintained at home because "at work men are powerless, so in their leisure time they want to have a feeling that they control their own lives. Because they are responsible for the household's subsistence, men often feel that they have the right to control the arrangements of the household and the people who live there" (Luxton 65).

The opening scenes of the flashback show Francis demonstrating wonderful qualities of a nurturing husband and father. He is portrayed as being very loving; the family is clearly his major priority. The movement of the camera makes this narrative control visually perceptible; the camera advances from a happy family at the dinner table—where Francis happily commends his wife for cooking a delicious meal—to the entrance of Peterson. The knock at the door followed by the entrance of Peterson foreshadows the disaster that follows every appearance he makes. Five months later, the same setting is used to visually capture the other side of Francis as a result of his encounter with Peterson. Francis's attitude changes as the crises become overwhelming; his outlook and demeanour are polarized, and at times he becomes violent. Hearn notes that such violence may be described as "occasional, infrequent, 'one-offs'; as a response to 'the relationship' or a reaction to alleged provocation . . ." (81). Francis's violence was therefore misdirected—any exhibition of violence at work (or with Peterson, for that matter) would likely have been contested with violence; a loss in such a contest would mean the loss of his masculinity. At home, this is an unlikely risk, and so Agatha becomes a "safe" outlet for Francis's fear and agitation as he spouts verbal abuse at her for her brother's actions.

Meanwhile, Peterson also manages to avoid Francis by claiming that there would be no point in meeting with him unless he had the money. Shuffling between different scenes that show Francis struggling to find solution to the impending problem, we see Peterson at the other side of town on a golf course. The scene opens with a golf ball rolling towards a hole; the camera then moves from behind Peterson's back as he hits the ball again. The focus on the ball and on his back turned to the camera indicates the frivolity of the occasion and reveals how he is enjoying life as a result of duping Francis. The progression of the scene further heightens Peterson's international connections and wealth. His British business associates had traced him to the golf course to pay him a huge sum of money. Soon after collecting the money amidst joy and laughter, Agatha walks onto the course looking distraught, on the verge of tears. When she demands to know when Peterson will repay her husband, he tells her a lie and sends her home. Only Peterson and the inferred audience for the film are witness to the truth of the matter. Peterson and Agatha exit the scene in opposing directions, with the former excited and the latter at the verge of nervous break down. The scene dissolves into Francis's

living room where the melancholic Francis informs Agatha that he has been fired from his job.

As discussed earlier, the many dimensions of masculinity are often tightly intertwined. The threat of job loss and legal action against Francis is also a threat to those aspects of his masculinity that have their roots in his role as the family breadwinner. Unemployment surely ruins the status and self respect of many men. Returning to the present, the camera takes us back to where we left off as Francis tells his pastor that all of his life has been devoted to work and dreams that, by this one set of circumstances, seem to have been shattered. Francis, this time looking quite unkempt, is again positioned in a tight frame while in police custody—constricted, powerless, emasculated. His body language and pattern of speech both indicate a loss of hope; all of that which had previously defined him as a man has been taken away, confirming Brittan's assertion that:

> Unemployed men see themselves as powerless and trivialised. The breadwinner's role (in theory) gives men a sense of identity of structural location. For most men in capitalist societies, their skilled and unskilled jobs are the prime focus of identity. Without work, they are rootless and disjointed. (189)

Francis is justified in fearing for his masculine status, as the greatest portion of this is indeed derived from his role as breadwinner. Part of this fear is that he will lose the base from which he is justified in demanding respect from his wife and children, and thereby his position of relative authority in the home. Beyond this, he is also at risk of losing the sense of personal 'success' that has become a large part of his masculinity:

> For many men, employment provides the interrelated economic resources and symbolic benefits of wages/salaries, skills and experience, career progress of power, authority and high discretion. Typically, it seems men's gender identities are constructed, compared and evaluated by self and others according to a whole variety of criteria indicating personal "success" in the work place. (Collison and Hearn 62-63)

As though her situation were not difficult enough, Francis's absence leaves Agatha to care for their two children alone, while attempting to raise money to bail her husband out of prison. At the same time, she suffers various degrees of emotional and verbal abuse from her brother. Sadly, her survival at this point is still dependant on men—her pastor provides her with emotional and spiritual support while she plans to sell the family property to raise bail. Meanwhile, her brother actually conspires with his friend Alhaji to rob her. Peterson's intent is not to harm Agatha directly, but to further emasculate his brother-in-law. Agatha is again placed at the centre of their attempts to attack the other's sense of masculinity, and bolster their own. Stoltenberg suggests that "whatever 'men' do to 'women' is intrinsically related to what 'men' do to 'men' and vice versa; it forges a tangible and verifiable structural link" (XXIII). Agatha's well-being is not of concern to these men; she is not the main focus of their masculine adventure.

Released from police custody, Francis faces the greatest humiliation of his life in moving with his family to the village. He hates the sight of his wife and children working on the farm. His inability to provide for them reduces his sense of masculinity, and thereby his overall sense of self-worth. This emotional state supports Brittan's observation that because "most men have been brought up to see themselves as being responsible for the bread and butter of daily existence, they find it almost impossible to accommodate themselves to the sight of their wives going out to work to put food on the table" (189). While it may be argued that Francis loves his wife and therefore cannot see her struggling in the scorching sun to help feed the family, Brittan's observation reflects the subordinate position in which society places women—always at the receiving end. Agatha's contribution will eventually change the power dynamics of the family. This is true for Francis, so much so that he prepares to commit suicide in order to escape further humiliation. This decision comes after much contemplation; his musings are depicted for the viewer by way of several soliloquies. In one, he seems to conclude that "a job is the ticket for membership of life; work is all [he has], to prove [he exists]" (Ingham 28). Indeed, before being fired, Francis is shown to be fully absorbed in his work, and his very existence is marked by his job. "So now with unemployment, [he becomes] 'un' anything" (Ingham 27). Work, "specifically waged work, is a dominant feature of twenty-first century conceptions of masculinity. The loss of opportunities to enact that aspect of masculinity and the changes in the nature of work has had far-reaching effects on men of all social classes" (Rushing 385). To men like Francis, being engaged in a successful occupation translates into power, dominance, and control, all markers of his perceived supremacy and masculine identity. Since it is overwhelmingly agreed upon that masculine identity is an enactment rather than a biological acquisition (Connell; Kimmel and Messner; Kimmel and Aronson; Rushing), men continuously embark on the journey to find means with which to assert their masculinities. Though the gender binary may often privilege men over women, men seem to be the most afraid of the validity of their position in the public eye. Concluding that his situation is beyond what he can bear, Francis is seen on a path to the forest with a rope around his neck.

The camera follows him to the spot where he hangs himself, but a mysterious hunter saves him and promises to help Francis solve his financial problems. The man orders Francis to follow him to a cave. Through a series of rapid shot transitions with shrill sound effects the hunter appears and disappears and he is seen transformed at the entrance of the cave. His ability to appear and disappear mesmerises Francis but at the same time, it gives him hope for a supernatural intervention. However, Francis's hopes are shattered when the hunter asks him to sacrifice his wife by breaking a pot at the edge of the forest. The priest's suggestion is characteristic of the social construction of women as both vulnerable and expendable figures. Agatha is portrayed as the proverbial sacrificial lamb that must suffer, and eventually die, for the rest of the family. Francis runs from the

shrine because he does not want to sacrifice his wife, but somehow this sentiment makes him feel like less of a man. Again using rapid shot transitions the pot appears and disappears before Francis as he runs along. These shots in the forest position Francis in tight frames—he is restricted, particularly in his ability to take some sort of effective action. Although he believes that he loves his wife, he is more afraid of the consequences of his continued emasculation. This part of the film seems to suggest that it is often necessary for women to suffer, in order for men to attain their masculinity. Francis's emotions regarding his quest for manhood are evidently stronger than his love for his wife; he breaks the pot and returns home. The events that unfold from this point call into question Francis's integrity and commitment to his family. He shows no remorse when Agatha becomes sick while he becomes wealthy. Even before the money begins to come, he delights in moving from the village back to the city, anticipating the "good life". Francis's transformation is dramatic—he quickly ceases to be the nurturing man of his family, hardly worrying at all about his wife's deteriorating condition (with his newfound wealth, he can marry another woman with ease). Agatha, therefore, becomes disposable, a commodity to be thrown away after its useful life. The movement of the camera and the use of special effects enable the camera to re-tell this story rooted in occultism by creating the illusion of the supernatural.

Despite his wife's condition, Francis begins to dress in the latest designer suits and drives the latest four-wheel-drive vehicles. He visits his friend Amos, proudly displaying the symbols of his new wealth. Francis introduces Amos to the shrine, suggesting that Amos may be able to achieve similar wealth through similar action. When a priest suggests that Amos kill a pregnant woman and spill the blood of her unborn baby, he complies. Thematically, one of the conspicuous characteristics of the film is that men do not consider the consequences of their actions when their masculinity is at stake. Through a number of dramatic shots, which culminate in the grotesque killing of the pregnant woman and other killing scenes later in the movie, *Time* seems to draw attention to itself as a movie about image making and blatant brutality. Incorporating these themes and the style of presentation make the movie gripping and suspenseful. The scene in which Amos commits this ritual murder is the most horrendous and violent in the film. The episode involving a series of shots begins with the pregnant woman leaving her shop after the day's work with the camera following her on her way home. Amos, pretending to be mad sits under a tree on the woman's path to home. The woman comes face to face with Amos but since he does not pose a threat she is comfortable. The camera shifts from the face to face encounter and follows the woman with Amos closely behind. With the opportunity at hand, Amos strikes her from behind. The camera angles and the subject positions within the frame resonate with the manner in which each male character is actively involved in stabbing others from behind. The symbolism of the shots is heightened by the dark night and naivety of the woman about the dangers of the night. The scene also seems to reiterate the unfortunate incident of the disappearance of

women in the Accra during late 1999 and early 2000. The episode continues with Amos putting the woman in his car trunk, driving her to an unknown place and, using the crudest means ever, cutting the woman open, and removing the baby from her womb with blood gushing out on him. The scene literally suggests that masculinity sometimes demands a blood bath before it could be attained. Amos's willingness to commit this act is the result of his inability to exercise authority over his wife and children, as he has limited income and cannot perform his role as the breadwinner adequately. Man's "sense of masculinity is based on feelings of power and control. When that is lost or when that cannot or does not exist for whatever systemic reason, then violence is the result, and it is women and children who bear the disproportionate brunt of this violence" (Brown 5). Seeing Francis's wealth, Amos begins to believe that being a newspaper vendor is a disgrace to his masculinity. As soon as he becomes rich, the petty quarrels between himself and his wife cease immediately; he gains her respect, and his authority at home is unchallenged.

As men such as Francis and Amos gain wealth, however, they also become more vigilant, more prepared to defend this wealth from other men. As a result, other men who might otherwise have been friends are now perceived as enemies, as threats to their status. This masculine uncertainty often leads men to commit terrible hostilities against their fellow men.

Violence against Other Men

Men's violence against other men is rampant in every society (Kaufman; Kimmel "Violence"; Spierenburg) and it is demonstrated through a number of violent acts including fights, rape in prisons, gay bashing, racism and other aggressive expressions. Certain types of sports and entertainment involve violence. Other forms of violence may at first seem non-violent, but are in fact quite harmful. Kaufman identifies some of the most subtle forms as "the verbal put downs or, combined with economic and other factors, the competition in the business, political, or academic world" (9). Men's violence against other men in *Time* is generally shown to occur because men are unable to accept that multiple hegemonic masculinities might exist simultaneously in the same society. In order to one-up one another, these men display multiple forms of violence, ranging from subtle verbal putdowns to physical assaults and murder. Hearn explains that "men's violence to men is often related to age, economic class and locality; while men's violence to women is often related to gender and sexuality" (207).

Time presents a male dominated society in which certain men top the hierarchy, above women, children, and other men. In many instances, violence is used to protect and maintain this hierarchical order. The demands of patriarchy and social order cause biological males to internalise emotion, often causing them to seek violent solutions to their problems. The hunter and hero ideologies are strongly entrenched in patriarchal societies; this is particularly evident in capitalist societies where business dealings for the acquisition of

wealth are prominent. Those who make it to the top (i.e., become the most wealthy) are considered superior to those who do not; there is little balance—the winner takes the grand prize, while the loser goes home empty-handed, feminised. In Brittan's words, "the fact that men compete with each other at all sorts of levels is the means whereby society guarantees that the successful occupy positions of power, the unsuccessful being left with the hard work" (78).

Peterson's carefully conceived plans against Francis are a reaction to his continuous success, somehow seen to highlight Peterson's own incompetence, and his subordinate masculine position in society. As hegemonic masculinity, as Hatty notes, "is the publicly avowed, preferred model of manliness" (117), Peterson embarks upon a quest to destabilize his brother-in-law's position in the hierarchy. He attempts to become the sole dominant masculine figure by destroying any man he sees as a threat or close competitor. Peterson's response to Francis's plight makes it clear that he intended, from the beginning, to rob his brother-in-law. He cunningly used his family ties to persuade Francis to offer the loan without collateral.

When Francis is in police custody and Agatha must bail him out, she approaches Peterson for the money. Peterson refuses and suggests that Francis's car and house should be sold to raise the funds. The scene where Peterson makes this suggestion takes place in his house. The scene opens with a series of shots that show an aerial view of the home, focusing particularly on the beautiful architecture and the multitude of cars parked on the property. The scene cuts into the living room where Peterson and his wife are together with Agatha and her pastor. The beauty of the living room and Peterson's elegant appearance further confirm his affluence. Despite the extravagance of the environment and the pomposity of Peterson's appearance, he claims not to have the money required to make Francis's bail. Peterson is keenly aware of the vital role that houses and cars play in masculine identity formation, (the camera emphasizes that by focusing on the elegance of the houses of all the main male characters in the movie) and uses this opportunity to dispossess Francis. After suggesting that Francis's house and car be sold, he sends his colleague Alhaji to buy the home, an act fully symbolic of Peterson's outright purchase of Francis's masculinity.

In yet another act of deception in the film, Alhaji buys the house, but retains the original deed for himself, presenting Peterson with a falsified document. When Peterson realizes that he has been duped, he confronts Alhaji, who replies that evil begets evil. Alhaji apparently feels justified in fooling Peterson, as Peterson acted similarly toward Francis, making Peterson an evil man. Though Alhaji and Peterson were once close friends, their individual quests for supreme masculinity drove them apart. The definition of masculinity, to such men, appears to mean "[being] in control at all times. But remaining in control prevents a person from ever achieving intimacy with another, from ever letting down his guard; it thus precludes easy friendship, fellowship, community" (French 530).

Peterson confronts Alhaji again at a later date, this time accompanied by three armed guards, and with their presence is able to retrieve the original documents for the house. This is analogous to the retrieval of his lost manhood—"if manhood is about power and control, not being powerful means you are not a man. Again, violence becomes a means to prove otherwise to yourself and others" (Kaufman *7 Ps*). Peterson's aim is accomplished only after shooting Alhaji's wife, and chasing Alhaji himself in an attempt to kill him. At one point during the chase one of the guards gains ground on Alhaji and is about to kill him, when Peterson waves him off. Peterson believes that his masculinity will only be redeemed if Alhaji dies by his hand directly, which he does. The camera helps in emphasising the symbolic fall of Alhaji; an aerial shot is used to project the fall from the sky to the ground. Once he lands on the ground as a result of a blow received from one of Peterson's bodyguards, Peterson walks on him and kills him. Alhaji's fall and death are displayed in slow motion signifying the futility of seeking masculinity through deception. The slow motion exaggerates the incident and presents it larger than life. Still in slow motion, the camera follows Peterson as he leaves the scene with a majestic walk and display of victory for killing his close competitor. However, it is just a matter of time because just as the slow motion is short-lived, Peterson's end comes.

Despite his success in strategically achieving new wealth, Peterson's construction of his hegemonic masculinity is incomplete. He displays his masculine status, such as it is, with fleets of cars, large houses, and expensive clothing. He makes himself out to be strong, in charge, a figure to be feared; at one point he tells Francis that "the fear of me is the beginning of wisdom." When Peterson's wife complains about his injustices against Agatha and Francis, alluding to the fact that they are likely to seek vengeance, he tells her that Francis and his family are like grains on his palm—he can blow them off whenever he pleases. Peterson's hegemonic masculinity, however, is missing one important component: validation from other men. Neither Alhaji nor Francis respect him, or regard him as their superior. Without the endorsement of his two equally successful counterparts, Peterson remains insecure about his masculinity. Meuser states that "[h]omosocial settings are of crucial importance for founding and maintaining a masculine identity" (296). Kimmel also confirms that masculinity "is a homosocial enactment" ("Masculinity as Homophobia" 275). Perhaps in response to the resultant insecurity, Peterson surrounds himself with what he perceives to be subordinate masculine figures—bodyguards, drivers, casual labourers. His masculine status is acknowledged by these men, but their social status prevents this from being entirely satisfying. As with all of the principal male characters in *Time*, Peterson equates masculinity with material wealth and the ability to control other men (the "hegemonic definition of manhood is a man in power, man with power, and a man of power" (Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia" 272)). This view, of course, simply leads to a societal reinforcement of the ideology that real men are the ones with power over women and over other men. Ironically,

this understanding of masculinity is perpetrated most strongly by men themselves: "We are under constant careful scrutiny of other men. Other men watch us, rank us, grant our acceptance into the realm of manhood. Manhood is demonstrated for other men's approval. It is other men who evaluate the performance" (Kimmel, "Masculinity and Homophobia" 275). Men who score low on this performance sometimes resort to acts of violence as a means of making up for their inadequacies. Peterson is a fair example of this—he fails to recognize that Francis and Alhaji know that he is simply posturing, pretending to be powerful. Peterson's violence in the film escalates particularly after realizing his failure in his performance for Alhaji and Francis.

During a confrontation between Agatha and Peterson, she refers to him as Lucifer, and Peterson orders her and her husband never to return to his house. The mise-en-scène is strategically crafted to enhance the contradictory masculine identity of Peterson thereby enhancing his humiliation by the end of the scene. Peterson is smartly dressed in a black suit, standing in front of one of his cars with male servants within his reach ready to execute his commands. The eye of the camera leads Francis and Agatha, looking extremely dejected, walking into the compound. After pretentious exchange of pleasantries an argument ensues and Agatha calls Peterson Lucifer. Peterson's humiliation at being insulted is compounded by the fact that Francis and various members of Peterson's staff are present for the argument. He therefore feels it necessary to speak particularly rudely to Agatha, which angers Francis, who warns him never to speak that way to her again. When Francis and Agatha are gone, Peterson still feels particularly insecure, and asks his servants' opinions on his physical appearance before leaving the house. In a subsequent incident with Francis, after Agatha's death, Peterson accuses him of killing Agatha in order to get even with him. Francis retorts by saying that he would not kill the mother of his children simply to retaliate against worthless garbage like Peterson. This shocks and angers Peterson, mostly because he realizes his own failure in winning Francis's approval. Peterson's violence continues more strongly after this event, as it does after similar events in which he fails to win the approval of other men in his social strata. As long as his expensive cars, clothing, and house cannot validate his masculinity before his peers, he seeks alternative, often violent, means to do so. In essence, Peterson demonstrates that what "we call masculinity is often a hedge against being revealed as a fraud, an exaggerated set of activities that keep others from seeing through us, and a frenzied effort to keep at bay those fears within us" (Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia" 277). When Peterson realizes the limitation of his possessions in positioning him as a strong masculine figure, it becomes important for him to eliminate anyone who might expose his inner weakness. When he tells Francis that fear of himself is the beginning of wisdom, he takes a twist on a similar Bible verse: "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10). In a desperate stretch for imagined power, he equates his position with that of God. He is constantly afraid that other men will "unmask [him], reveal to [him] and the world that [he] does not

measure up, that [he is] not a real [man]" (Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia" 277). As hard as Peterson tries to gain and maintain his masculine position, he fails to earn the endorsement of other men. These men can somehow read his life, see his weaknesses, and refuse to pay homage to him. Faced with this and the fear of being unmasked by either Francis or Alhaji, he feels the need to silence them both.

Peterson sees Francis as a threat, instead of a companion who might help him build his masculine identity. Alhaji betrays Paterson's trust by presenting him with false papers. The men treat each other with suspicion, and are constantly on guard; it is no surprise that they are so quick to employ violence against one another with little provocation. As Kaufman explains, each corner of the triad feeds on each other, so men's violence against women occurs in connection with violence against other men, which leads to the internalization of violence—man's violence against himself.

Violence against Himself

In Kaufman's conception, man's violence against himself is carried out in construction of the male ego, an extension of Herbert Marcuse's "surplus aggression", defined as "the building of a precarious structure of internalised violence" (12). Man's violence against himself arises as a result of being denied the expression of emotions such as fear, pain, sadness, and embarrassment, which are connected to passivity. Kaufman makes the point that the "constant psychological and behavioural vigilance against passivity and its derivatives is a perpetual act of violence against oneself" (12). When Francis and his family move to the village, he begins to see himself as a worthless man because he cannot provide adequately for them. He sees their relocation to the village as a move backwards; the quiet village life is not for him, not the way to pursue his dreams (this view of village life actually reflects a view depicted by many Ghanaian filmmakers). In a scene in which Francis is shown on a farm, weeding with the rest of the family, he remarks in a soliloquy that life is no longer worth living; the next scene shows him attempting to commit suicide. Francis's violence against himself arises from a sense of being unable to communicate his pain and his fears to anyone, including his wife—up to the point of his attempted suicide, he continues to act as though he is in control. Though he is in a fragile state, he attempts to maintain an outward toughness. Francis is not shown, up to this point in the movie, to have any close friends on whom he can lean. The male characters he interacts with are either co-workers or his pastor. As Marilyn French writes, "Men may have 'buddies,' acquaintances with whom they can engage in the ritual competition of banter, sport, or game, but they rarely possess intimate friends" (530). The absence of intimate friendships brings Francis to internalize his emotion. When the situation becomes overwhelming and he cannot find a means of escape, he feels that suicide is his only option. From this point forward, Francis's life begins to decline and is characterized by terrible emotional instability. Francis's emotional distress continues even after he returns to the city and becomes rich again. Despite the money, cars,

and other material possessions, Francis is lethargic and acts as though he were sick. He lives in fear that his wife's death will be questioned, and that it will eventually be avenged by Peterson. He begins to lie to those around him.

Peterson's issues with Francis begin as a result of his envious considerations of Francis's wealth, which he finds threatening. Feelings of inferiority eventually lead to feelings of jealousy and anger, which contribute to his hostility. Psychoanalytic accounts suggest that aggressive behaviours may be inevitable when the psychological self feels threatened (Chodorow 241). When men fail to find a safe environment in which to express themselves, they suffer complex emotions that lead to anger and hostility; "part of that anger is directed at oneself in the form of guilt, self-hate and various physiological and psychological symptoms. Part is directed at other men. Part of it is directed at women" (Kaufman 12). Both Francis and Peterson regard the men around them as rivals; they do not see the potential for friendships. Their lives are dominated by their individual quests to defeat other men, so they lose sight of the benefits of companionship. This is true of many men:

> In modern competitive society, all men to some extent are seen as potential enemies. In school they are competitors. On the playing field they are competitors. After school hours they are potential aggressors. As we grow to adulthood, they confront us with their criticisms, with their manoeuvring for positions in the hierarchies of power, money, celebrity, accomplishment, and conquest of women. (Miller 10-11)

Peterson seems particularly unable to communicate with others without attempting to assert his superiority over them. However, at the peak of his crime and hostility, he actually begins to feel quite guilty. Images of his dead sister haunt him; sometimes they appear transposed over his wife's face. He becomes generally fearful, on edge, paranoid. He runs when no one is chasing him, alarming his family with this and other strange behaviours. Peterson refuses to communicate with his wife, and becomes obsessed with eliminating men by whom he feels threatened. Rather than enjoying his wealth, he is consumed by guilt and general psychological instability. The results of employing dishonest means to acquire their wealth are catastrophic to both Francis and Peterson. Fear and mental instability lead to their use of violence.

The Fragility of Masculinity

The wickedness of these men cannot be overemphasized. While they portray themselves as individuals with valid reasons for their actions (and perhaps they believe this themselves), their violence cannot rightly be justified. The question one must ask is why are these men so wicked, despite their privileged position in society? Peterson has considerable wealth and material possessions, yet is not content. Similarly, a businessman in the film *Accra Killings* is also quite wealthy but is not satisfied with his riches, as others in the city are richer than he is. In the movie, the god Zeus cautions him against this

dissatisfaction. A politician in the same movie is already in power but demands more, to be able to rule the people indefinitely. One common factor in the characters of each of these men is their insecurity regarding their masculinity, which leads them to seek harmful alternative means to construct it. Despite traditional masculine advantages, they are not at peace within themselves. Kaufman explains:

> Masculinity is power. But masculinity is terrifyingly fragile because it does not really exist in the sense we are led to think it exists; that is as a biological reality—something real that we have inside ourselves. It exists in ideology; it exists as scripted behaviour; it exists within gendered relationships. [. . .] The presence of a penis and testicles is all it takes. Yet boys and men harbour great insecurity about their male credentials. This insecurity exists because maleness is equated with masculinity; but the latter is a figment of our collective patriarchal surplus—repressive imaginations. (7)

This fragility of masculinity is exhibited repeatedly in movies that normally depict the wealthiest male characters as the principal culprits. Though these men have ample material wealth, their masculine status must be continually validated and defended. Each principal male character in *Time* goes to great, often violent, lengths to protect and construct his masculinity. To these men, outwitting one another in business and outdoing one another in public defines their masculinity. Kaufman suggests that "in a patriarchal society, being male is highly valued, and men value their masculinity. But everywhere there are ambivalent feelings. [. . .] Although maleness and masculinity are highly valued, men are everywhere unsure of their own masculinity and maleness, whether consciously or not" (7-8).

The instability of masculinity and the risks that come with it prevent men from enjoying their wealth and positions of privilege. They are continually exploring new means by which to validate their masculinities. For instance, when Amos is asked at the shrine to kill a pregnant woman, he pretends to be insane in order to subdue his victim without arousing suspicion of his motives. He is prepared to become mad—that is, to assume the most basic of masculine emotional positions—in order to assert his hegemonic masculine status. To achieve success in maintaining one's dominant masculine position occasionally demands that men perform acts of marginalized or subordinate masculinities, synonymous with the distinction between their public versus private lives. This is supportive of Kaufman's argument that masculinity is simply a figment of our imaginations. Susan Bordo's observation regarding the difference between the penis and the phallus may be applicable here, since men's idea about the phallus, which is equivalent to masculinity, is also a figment of their imagination and not an actual body part (104).

Time explicitly presents performance for other men as the main reason for men's violence against women, themselves, and other men. The movie shows that women are neither the perpetrators of violence, nor are they (in this culture) related to the reason why men perform violent acts. Violence is primarily the means by which men prove themselves to other men. With consideration to all of the violences

perpetrated by men in the film, it is obvious that other men, not women, are the centre of men's activities in Ghanaian culture. The fear of being exposed by other men is their driving force for violence. By the end of the movie all of the major male characters are violently killed, signifying the fragility and absurdity of violent masculinity. Similar significances can be found in other popular Ghanaian media; male psychic tension and masculine violence are common themes.

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