The Effects of Formal Education on Mother/Daughter Relationships in French Colonies

Laura M. Hartwell

Introduction

The French educational system of French post/colonist structures resulted in a wealth of francophone literature. In turn, the educational system became an essential theme of francophone literature. Texts by women in colonial settings are no exception. The term "women" intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of ideological construction. By assembling diverse voices describing both education and mother-daughter pairs, the relation between governmental and societal pressures and women's intimate life becomes clear.

This paper will discuss the interplay between formal education and mother/daughter pairs viewed through the lens of selected works of Marguerite Duras, Fadhma Aïth Mansour Amrouche, Hélène Cixous, and Maryse Condé. In *The Lover* and *The Sea Wall* and other works, Duras draws upon her difficult childhood experiences in Indo-China where her mother traveled as a schoolteacher at the beginning of the twentieth century. Amrouche wrote her autobiography *My Life Story: The Autobiography of a Berber Woman* in 1946, which was later published in 1968. In an economically poor and rural setting at the turn of the century, her Berber mother sent her to one of the rare French schools for girls in order to insure her economic future. However, this academic and professional advancement entails both a linguistic and physical separation between mother and daughter. In *Les Rêveries de la Femme Sauvage*, Cixous describes her Jewish/German mother's return to a school for midwives in French colonized Algeria. For the mother, this new profession opens doors of intimacies with native women, intimacies that evade Cixous while in her French segregated lycée. Finally, the mother and daughter relation and formal education are recurrent themes in Condé's *Windward Heights*, a re-telling of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* that is notably void of living mothers of daughters. Condé rewrites these pairs into her multi-narrated text set in the twentieth century Caribbean region.

In these stories, formal education creates many levels of physical, cultural, and economic separation between daughter and mother. However, formal education also serves as a means of personal or societal advancement. In this paper, I will discuss the role of formal education as an influence on the mother/daughter relationship in four women's writings with colonial or postcolonial settings.

Colonial Context

As Albert Memmi said "Colonization creates both the colonized and the colonizer" (11). These chosen texts encompass different ways of living under this specific political structure. The economic and cultural wealth created under colonization for the dominant population is couched in the promotion of the exploitation of "other" lands and people. Duras writes of her mother, a daughter of peasants in France who was "victimized" by institutional indoctrination, and enlisted as a schoolteacher in Indo-China in 1899:

> *Occasionally, on Sunday, she stopped to gaze at the Colonial propaganda posters in front of the town hall […]: "Young People, a Fortune awaits you in the colonies!" The picture usually showed a colonial couple, dressed in white, sitting in rocking-chairs under banana trees while smiling natives busied themselves around them.* (Sea Wall 17).

The official propaganda portrayed a "harmonious" master to servant relation that was financially advantageous for the white French settlers. Even when she becomes part of the colonial occupation, the mother is still "innocent of any knowledge of the powers of evil, desperately ignorant of the bloodsucking proclivities of colonialism" (Ibid 19). Duras describes her mother as "innocent" and victim of an intrinsically evil and unjust political system.

Condé's novel, *Windward Heights,* describes an abandoned school and other colonial remnants as part of a small Caribbean island setting:

> *[On the island of Marie-Gallante] many nationalities have clashed, from the French and the British to the Dutch…But all of them linked hands to enslave the African and grow rich at the expense of his sweat in the fields of indigo, cotton, coffee and tobacco…One or two miles from Saint-Louis, behind the Massicot mill, on the land of an abandoned great house, the Republic had installed a one-room schoolhouse where reading, writing and arithmetic were taught together with a little French history and geography. For a number of years no child had crossed its threshold and nobody could remember when the last teacher, a former student of the Ploermel Brothers, had left on a boat.* (Windward Heights 223-4).

As these excerpts demonstrate, women have been victims, survivors, perpetrators, and denouncers of colonization. Although many women on the continent directly or

indirectly profited from the colonial economic system, some white women were encouraged to participate physically in the process. The colonial propaganda did not reflect the hardship, repression, and neglect that local populations endured.

As Nicola Cooper discusses, the French administration was aware of the importance of women in the colonies. In 1897 the *Société francaise d'émigration de femmes* was created to encourage unemployed women to emigrate. These future wives and mothers were presumed to improve fertility with the aim of occupying the territory and to have a moralizing effect in the French empire. The official propaganda encouraged French women to "help" the indigenous populations: these women are instrumental in the colonial domination of indigenous women (France in Indochina 133-143). In *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord,* a school administrator delineates the moral role of mothers in colonial Indo-China, "You are surrounded by the police network of students' mothersChe smilesCfrom Saigon. They want their daughters to stay together. They say–get this, 'Why does that little slut run after the baccalaureate?" These mothers correlate virginity and adhesion to the white community with the honor of the baccalaureate, even though the transgressing daughter is an outstanding student. The colonial mother's role is to keep her daughters safe from "immoral" behavior.

Academic Segregation

The colonial schools for whites and native or other ethnic groups remain predominantly segregated. Following an administrative error, the young Jewish Cixous enters the segregated French *lycée* in Algiers. She experiences the division between the other French nationals, her own family as well as of the Algerian community: "Never in the powdered Lycée was there question of the Algerian being. Never did the word Algeria enter here. In the Lycée, here, it is France. It was nothing but an immense, delirious lie that took up all the place of the truth. This lie became the truth" (Les Rêveries de la Femme Sauvage 150). The French educational system in the colonies during the late nineteenth and twentieth century courted certain French nationals and to a lesser degree the native populations, most often segregating the two.

Before the introduction of formal education, a native child's initiation into society was typically based on local cultural rituals. However, the economic and social advantages of formal education within the colonies conflicted with this tradition. Ngandu Nkashama remarks that in African literature of the 19th and 20th centuries, "The colonial administration attempted to privilege academic instruction as

the only possible form of initiation" (58). This new initiatic form reinforced the imposed administrative structures of the colonies.

Formal education in the former colonies incorporated people of color into certain levels of the administration for the advancement of the colony. In 1848, Victor Schoelcher, Sous-Secrétaire d'Etat and responsible for creating policies relative to the colonies and the abolition of slavery, encouraged education for students of all ranks and colors. He argues that a free, obligatory, and secular education is essential to "promoting every citizen's notion of rights and duties, which is the base of a just and good society" (Schoelcher 150). Later in 1881, he applauds the opening of a lycée for Creoles of diverse origins, "We see here the strongest agent of the fusion that we have already preached as the only possible way to assure the well-being of colonial society" (150). Formal education serves not only the advancement of individuals but the colonial society as well. Despite Schoelcher's enthusiasm, equality was not *de rigueur* within the educational system. Sexism was present, both in the creation of schools and in their content.

Gender Discrimination

In 1880, secondary education for girls was inaugurated under the devise "La République teaches girls who will become the mothers of men" (qtd.in Montreynaud 20). Amrouche's work exemplifies this phenomenon by describing the demands and inequalities in a Kabyle area of Algeria at the turn of the century:

> *People were beginning to demand the emancipation of Muslim women. At that time school was compulsory for boys; if a pupil played truant, the father and son were sentenced to three days in prison and a fine of fifteen francs. So boys attended school regularly. But, alas! Nothing similar was enforced for girls. […When her school closed, the French administrator said], "I can't help you. If you were men I'd issue you with a burnouse and give you a job in the police or the horse regiment but you are girls…" And he added casually, "They're pretty, they'll get married…!"* (Amrouche 17-18).

The sexism of the colony as played through in the educational system had a direct influence on the mother/child relation. Furthermore, the school imposes the governmental model of heterosexual marriage as the only family model available. Heterosexuality is expected to follow certain racial lines. Francoise Vergès illustrates

the institutionalized separation of certain mothers and children who enter the educational process:

> *In a work about Indo-China, published under the authority of the President of the Republic, Gaston Doumergue, and the Maréchal Lyautey, Albert de Pourvouville wrote: "The race of mixed-bloods, that many have helped develop, have always been the dishonor of the regions where it is present." It was necessary to slow down the "creation" of mixed-bloods "in those colonies that have the luck of not having any." Pourvouville makes a distinction between the boys and the girls issued from mixed blood in [Indo- China]. The girls, he said, will return to their race because the Indo-Chinese don't have any appreciation of children of the feminine sex. On the other hand, it is important to tear the boys from the influence of the mother in order to make future "low ranking administrators or French employees, this is the ideal of the integrated and respected* Annamite*". The colonial school took on a particular significance[…] The colonial project was clear: a good mixed-blood, male, was one that served the colonial project and rejected the world of his mother* (Penser la Créolité 75-6).

Albert de Pourvilles's racist and sexist arguments define the interests of France. He does not acknowledge that the "development" of *métis* stems from the power structure that permitted white male and women of color transgression of segregation within certain parameters. Ironically, he argues that the indigenous people do not appreciate female children, but is oblivious to sexism within his own culture. He proposes that schools are the means of integrating certain children and hence creating a mass of trained men ready to fill necessary employment and administrative positions.

Sexism was not limited to cross-cultural structures in the French colonies. On the continent, there was an immense political, social and economic push to encourage women's domestic role. Karen Offen notes that between the two World Wars:

> *In no industrializing country had women constituted so great a percentage of the labor force […], yet in no country did [male] perspective rhetoric insist so strongly on the necessity of achieving the ideal of a sexual division of labor, with the husband as*

> *breadwinner and the wife as* maîtresse de maison *and mother-educator.* (11)

Despite actual demographics, women remained symbolically confined to the domestic sphere. During the twentieth century, women entered into teaching more than into any other profession. Florence Montreynaud remarks that during this period, "L'institutrice et la "femme professeur" s'imposent dans la réalité quotidienne comme dans l'imaginaire ; elle sont sujets d'enquêtes, de livres, et mêmes héroïnes de romans." Cultural artifacts mirrored the entry of women into the educational system. However, "women" is not a homogeneous category. Judith Butler explains, "gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, [it] intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities" (3). Referring to these modalities in her work on women's autobiographies, Leigh Gilmore searches to interrupt the formalistic logic governing the "institutional inscriptions of gender" (11). By listening to these authors' narratives of formal education and mother/daughter pairs in countries colonized by France, I weave their stories and find how particular societal and governmental forces intimately affect women.

Mother/Daughter Relationships

Although the social climate domesticated and often idealized the image of both mothers and daughters, the following texts demonstrate that these roles are heterogeneous. In this paper, I define mother/daughter relationships as the social and/or biological links between two female subjects where one is or was responsible for the other. The pairs include, but are not limited to the non-biological and legally unrecognized Kabyle mother in Cixous's work, the daughter who muses over her dead mother in Condé's novel, Duras's physically abusive mother figure, and Amrouche's mother who considers infanticide after refusing a French judge's unethical proposal of adoption. My purpose is not to prove that all women, or that women of varying socio-economic-historical contexts have a universal experience of education or of mother/daughter relations, but to examine how societal constructs of women, vehiculed by education, inevitable touch women and girls on intimate levels.

This paper does not assume a normative model of mother daughter relations. On the contrary, their writings portray the overlappings, rifts, and divisions between women within the particular historical context of colonization. Patricia Hill Collins warns:

> *By jettisoning the implicit assumption of a normative center needed for both oppositional difference and reconstructive postmodern tolerance for difference, intersectionality provides a conceptual framework for studying the complexities within historically constructed groups as well as those characterizing relationships among such groups.* (152)

While mother-daughter relationships are found universally, that is not to say there is a "normative center" from which to compare them. The subjects in these literary works share the specific historical context of French colonialism. Intersectionality or socially hierarchical areas of sex, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and class affect both educational practices and mother-daughter relationships.

The effects of formal education can be of varying nature: education transmits governmental and societal models of this relationship that fluctuate according to ethnicity, age, and status; formal education modifies the economic statuses of both mothers and daughters, the lack of which is often detrimental to poorer women, and only exceptionally passes lines of ethnicity; lastly, formal education can physically and psychologically separate these pairs by introducing the mother or the daughter into a socio-economical sphere that remains alien to the other.

Marguerite Duras

In the works of Duras set in Indochina during the first half of the twentieth century, poverty among the colonized and the poor white settlers systematically separates mothers and children. The white mother figure of *A Sea Wall* and *The Lover,* hopes to better her own life and to help the people of Indo-China by accepting a teaching position. The mother's role as a schoolteacher brings her into close contact with many native children. However, the indigenous rural children that she and her family encounter are often dying from hunger. Duras' mother is known for adopting children into her home, but the weight of caring for poor sick children is also her undoing.

In *The Sea Wall,* a peasant mother traveling north for fieldwork leaves "Ma" her baby girl. The indigenous mother had a terrible sore "that had eaten away her heel and a part of her foot. She said she loves her child so much that she had walked thirty-five kilometers on that ailing foot, to bring it to her" to care for while she

earns a living in the fields (94). Ma cares for the baby for several months, before the baby girl dies. This death shatters the already psychologically fragile mother:

> *The death of that child had been worse than the death of the horse, worse than Monsieur Jo, worse that all their bad luck put together. Ma, even though she had anticipated it, had wept for days and days, working herself into a rage, swearing she would never again do anything whatsoever for children* (95).

In this work, the colonial structure's opposition to indigenous women's education and professional possibilities leads to death, a drastic form of separation between mother and daughter. The tragic reality of many of the indigenous people's quest for survival has a destructive influence on Ma. Her psyche deteriorates as she loses hope.

The mother is entangled in the violent destructiveness of society. The daughter is vividly aware of the mother's state and its ramifications on the entire family. The children are without power to change the situation and remain dependent on her life choices and personal disintegration. She wants to assure the economic and social future of her daughter, but even this is difficult in the French colonial framework. She dreams that she can marry her daughter to a rich husband, but this endeavor is fruitless. When an unsuitable suitor gives a diamond ring to Suzanne, a fictionalized Duras, the mother erupts:

> *Then it was that Ma had stood, had flung herself at Suzanne, had hit her with her fists, using all the strength that remained in her. With all the strength of her convictions, and also of her misgivings…She had talked about the sea wall, about the debts, her illness, the roof, the piano lessons, the cadastral agents, her old age, her fatigue, and her death.* (*The Sea Wall* 108-109)

The mother had come to Indo-China following a dream of self-improvement and helping native children to learn new skills. Instead, her life as a single mother with few resources is pitifully degrading. Her vitality is "murdered by society." The mother/daughter relationship can only suffer under such conditions. The mother's mental and physical disintegration adversely limits her positive interactions with her daughter.

Formal education is a means of advancement for both mother and daughter. In Duras's oeuvre the mother-figure is able to support her family by establishing a

new French-language school, *La Nouvelle Ecole Française.* The daughter attends a boarding school for girls. She is one of two white girls among many "half-castes," many of whom have been abandoned by their fathers. Their fathers are soldiers, sailors, or minor official in the customs, post, or public works department. Duras does not mention the status of the indigenous mothers, which is overridden by the fathers' status.

In *The Lover,* Marguerite's white school companion, Hélène Lagonelle is convinced that the "French government raises [the students] to be nurses in hospitals or to work in orphanages, leper colonies, and mental homes" (70). She iterates the way in which education of girls can be useful to the colonizing structure. However, the beautiful Hélène is not psychologically prepared to continue above the primary level, so marriage seems her likely future. Marriage is the only venue of sexuality accepted by society. Mothers or daughters transgressing this limit is a recurrent theme in Duras's *The Lover, L'Amant de la Chine du Nord,* and in the film *Indochine.*

Duras' work captures the actual progression of some white settlers. Clearly many French families, both on the continent and in the colonies, financially profited from colonization. The Duras family remained significantly financially more stable and retained the possibility of mobility that was refused to indigenous people. However, their dream proved to be a nightmare. The historian Nicole Cooper remarks:

> *Duras details the sapping of the psychological and physical resilience of the poor white settler; and charts the initial hope and expectation of idealistic parents, imbued with official France's missionary zeal, on their way to bring French civilization to Indochina; and their gradual disappointment, loss of hope and despair as their projects fail.* (121)

Through her teaching, the mother had come to Indochina full of idealism and economic hope for her family. Her battered Bentley and the ruined sea walls symbolize her fruitless clinging to colonial power. Her gradual debilitation results in the violence that she hurls on her daughter. Education remains the key to their survival: the mother returns to teaching, and the daughter academically excels in school.

Fadhma Aïth Mansour Amrouche

In her autobiography *My Life Story,* Fadhma Aïth Mansour Amrouche integrates aspects of both the French colonial culture and her native Kabyle culture. She was born in the northern region of Algeria, then a French department, at the turn of the century. A French judge who wanted to adopt Amrouche had pressured her mother by refusing to require the natural father to recognize the baby as his own. She is considered an "illegitimate" child and hence "un-marriageable" within her own community. Her mother sends her to one of the rare French schools for girls in order to ensure her economic future. After the school closes, she tells her mother, "Since the *Roumis* [French colonizers] had rejected us, I resolved to become Kabyle again" (30). She understands the colonial institutions as a foreign world. The dichotomy between legal authority and care is especially evident when race or ethnicity is factored. White mothers frequently legally adopt children of color, such as the judge's desire in Amrouche's case or in Duras's *Indochine.* Women of color are often employed to care for white children such as in Cixous's or Duras's works. While relegating poorly paid physical labor to women of color, the white colonizing class retains legal power, even within the context of mother/daughter relationships.

Amrouche's autobiography is both remarkably similar and different from the widely known fictionalized work of Mouloud Fouloun, *L'Enfant du Pauvre.* Published in 1954, the introduction presents a modest Kabyle schoolteacher in Algeria who keeps a school notebook filled with the story of his life. Amrouche and Fouloun lived in the same area, read French literature, and drew portraits of Kabyle life. Both authors describe similar elements of Kabyle life: the farming, the houses, the stories, the food, the local artisans, and the celebrations. However, the lives described are dramatically different. Fouloun's main-character, Menrad is the first son of the family who continues his studies to become a teacher. It is *because* of his education that he can both improve his economic situation and remain in his hometown. If not, he would have remained a shepherd or left his town in search of salaried work. Because of societal and colonist gender discrimination, these are not possibilities for Amrouche.

The aspirations of the French educational system for Fouloun and Amrouche were divided along lines of gender. The colonizing structure offers extremely limited educational or professional opportunities to Amrouche. Because of her education, she is chosen to work in a Catholic hospital. This is reminiscent of the Durasian character Hélène Lagonelle's conviction that unmarriable young women are destined to hospitals and similar institutions. Amrouche accepts the offer for economic security: "I had been happy with my mother and brothers. I had had a

home, I was no longer the pariah I had always been; but I realized that this existence could not last: my mother was my sole protector and she could die and I would be alone" (43). She leaves her mother once again. While Amrouche is the first known female from North Africa to be writing in French, she also remained strongly attached to the Kabyle language. She continually shared Kabyle songs, stories, and proverbs with her children especially her son the poet Jean Amrouche and her daughter the writer and singer Marie-Louise-Taos, the first North African women author of French expression. Amrouche's first language remains an essential to her:

> *Oh! How beautiful the Kabyle language is, how poetic, how harmonious, when one knows it well…My country folk are so long-suffering in adversity, so obedient to the will of God, but this can only be fully understood if one can penetrate the language which was a comfort to me during all my long periods of exile.* (172)

Amrouche lived within two languages. Her educational experience never validated the Kabyle language. This living tie to her people and family is a "comfort" and priceless possession. Literacy in French brings an introduction to written texts, the ticket to being employed by French-speaking institutions, and the tool to write her life in a language that is read and published by a greater audience.

Hélène Cixous

In 1946, Amrouche wrote the story of the first sixty years of her life. During this same period, Hélène Cixous was a Jewish student in a High School for non-Jewish French nationals in the bustling city of Alger in Algeria. Like Duras, her mother augments her income through the bias of higher education. Her Jewish and European heritage separate her from both local and settler communities. Like Amrouche, her educational experience does little to bridge these ethnic and class barriers. Her *Rêveries de la Femme Sauvage* evokes this period.

She is acutely aware of the racism, anti-Semitism, and sexism that construct her family's status:

> *En plus du racisme fondateur français du racisme racine raison socle piliers société culture coutume en plus de cette inoculation congénitale triomphale…il faut ajouter les antisémitismes…et par-dessus l'antisémitisme banal et continu, l'antisemistisme aigu à*

> *brusques poussées très dangereuses ; et par-dessus il faut ajouter l'antiveuvisme, dont nous vîmes surgir les manifestations, une fois mon père disparu, parmi les proches, les amis de mon père qui voulaient tous maintenant être les amants de ma mère sinon, et leurs épouses qui toutes sans aucune exception mirent ma mère et la famille à la porte préventivement.* (43)

Cixous's family is both part of and rejected by the colonial community in Algeria. They must contend with the racism that deforms the dominant community. The community's anti-Semitism regulates their status of exclusion by both low-level forms of continual violence and a constant threat of intense violent action. Furthermore, Cixous sees how the local Jewish community defines her mother as a "woman." Because her family no longer has a father/husband figure, it is violently pushed away. After her husband's death, the mother became a potential sexual commodity, and was therefore excluded by other married women of her class.

At the death of Cixous's father, the mother, seemingly indifferent to the difficulties, studies to become a midwife in order to support own mother and her own two children. Cixous' mother turns to education in order to re-establish a solid footing:

> *[M]ais ma mère indifférente, en bonne santé et même meilleure encore, et de plus blindée par l'urgence et par son héritage génétique allemand de fille de veuve de guerre allemende, a tout de suite trouvé le chemin de l'Hôpital,…elle va s'inscrire pour des études de sage-femme…Et de là, de l'Hôpital devenu le sien, elle crée en quatre années le nouveau monde…où ? Au sein même de la fertilité de cette Algérie, dont nous, et surtout moi, nous rêvions depuis que je marchais d'atteindre un jour le corps, les bras, les seins, les mains.* (55)

Strengthen by her German roots of a widowed mother; Cixous's mother carries on as if all is well. Following her studies, she creates a medical service that accompanies indigenous women during their childbirth. Through her new work, the mother intimately enters the local Algerian community. A world that Cixous still dreams of reaching.

Hence, the mother comes in intimate contact with Algerian families, and more particularly women. It is a profession, like teaching, that is an acceptable domain for women. It is interesting to note that even in the domain of childbirth;

there are French-institutional ways and indigenously accepted ways of birthing. The mother describes how in the French hospital, pregnancy is treated as a sickness, and the mother is tied to the table to keep her from moving, while at her *Clinique* she encourages the local tradition of walking before, during, and after the birthing. This demonstrates how pervasively the colonial mandates entered into local traditions. Again, not all indigenous women gave birth in an institutional setting, just as not all women were included in the educational system. In order to become a midwife, the mother attended medical school for four years. This option was clearly not an option for many indigenous women because of the segregation in the primary and secondary schools.

For the mother, this education is essential to financially supporting her family. The daughter sees how her mother, after the dominant and Jewish communities' rejection, found herself a place within the local community. Several years later, during the Algerian War of Independence, she will see her mother rejected and imprisoned by the local community officials. Education is an important factor to individual advancement, but societal contexts also largely affect both mother's and daughter's possibility of integration.

Cixous's mother, because of her professional status, faces a decision similar to the one the judge made in refusing Amrouche's father to acknowledge her. Here, a post-menopausal Kabyle woman brings a two-year-old child she cares for and asks the mother to create a birth certificate naming the Kabyle woman the mother of the child. The mother refuses and finds the whole situation unbelievable. Like Amrouche, this child will have a most difficult future because he does not have adequate official ties of family. Unlike her mother who sits solidly in her refusal to lie, Cixous describes the absurdity of a culture that functions within a racist, anti-Semitic, and sexist dichotomies. For Cixous, this positioning within society is the mother and daughter's essential point of difference, a difference the mother does not understand.

It is evident that both Cixous and her mother gain or retain financial status through the bias of education. Cixous will continue to study in Paris and become an exceptional writer and professor. Their lives, and hence their relationship, were in many ways affected by the prevailing colonial structure, of which the educational systems were an essential factor.

Maryse Condé

The mother/daughter relation and formal education are recurrent themes in Maryse Condé's *Windward Heights* set in the Caribbean during the first half of the

twentieth century. This interpretation of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is built around a multiplicity of personal "tales" narrated by Lockwood, a Londoner who learns much from the country-born servant Nelly. Beth Newman describes Nelly, the character that serves as "mother" to the main character, Catherine:

> *The oldest woman in two motherless households, she acts more as guardian than as housekeeper. In her role as "patriarchy's paradigmatic housekeeper," in Gilbert and Gulbar's memorable phrase (291), and as bearer of the shield that shows Catherine's image to Lockwood, Nelly watches on behalf of men while seeking to remain outside the circuit of desire.* (456)

Condé eliminates Lockwood as narrator, but incorporates characters such as Nelly, Catherine, her mother Catherine, and Razyé (Brontë's Heathcliff), as well as adding a third generation of Catherine's and Heathcliff/Razyé's respective children. Condé also includes a wide representation of the many peoples that form the Caribbean community. Within their narratives, mother/daughter relationships, remarkably absent from Brontë's work, are included.

Windward Heights is steeped in Caribbean culture: the incipit speaks of a *babalaw,* a powerful and venerable seer that Razyé later consults. The ability to see into the future is not acquired or even condoned by the French educational system. Unbeknownst to them, Razyé and Irmine's young daughter, Cassandre is able to see into the future through her dreams. Cassandre, although too young to attend school, "knew her powers over Irmine" (300). She is even able to foretell the future of her son (the ending of the novel) to her mother. Condé includes and validates "ways of knowing" that are exterior to formal education.

In a second mother/daughter narrative within the novel, second-generation Etiennise does not share the same closeness with her Indian-born mother, Sanjita. The mother has lost several sons. Her own upbringing modifies her relation with her daughter:

> *A daughter is of very little value. My mother told me that in India they are killed at birth and thrown out at the crossroads where they are trampled on by our sacred cows. In spite of everything, that child has become the apple of my eye, but I don't show it for fear fate takes her from me.* (160)

As housekeeper for a plantation family, Sanjita has dedicated herself to the care of a sick but academically achieving boy. When Etiennise and the young boy meet, he wishes to speak about her mother and her schooling. However, these topics of are no interest to Etiennise. She perceives the schooling she receives to be both limiting and boring.

A third daughter in the novel is Cathy, also named after a motherless girl in *Wuthering Heights*. In Condé's work, when her father also dies, Cathy goes to school to become a teacher. As she sails off to her first position, she muses over the fate of her half brothers: "They had no inclination to study for years and years to become civil servants. So what was left? Marry some richly endowed mulatto girl, prepared to do anything to whiten her blood?" (230). As discussed earlier, education serves to prepare some *métis* for limited administrative employments of the government. For Cathy this is not a possibility because she is neither rich, nor white-skinned; however, teaching had recently become an option for her.

Upon arrival at her new post, Cathy is shocked to find the poverty in which her students are living, but is zealously committed to their education:

> *Since she could not fill the bellies of her pupils with food, she would fill their ears with words of affection and their hearts with love. Never were children more cherished, more admired and encouraged to work harder and behave better…Consequently, after only one year of teaching, ninety-five per cent of Cathy's pupils received scholarships and six fishermen's children were admitted to the lycée Carnot in La Pointe.* (232)

Quality education is a means of improving one's status, be it Cathy's or the fishermen's children. Cathy helps her students enter the French speaking community, but language continues to separate her from the local community. The townspeople wonder what kind of woman Cathy can be because she does not speak Creole. Furthermore, the French language is equated with the French power system. For carnival, she dresses her students as French speaking royalty. The importance of language as power and its implications for the individual is particularly true in the French Caribbean. Condé argues that [the West Indies Anglophone] "have never experienced the terribly French exclusion of languages judged to be nonstandard or nonclassic" (Pfaff, 108).

The act of teaching and learning French in the colonies was of intrinsic importance. Hierarchies are mirrored and continued through empowered or dis-empowered languages. Pierre Bourdieu argues that language is central to one's

social definition and hence of one's status: "The linguistic relation of power is not completely determined by the prevailing linguistic forces alone: by virtue of the languages spoken, the speakers who use them and the groups defined by possession of the corresponding competence, the whole social structure is present in each interaction" (503).

In the colonial setting, language takes on a particular importance. Language, even ways of speaking a specific language, positions and mirrors the speaker's place in the societal power structure. The French-speaking Cathy, like other teachers, helps students move out of being solely positioned with the economically disempowered group of Creole speakers. Because she is unable to speak the local Creole, Cathy is reciprocally excluded from the local Creole community.

Another difficult factor of integration is Cathy's adhesion to the social group of young educated women. The townspeople wonder "Since when were girls capable of reading and writing and teaching children? The inhabitants of Saint-Louise would not have been more flabbergasted if they had seen Lucifer himself settle down among them" (225). Both the fictional Cathy and the real life Amrouche suffer from social doubt of girl's performance. However, their education also separates them from their mother's communities.

Conclusion

These literary texts reflect how formal education within a post/colonial context is provided and perceived. As seen in these works, education is a positive influence on an individual's life. In contrast, the financial and social futures of under-schooled children were much bleaker. However, the educational system Adevalued" local attributes such as language, language arts, or history.

These authors bring with them a wealth of culture, including oral family legacies or knowledge, which the formal educational system often disregarded. Brinda Mehta maintains, "Women's access to oral history serves as a rite/write of passage for female individualization and self-affirmation, calling for a reinsertion of the feminine in literary production" (235). Oral history is especially prevalent in the works of Amrouche and Condé. Their texts mix both oral tradition and classical French literature. Two authors, Duras and Condé, had mothers who were teachers. Amrouche's Kabyle husband taught in missionary schools. Cixous and Condé followed university teaching careers. These women draw upon the traditional literary field dominated by male writers and incorporate their personal lives and understandings of education and distinct communities.

The French governing institutions propaganda reduced the colonizing women to the glorified but unsupported role of mother and educator or moralizing agents. On the contrary, colonized mothers were often construed as impeding colonial society's vision of integration. However, the reality revealed through these texts is not polarized, but must be approached through "the analysis claiming that systems of race, economic class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization" (Collins 278). In other words, this intersectionality creates a complex web of ebb and flow governed by institutions including education and society that links communities and individuals.

These texts demonstrate how the French government constructed roles of mothers and daughters along various eco-social-cultural levels, and how education transmitted these constructions which in turn modified individual mother/daughter relations. As found in these texts, formal education affects the mother/daughter relationship in four central ways. First, it transmits governmental objectives of women and girls. Second, these governmental models in turn modify societal support or rejection of certain ways of being. Third, formal education (or lack) unequally influences the economic status of both mother and daughter. Fourth, it may promote traditional French values, culture, and language while ignoring or stifling those of indigenous or oppressed mothers and daughters. I hope I have done justice to the knowledge of these authors, and in doing so revealed the larger societal implications for women and the deeply personal repercussions of governmental and societal biases that are intrinsically linked with formal education.

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