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Beating the Bastard: Discourses of Domestic and Educational Violence in Autobiographical Novels of Mid-Twentieth-Century Caribbean Decolonization



This article argues that the discourse of parental and educational violence toward bastard children in mid-twentieth-century Caribbean autobiographical fiction allegorizes the political afflictions imposed by European and North American colonial powers on the Caribbean region. This argument has as its corollary the idea that children's resistance to this adult violence functions as a literary expression of Caribbean revolutionary movements seeking the end of colonial rule. This proposition intervenes in various critical conversations regarding postcolonial subjectivity that up until now have not fully converged.

By studying the function of allegory in Caribbean discourse, this paper reinvigorates the *Social Text* debate between Fredric Jameson and Aijaz Ahmad regarding whether all Third World texts can always be read as national allegories. Partially as a result of this debate, the last ten years have witnessed the emergence of an important body of work on Caribbean autobiographical discourse. Belinda Edmondson's *Making Men* (1999), Geta LeSeur's *Ten Is the Age of Darkness* (1995), and Sandra Pouchet Paquet's *Caribbean Autobiography* (2002) have increased our overall understanding of the *Bildungsroman*'s role in the definition of the postindependence, national Caribbean subject, even as their analyses have been limited to the Anglophone Caribbean.

It is my intention to extend this line of inquiry through the inclusion of Hispanophone and Francophone Caribbean coming-of-age narratives. Moreover, my analysis moves beyond the rigid colonized/colonizer binary framework that underwrites much of this *Bildungsroman* scholarship by seeking to understand the ways in which colonized adults inflict violence upon colonized children in the realms of the home and the school. In so doing, I wish to lead this autobiographical school of Caribbean scholarship to consider the issue of child abuse—one of the most sinister aspects of colonial childhood, and one that can trace its origins to the discussion on domestic abuse found in “Guerre coloniale et troubles mentaux,” the last chapter of Frantz Fanon’s *Les damnés de la terre* (1991).

This essay provides critical character profiles of the protagonists of three of the most important novels of the region written during the 1950s: Joseph Zobel’s character of José in *La rue Cases-Nègres*, George Lamming’s character of G in *In the Castle of My Skin*, and René Marqués’s Pirulo in *La víspera del hombre*. All three texts utilize the narration of a child’s life as a way to personalize the historical process of Caribbean decolonization. Yet, in each novel, the general coming-of-age narrative is attuned to the specific history of each island. These subtle differences are particularly noteworthy in the depiction of resistance to colonization within the imperial state apparatus of the school. All three child-protagonists achieve maturation as they become aware of schooling as a process of colonial indoctrination invested in the production and disciplining of the colonial citizen. Despite the fact that all three achieve this level of self-consciousness as colonial subjects largely through their common experiences in formal education, each one arrives at this vision in ways that are particular to each island-colony.

PAINFUL LESSONS OF COLONIAL EDUCATION

While Aijaz Ahmad’s resistance to Fredric Jameson’s statement that “all third-world texts are . . . national allegories” (Jameson 1986, 69) is commendable in its debunking of the idea of a monolithic “third world literature” (Ahmad 1987, 4), the following passages make it very difficult to dismiss the concept that national independence finds literary expression in the trope of personal maturation in narratives all across the

Caribbean. As such, they support Sandra Pouchet Paquet's claim that in the Caribbean "group identification and differentiation are part of a complex autobiographical process" (2002, 257). For instance, one of the decisive moments in the articulation and formation of Pirulo's personality in René Marqués's *La víspera del hombre* occurs during the recitation of the U.S. pledge of allegiance in his Puerto Rican school. His sense of alienation as a result of colonization becomes evident in Pirulo's view of the event:

El acto de izar la bandera le recordó la plaza de su pueblo en la montaña. Pero ésta no era la bandera chiquita con que celebraban el Grito de Lares. Era la otra, la grande, la del cuartel de la policía. La que en la escuela de San Isidro lucía su montón de estrellas pegada a la pared, dentro del salón de clases, debajo del retrato del gobernador americano que vivía en San Juan. (1996, 115)¹

The incongruities imposed by the U.S. colonization of Puerto Rico emblemized by the competition between two flags and the existence of a foreign governor begin to be perceived by the child, who is perplexed and disturbed by the patriotic ceremony in which he is forced to participate. Pirulo is frustrated by his inability to fully understand both the semantic and political significance of reciting an anthem and a pledge in a language not his own. In response to this frustration and to a burgeoning suspicion of cultural domination, Pirulo, in an act of defiance, chooses to remain silent and look away while the rest of the class obediently recites the pledge. His transgression is met with a reprimand, to which he reacts by strengthening his position and self-definition within the colonial context. In an important moment in his maturational process, Pirulo defines his national identity and political inclinations against the tyranny of American colonization as enacted in the educational system. After the school principal scolds and beats him for not reciting the pledge, Pirulo heroically responds: "¡Si yo no quiero, ni usted ni nadie me puede hacer americano!" (118).²

Much like Pirulo, G, in George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*, is drawn to the image of the flag as a marker of a burgeoning self-consciousness as a colonial subject:

It was the twenty-fourth of May, the Queen's birthday. . . . In every corner of the school the tricolour Union Jack flew its message. The colours though three in number had by constant repetition produced something

vast and terrible, a kind of pressure or presence of which everyone was a part. (1991, 37)

The general atmosphere of festivity is overcast, even at this early point in G's maturation, by the subconscious premonition of the flag's concealment of something "terrible," "a kind of pressure" behind its veil. This suspicion is confirmed at a later point, when, much like Pirulo, G is confronted with the violence of colonial submission through education and is forced to define himself within the colonial struggle. On Empire Day, as the teacher explains the tradition of giving pennies to the children as gifts from the Queen, a loud giggle is heard. Social pressure produces a scapegoat who is tortured for the offense:

The head teacher removed his jacket and gripped the leather. The first blow rent the pants and left the black buttocks exposed. The boy made a brief howl like an animal that had had its throat cut. No one could say how long he was beaten or how many strokes he received. (43)

The witnessing of this flogging provides an important experience for the progressive attainment of G's vision of himself and his island as colonized and of the colonization process as violence. It is the accumulation of experiences such as these during his maturational process that allows him to obtain a broader perspective of the project of colonization. Some time later, the third-person authorial voice of *In the Castle of My Skin* says of G: "It was the first time that he started to think of Little England [Barbados] as part of some gigantic thing called colonial" (99).

The scapegoating and flogging of G's classmate resonates with one of the Crown's most significant attempts to quell Barbadian nationalist-populist sentiments. The trial and deportation on July 26, 1937, of Trinidadian Clement Payne, one of Barbados's most charismatic labor leaders, spurred a devastating riot in Bridgetown the next morning in which "armed with stones, bottles, sticks and similar instruments, workers began their attack upon the heart of ruling-class power, the commercial district of the city" (Beckles 1989, 166). The scapegoating of Payne and the severe beatings many of the rioters endured at the hands of the police are mirrored in G's classroom, where the semblance of any challenge to authority is met with harsh, punitive measures.

Similarly, Joseph Zobel's José is beaten by his teacher, M. Roc: "Nous recevions déjà des calottes. J'en avais déjà goûté à l'occasion de l'accord

des participes passés" (1974, 180).³ However, in contrast to Pirulo's and G's schoolmates, the protagonist of Zobel's *La rue Cases-Nègres* enacts a much more intellectual act of resistance. Zobel, better than Lamming and Marqués, is able to present the world from the perspective of a small child who has not yet fully attained the adolescent and adult analytical sophistication to view his condition as a colonized person.

Throughout *La rue Cases-Nègres*, references to France are few and far between. France is a vague, distant location to which some people, like his father, migrate, and from which all sorts of commercial artifacts arrive. José's world is comprised of the cane fields, its laboring community, and the "big city" of Fort-de-France. Only toward the end of the novel does the character of José achieve the sufficient level of critical skill to understand his location in the world. The widening of his global vision is described as occurring through the act of reading, particularly the act of reading "hidden" texts. At this late point in the novel, José admits to having studied all the philosophy and historical texts required for his examination, but confesses that "mes lectures préférées pendant toute cette année de philo consistaient plutôt en ouvrages hors du programme et relatifs à la vie des nègres: ceux des Antilles et ceux d'Amérique" (293).⁴ José describes how this personal reading "me faisait tressaillir de ce vibrant orgueil qui fait lever les boucliers" (293).⁵

In spite of this, José's apocryphal reading material remains a passive form of resistance, particularly when compared to the bold and assertive nationalist statement pronounced by Pirulo and the revolt inherent in G's schoolmates' ridiculing of authority through their buffoonery. At the same time, José's subversive reading reveals more assimilation of French Enlightenment thinking than it does a rejection of the canonical philosophical tradition he is required by the lycée to read. The *Philosophes* in José's syllabus advocated emancipation based on the notion of a free, rational, thinking subject, and his choice of readings of African-diaspora writers deeply invested in the reappraisal of "Blackness" is fueled by precisely that philosophical impetus. Rather than a move against the syllabus, José's personal reading is an extension of it, in which he furthers and adapts the coercive nature of education and Enlightenment thinking to ends beneficial to himself.

José's *prise de conscience* through his personal reading naturally follows from France's policy of "assimilation." In a fashion distinct from

England and Spain, France has utilized a very complex formation of culture, within which "literature" and "philosophy" stand as prominent elements, and has encouraged the people it colonized to acculturate to this model by infusing them with the hope of achieving cultural citizenship. Armand Nicolas in his *Histoire de la Martinique* aptly describes this French process of cultural assimilation through education:

Dans les profondeurs de la société martiniquaise cette assimilation avançait, notamment par le véhicule de l'école. A travers la langue, à travers l'histoire enseignée dans une perspective chauvine et patriotique, à travers l'exaltation systématique de l'œuvre de la France, la culture française se répand. (1996, 185)⁶

Though the choice of texts reveals a reactionary move against the hegemony of compulsory, required reading, the Enlightenment quest and impulse for liberation on the part of José's act of reading forbidden texts is nevertheless consistent with received ideas from the metropole. José's preference for African-diaspora texts therefore presents the idea of breaking from France solely as an intellectual pursuit, because the struggle for Martinican autonomy has largely been treated as a matter of cultural, rather than political, self-determination. Barbados and Puerto Rico, on the other hand, have had more militant struggles for political autonomy and this distinct disposition is what is articulated in Pirulo and G's disdainful stance toward their colonizers' flags.

In all three texts, however, resistance to educational colonization becomes an important milestone in the maturational progress of their protagonists—a resistance which becomes the moment of the subject's instantiation and entry into the historical timeline of national history. In Zobel's, Lamming's, and Marqués's texts, the beginning of resistance is the moment in which the subject begins to see his spatial, hierarchical, and historical location in the world. In this sense, the act of resistance of the various protagonists in the three texts mirrors the act of writing by their authors who, in turn, have availed themselves of colonial narrative forms and concepts of the self in the production of their novels. Transforming the act of social patterning, or schooling, through the resistance of their protagonists and the act of writing of the authors is the Bakhtinian moment of emergence of the self into history in which the subject "emerges along with the world and he reflects the historical emergence of the world itself" (Bakhtin 1986, 23).

The school beatings which Lamming, Marqués, and Zobel describe—commonplace in colonial education during the first half of the twentieth century—provide narrative material which these authors use to articulate ideas concerning the violence involved in the process of cultural indoctrination in the context of colonization. Making a connection between the uses of violence to enforce compliance in both the colonial school and in the cane fields, Joyce Jonas states that, in Lamming's text, "colonial education is depicted as a subtle form of slavery whose goal appears to be emulation of . . . correct 'performance' achieved by memorization, voice control, and generally keeping in step" (1990, 61). The description of the beatings become a way in which the discourse of slavery resurfaces in postemancipation times, with the children standing in symbolically for the slaves and the adults in general for the masters. When, for instance, Jojo flees from the abuse to which he is subjected at his father's house, his schoolmates compare him to a runaway slave: "Jojo avait marronné. . . Comme un nègre marron, il s'était enfui dans les bois" (Zobel 1974, 198).⁷

DOMESTIC DISCIPLINE AS COLONIAL CASTIGATION

In *Les damnés de la terre*, Frantz Fanon provides some crucial examples of the ways in which colonial violence is routed toward children because, as one of his patients tells him, "on ne peut pas tuer les 'grands'" (1991, 323).⁸ In "Un inspecteur Européen torture sa femme et ses enfants,"⁹ Fanon demonstrates how the torturer brings his abuse home and beats his wife and toddler (1991, 319–20). But what Fanon does not tell us is what happens to the tortured when he returns home. Does he beat his wife and children, too?

While the beatings the adult teachers perform at school are the result of a wide variety of offenses and force different kinds of reactions, the beatings performed by the adults at home, aside from being generally more severe, serve as points of departure in the establishment of a certain uniformity in the general coming-of-age narrative in all three texts. While the home environments of José, G, and Pirulo contain elements of family warmth, as a whole it is the sound of the whippings that most loudly resonate within the description of the home. It can be said that, in all three texts, the narration traces the passage from the home to the world outside

the home and that this journey traces a developmental movement from a place of oppressive cruelty to one of ameliorated uncertainty.

In *La rue Cases-Nègres*, José occupies the lowest place in a chain of brutality and oppression. The *béke*¹⁰ controls the overseer, who tyrannizes M'man Tine, who in turn beats José. The reasons for which José is beaten can ultimately be traced back to flaws in the social system. M'man Tine sees José as the originator of trouble, beating him mercilessly, without considering how the economic exploitation they endure is responsible for José's activities. M'man Tine beats José for being poor and lacking food, clothes, and proper adult supervision: "J'en ai assez d'être battu pour avoir déchiré mes vêtements,"¹¹ José confesses (Zobel 1974, 36).

Aside from lack of clothes, hunger is an overwhelming motif throughout the text. The book begins with the image of hunger, and this need for physical nourishment continues throughout the narration of José's life. José mentions waking up hungry and, lacking food, needing to fill his stomach with water to arrest the unpleasant sensation. After he finds the place where M'man Tine hides the sugar, he satiates his hunger with it and is scolded by her when she discovers his deed. José becomes afraid of her abusing him "comme au moment où m'man Tine cherche un manche à balai, un lélé, un bout de corde pour m'assomer" (42).¹²

The scarcity of sugar in their home becomes emblematic of the extreme injustice to which the workers of the field are subjected, for they cannot consume what they produce. José and many other children in the narration of *La rue Cases-Nègres* are left alone while their parents work long days at the cane fields. Lacking adult supervision, the children accidentally set fire to one of the shacks. As expected, José pays for the irresponsibility of a system that does not take account of the needs of children: "Et je fus tellement battu, malmené, contusionné!" exclaims José (Zobel 1974, 73).¹³

In light of their abuse, the children develop a network of information to safeguard each other: "Aucun de nous ne recevait une volée sans, par ses cris, se trahir à l'égard d'un camarade de son voisinage, qui se chargeait volontiers de corporter la nouvelle en classe" (198).¹⁴ Their solidarity aims at ensuring their survival until adolescence and adulthood, when they will no longer have to endure the abuse of the home.

La rue Cases-Nègres ends with José passing the first part of his baccalaureate from the lycée and the death of M'man Tine. What will José

do now? The novel does not give much indication: "Je ne doutais pas de pouvoir réussir à mon examen enfin d'année, mais après?" (292).¹⁵ In the bittersweet life of the home with its poverty and physical abuse, José had been able to enjoy at least a certain degree of security. Now, with his school career nearly complete and the death of M'man Tine, the end of home life presents itself to José, who must face an uncertain future—a future that unfolds in Zobel's sequel, *La fête à Paris* (1953), where José continues his maturational growth, outside the realm of the home, abroad in France.

George Lamming's *In the Castle of my Skin* traces a similar journey from the brutality of home to the uncertainty of the future as an independent adult. Like M'man Tine, G's mother endures the harsh living conditions and the poverty brought upon them by their situation at the bottom of a rigidly stratified society. G's mother's reaction to his care-free nakedness after a shower is typical of her abuse of her son in general: "Don't move", she said. 'If you move I lash you.' She clutched the broken branch and came closer. She had hardly stated her case before the arm was raised above her head and the blow struck" (1991, 19).

Interestingly, in the scene immediately preceding this beating, G's mother protects Bob, the next-door neighbor's child and G's playmate, from a physical attack by his mother. "You shouldn't hit him like that" (18), G's mother says, hiding the neighbor's boy in her house. The sudden change in attitude toward physical abuse confuses G, who cannot make sense of the two scenes. The ability of G's mother to be both rescuer and chastiser points to the amount of power she wields and to the arbitrary and absolutist nature of her rule, which makes life at the home both unpredictable and unbearable.

Upon G's expected departure for Trinidad to teach English, his mother, unable to express her sorrow, turns to anger to express her emotions. "Then she banged her hand on the table and shouted, 'If you think you can treat me as you like you make a sad mistake'" (262). Her irascible nature makes the living environment hellish for G. G himself remarks how her brutality had become so commonplace as to become a defining factor of the quotidian in their household: "This wasn't a new experience, for I had grown used to these sudden explosions of anger. . . . They had become so frequent in recent times that I thought my mother could not help it" (263). The fact that in this farewell outburst

she interrupts his reading presents his mother's anger as an obstacle impeding his intellectual and professional development and points to his need to leave the house to continue his growth. It is scarcely surprising then that the person giving him his final farewell and blessing from Trinidad at the last scene of the book is someone other than his mother. "Pa," the town's aging patriarch, akin to Zobel's Médouze in *La rue Cases-Nègres*, gives him the "kiss of blessing" (303), sending him off into a future that is full of both promise and uncertainty, away from the familiar and despotic realm of the domestic.

Pirulo's departure from home occurs much earlier than that of José and G, but the degree of physical abuse he endures is no less severe for that. His mother is loving, but inefficient in halting the abuse inflicted by her husband. The stepfather accepts Pirulo in the house because he is able to extract material gain from the child's presence there: The fact that Don Rafa, the landowner, is Pirulo's real father ensures an occasional gift or concession to Pirulo. Keeping the child at the house becomes, therefore, profitable. They obtain a small plot of land from the landowner on account of him. When Pirulo receives clothes and shoes from Doña Rafa, the stepfather sells them to other people. Nevertheless, when there is a scarcity of gifts, the stepfather is very quick to say, "El muchacho ya no nos deja na" (Marqués 1996, 71).¹⁶ The stepfather's exploitation of Pirulo and tolerance of him for the sake of monetary profit is blunt:

—Oye, Juana, si no sacamos más chavos por este muchacho no vale la pena tenerlo. . . .

—Uno pare hijos pa criarlos y no pa sacarle chavos. . . .

—Eso estará bien pa ti porque es tuyo. Pero pa mi ya va siendo una carga. (11)¹⁷

Pirulo's tolerated presence in the house contrasts with the image of Lulo, the couple's toddler. The stepfather, Juana, and Lulo form the nuclear family whose expelling force drives Pirulo to an abject existence outside of their circle. In spite of Juana's efforts to safeguard Pirulo against the violence of her husband, his attacks against his stepson increase in violence:

El machete en la mano crispada era la muerte. Pirulo lo sabía. Pero no sintió miedo. Ya el hombre estaba allí, ante él. El aliento a ron salía de su

boca como una oleada de odio: agria, envolvente, abrasadora. . . . El machete bajó con rapidez de centella clavándose en el escalón, a sólo unas pulgadas del pie descalzo de Pirulo. (23)¹⁸

The drunken stepfather's rage and his subsequent beatings drive Pirulo to find another place to live. His long exodus through the mountains take him to Don Rafa's second estate, on the coast, where he works and begins to experience the uncertainty of being independent at a young age. Like the coming-of-age narratives in *La rue Cases-Nègres* and *In the Castle of My Skin*, *La víspera del hombre* is punctuated by journeys from the cruelty, violence, and despotism of the home to a place outside the home where the familial and familiar are exchanged for the uncertainty of independent living.

For the Antilles, after more than four hundred years of colonization, the decisive moment of decolonization occurred in the mid-twentieth century. The brutality of the home in these texts is emblematic of the violence of the colonial situation during the mid-twentieth century, the time in which these three novels were written. The beatings and general humiliation were integral aspects of the colonial experience. The uncertainty that the future holds for Pirulo, G, and José outside of the violence of their homes points to the trepidation with which the option of independence has been approached by many territories in the Caribbean.¹⁹ The journeys from the mountains of Puerto Rico to the coast, from Barbados to Trinidad, and from Martinique to France all contain elements of personal decolonization that articulate the political need for independence and surpassing of the current situation of domination by an outside power.

OEDIPUS AT COLONUS/ATION: BASTARDIZATION AND POLITICAL ILLEGITIMACY

All three characters are bastards. As discussed earlier, Pirulo is the illegitimate son of a landowner and a peasant woman. He lives in a state of ignorance concerning his paternity until the end of the novel's narration, when he receives the hope of being recognized by Don Rafa: "Quizás te reconozca. . . . Más tarde, sin duda. . . . Legalmente, quiero decir" (Marqués 1996, 265).²⁰ José, on the other hand, is aware of his illegitimacy from the start. M'man Tine tells him early on in his life how

his father went abroad to France and never returned, leaving his mother without a helping hand to raise the child:

C'est toute enceinte qu'elle se présentait devant moi. J'ai jamais vu la tête de cet homme-là qui s'appelait Eugène et qui est ton père; et lui-même t'a jamais vu non plus. T'étais pas né qu'on l'a attrapé pour l'envoyer faire la guerre en France. Depuis le jour qu'on dit que la guerre est finie, point d'Eugène. (Zobel 1974, 44)²¹

G's father is also completely absent from his life.²² G eloquently describes the fatherless condition of all three characters when he says: "My father who only fathered the idea of me had left me the sole liability of my mother who really fathered me" (11).

In the work of Zobel, Marqués, and Lamming, the absence of the father of the family becomes a way to articulate the political orphanage and cultural bastardization of the Caribbean by the various colonial powers. Aside from addressing the gendering and sexualization of the colonial project, the treatment of paternity in these texts demonstrates a certain deployment of Freudian thinking that exhibits Caribbean literature's immersion in high-modernist European culture. The treatment of paternity in these three texts is better understood when studied in relation to Sigmund Freud's "The Passing of the Oedipus Complex" (1993). In this essay, Freud—in accordance with the developmental models of modernism—sets up the Oedipal as a "stage" in the human psychological growth process that must be overcome. The story is familiar: the male child sexually desires his mother but is prevented from carrying out his desire by the father; the child, therefore, decides to kill his father in order to have his mother; the child becomes aware of "the law of the father," the punishment of castration, and desists in his effort. In this essay, Freud argues that either through the "disappointment" of realizing the impossibility of the Oedipal narrative or through the cognitive development within the child's genetic program, the result is the same in most cases: the child gives up his aspirations, and his sexual desire is socialized into an acceptable manner through the incest taboo. It is important to note that this repression or abolition of the Oedipus complex is, for Freud, dependent on the child's ability to visualize castration as the potential punishment for his transgression. Freud explains that boys do not consider this possibility as real until their first observation of the female genitals.

Politically, the implications of Freud's essay are powerfully present in these Caribbean novels. The colonizer as father is embodied in the law and the system of hegemonic domination from the metropole. In these texts, Freud's *law of the father*, becomes *the father of the law*—the reversal displaying the paternalization of colonial rule. The desire of the colonial subject for autonomy and independence is metaphorized in the boy's desire for the mother, a symbol for the land. Passages equating the maternal figure with the land abound in these three novels. In Zobel's text, for example, M'man Tine's facial complexion is compared to the color of the plantation's soil (1974, 6). But the colonial father will not allow the colonized boy to establish a "matrimonial" control over the land and threatens the boy with an emasculating violence of beatings, whippings, and humiliation. Killing the father becomes the only option out of the Oedipal situation in which the colonized is placed, an option explored with the idea of independence in all these texts.²³

Cognition of the condition of fatherlessness—the lack of a *pater/patria*—launches the protagonist into a journey of quest for personal identity and, by extension, national identity. Just as the slave was devoid of an identity legally and socially, so is the fatherless rendered nameless. The slave and the bastard are the denied subjects of Modernity whose site of entry into discursive existence becomes the coming-of-age narrative due to the genre's abundant opportunities to claim the "I" as voice. The physical abuse of the boy, explained as Freudian castration, echoes the brutality of slave discipline during slavery. The beatings, both at home and at school, become a way for the violent discourse of slavery to resurface in postemancipation times, effectively replicating the Hegelian master/slave dialectic in the adult/child relationship. In this sense, giving the child the opportunity to narrate his story amounts to allowing the silenced voice of the slave to speak and to reassert his denied subjectivity. This common literary usage of the idea of the abused colonial child, in the decade of the 1950s, by three writers from different Caribbean islands with different colonial histories, serves as a useful point of departure for the exploration of the thematic affinities among Caribbean *Bildungsromane*, which up to now have been largely studied along the separate axes of languages and are, therefore, in much need of comparative literary criticism.

NOTES

1. "The act of raising the flag reminded him of his town's main square. But this was not the small flag with which they celebrated the Lares' Cry. This was the other one, the big one, the one which is at the police headquarters. The flag at the small San Isidro school, stuck to the wall, displayed its many stars inside the classroom underneath the portrait of the American governor living in San Juan."
2. "If I do not want it, neither you nor anyone can make me an American!"
3. "We were already getting slapped. I had already had my share over the agreement of the past participle."
4. "my favorite reading during that entire year in the philosophy class consisted rather of works that were outside the syllabus and related to the lives of black people: those in the West Indies and in America."
5. "filled him with the same fervor that made people raise their shields."
6. "This assimilation made its way to the depths of Martinican society, primarily through the school. French culture expanded through the language, a chauvinistic and patriotic history, a systematic exaltation of the work of France."
7. "Like a maroon, he escaped into the woods."
8. "we cannot kill the grown-ups."
9. "A European Inspector Tortures His Wife and Kids."
10. White descendant of former plantation owners, many of whom have inherited their ancestors' large estates and continue to use them for cultivation.
11. "I was fed up with being beaten for getting my clothes torn."
12. "like the times when M'man Tine looked for a broomstick, a *lélé*, or a piece of rope to beat me."
13. "I was so severely beaten, ill-treated, bruised!"
14. "None of us ever received a beating from our parents without, by our cries, betraying the fact to a friend in the neighborhood, who would take it upon himself to broadcast the news in class."
15. "I had no doubt I could be successful in my examination at the end of the year, but afterwards?"
16. "We ain't getting anything from the kid anymore."
17. "—Listen, Juana, if we can't get any more money from this kid, it is not worth having him here. . . ."

—One gives birth to children to raise them, not to make money off them. . . .

—That might be fine for you, because he is yours. But for me, he is already a burden."

18. "The machete in the fisted hand was death itself. Pirulo knew it, but was not afraid. The man was already there, before him. The alcoholic breath left his mouth like a wave of hate: bitter, enveloping. . . . The machete came down like a flash, nailing the step, only a few inches away from the bare feet of Pirulo."

19. The degree of anxiety which this option presents is evident in the fact that, during the decade of the 1940s, many territories did not choose independence but rather solidified their attachment to the colonizing power. Martinique, for instance, became a politically integral part of France and Puerto Rico became a commonwealth of the United States.

20. "Maybe he will recognize you. . . . Later on, doubtlessly. . . . Legally, I mean."

21. "She came to me when she was good and pregnant. I never set eyes on that man called Eugène who is your father and neither did he ever set eyes on you. You weren't born yet when he was drafted to go to war in France. Since the day the war was reported to be over, no news from Eugène."

22. The idea of the fatherless child-protagonist makes necessary a comparison between these three Caribbean texts and the Spanish picaresque *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes y de sus fortunas y adversidades* (1554). Like Lazarillo, the three protagonists of these Caribbean novels are characterized by hunger as a driving force, nomadism, and a life of servility. The first-person authorial voice is a very strong element of the text, *El Lazarillo* beginning with the first-person pronoun "Yo" and continuing this narrative perspective throughout. Like the Caribbean texts studied here, it is important to highlight the publication of *El Lazarillo* at a crucial time of national self-definition. Written within the half century after the Moorish expulsion, the national context of the work is one of Spanish cultural consolidation. The importance of the first-person voice in *El Lazarillo* bears a striking similarity to the twentieth-century Caribbean texts studied here insofar as they all serve to define the subject of the nation. It is no coincidence that Lazarillo's father is killed by the Moors: "En este tiempo se hizo cierta armada contra moros, entre los cuales fue mi padre, que a la sazón estaba desterrado por el desastre ya dicho, con cargo de acemilero de un caballero que allá fue. Y con su señor, como leal criado, feneció su vida" ["At that time, an army against the Moors was assembled. Among them was my father who ended up exiled as a result the aforementioned disaster. He died in the service of his knight, whom he served as a mule-driver] (Anon. 1967, 48). As his widowed mother remarries a Moor herself, she

metaphorically weds her husband's killer, leaving Lazarillo in Oedipal anxiety. Lazarillo pejoratively refers to him as "el negro de mi padrastro" ["that black man who is my stepfather"] and pities his half brother for his mixed blood. In this way, Lazarillo becomes the racially pure, Christian subject of the new Spanish Nation who is oppressed by a Moorish paternal usurper.

23. In this context, it becomes important to reevaluate one of the most provocative assertions of Frantz Fanon, who, in *Peau noire, masques blancs* [The absence of Oedipus in the West Indies], declares "l'absence de l'Oedipe aux Antilles" (1995, 146). Included in a comment refuting the existence of homosexuality in Martinique, Fanon's statement rings as denial—particularly when one considers the Hegelian usage, in his text, of the homosocial bond between master and slave.

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