Female Identity through Language in Simone Schwarz Bart's *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*

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Abstract

The focus of inquiry in this thesis is female identity and its representation through Language as seen in the novel Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle by Simone Schwarz-Bart. The context of the novel clearly depicts instances of oppression of both women and Blacks. I have chosen to apply feminist interpretations of Lacanian psychoanalytical theory, which qualify a woman's place in the symbolic order of Language as that of "object", in order to analyse women's alienation in Language as depicted in the novel. I believe Lacan's view of Language as a hierarchical system into which the human child is born not only underscores the dominant position of Language in relation to the individual, it also emphasizes the extent to which women are prevented from speaking with the (authoritative) voice of the Subject. I focus on Schwarz-Bart's process for the "feminine" encoding of meaning, whereby the traditional "male" perspective is supplanted by an alternative approach to existence. This initial analysis of the repression of women in a patriarchal or male-dominated discourse is then used as a model to study the position of the Black in a society dominated by Whites. I have adopted Jung's interpretation of the workings of the unconscious as a means of further extending the study from the realm of the sexual (male vs. female) to the political (White vs. Black). Delving more deeply into the Guadeloupin context of Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle provides the basis with which to counter the dual Lacanian assumption that
(sexual) identity does not exist before its symbolization in discourse and that the individual is therefore limited to expressing himself or herself within the confines of the essential male=subject/ female=object paradigm.
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Introduction

Ma mère la vénérait tant que j'en étais venue à considérer Toussine, ma grandmère, comme un être mythique, habitant ailleurs que sur terre, si bien que toute vivante elle était entrée, pour moi, dans la légende.

Being a woman, living yet mythical, a subversion of the Word, inscribing herself in history, this is the experience of Télumée Lougandor in Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle by Simone Schwarz-Bart. The novel elicits a re-thinking of "Language" as a symbolic abstract order which excludes or objectifies women. Pluie et vent describes an alternative relationship to representation, one based on the notion of correlation rather than that of difference. This relationship is characteristically "feminine" in that it mirrors precisely Carol Gilligan's elucidation of female psychological development.

Woman's development points toward a different history of human attachment, stressing continuity and change in configuration, rather than replacement and separation.

Whereas dominant patriarchal discourse isolates elements according to their difference, Pluie et vent's "feminine" discourse affirms the interdependency of all aspects of existence such as Man, Nature and the subconscious.

The title itself is a synthesis of Natural, human, and mythic elements. It introduces the novel's alternative order, an order
which proffers movement beyond abstract linear discourse as its central component. The author weaves linguistic and structural constructs together to produce a tapestry of Guadeloupian experience. "Pluie et vent" illustrates the plurality of Nature as purifier, nurturer, and destroyer.

...Elie venait à moi et nous plongions ensemble, tout habillés, lâchions nos craintes, nos jeunes appréhensions au fond du Bassin bleu. (74)

...au long des ses derniers jours, grand-mère fabriquait-elle du vent pour gonfler mes voiles, me permettre de reprendre mon voyage sur l'eau. (170)

...la porcelaine était en miettes, le pétrole enflammé se répandait sur les jambes de Méranée, sur ses épaules... Dans la nuit s'échappa une torche vivante que le vent du soir attisait en hurlant. (24)

As for "Télumée" the name's connotation is threefold; "tellus" (Latin for "terre" - "terre nourricière"), "thélus" (Greek for "the feminine"), and "telos" (Greek, meaning "destiny" or "ultimate end"). "Miracle" is the transforming agent, the speaking presence of the "feminine". Télumée as "Miracle" represents the transcendence of victimization.

In the words of the author:

j'ai pris conscience de tout ce déferlement d'événements qui menaçaient de...dénaturer (Télumée). C'était comme un miracle qu'elle soit restée fidèle à elle-même.4

As "Miracle" enigmatizes "Télumée" by endowing her with a mythic
quality, so does "Télumée" demystify "Miracle" by transforming it from common noun to proper name. The multifaceted signification of each element in the title is an initiation into the novel's prismatic structure.

The opening line of the novel establishes a link between the Self and the environment which is consistent throughout the novel ("Le pays dépend bien souvent du coeur de l'homme: il est minuscule si le coeur est petit, et immense si le coeur est grand" (ll) ). The notion of "pays" here reflects the concept of an inner reality whose horizons expand according to the individual's feeling of intrinsic self-worth. The "coeur" is akin to an island, for although it exists as an entity in itself, it is also subject to malefic external influences. Télumée's "coeur" must learn to bear the weight of outside forces in the same way that Guadeloupe suffers climatic and socio-economic adversity (storms, drought, colonization). Man Cia, the sorceress, counsels Télumée on how to proceed through life by conjuring up the analogy of the drum to convey this struggle between inner and outer realities.

...sois une vaillante petite nègresse, un vrai tambour à deux faces, laisse la vie frapper, cogner, mais conserve toujours intacte la face du dessous. (62)

Télumée's coming into "selfhood" involves acceptance of both her inner reality as a woman and the outer reality of all that is "other" to her. As producer and product of her text, she relates a myriad of relations with the external world. Her subjectivity consists of the
movement between inner and exterior forces rather than the demarcation or separation of the self from the "other". She is like her island country, subject to the surrounding environment yet whole and centred within it. Téluomée therefore comes to stand for the point of interaction between what is known or understood through the terms of Language, and what exists beyond the grasp of individual consciousness. Her conception of existence effectively dissolves the hierarchically determined boundaries indicative of linear patriarchal discourse.

The circularity of Guadeloupe's coast spatially echos the novel's theme of constant regeneration. This echo is taken up at a structural level, in the narrative, for the terminus of Téluomée's journey is also her point of departure ("debout, dans mon petit jardin"). Time is equally cyclical as its passing is marked by seasons, events, and rituals which are re-enacted from generation to generation. In view of this the river is adopted as a primary metaphor for human existence in the text.

Toutes les rivières, mêmes les plus éclatantes, celles qui prennent le soleil dans leur courant, toutes les rivières descendent dans la mer et se noient. On peut prendre méandre sur méandre, tourner, contournier, s'insinuer dans la terre, vos méandres vous appartiennent mais la vie est là, patiente, sans commencement et sans fin, à vous attendre, pareille à l'océan. (81)

This metaphor minimizes the abstract quality of time by emphasizing movement, fluidity, and regeneration ("sans commencement et sans fin").
Time becomes an element relative to the self, fused with the cadence of collective development, not alien to it.

The aim of this study will be to examine the relationship between language use and identity in the novel. The first chapter will undertake an analysis of women's "objectivity" in traditional male discourse. Lacanian psychoanalytical theory will be drawn upon in order to establish the mechanism by which women are initially excluded from a role as subject in the symbolic order. Various "feminist" perspectives will be evoked to illustrate how women's initial alienation is perpetuated through the terms of patriarchal discourse.

The second chapter proceeds to an examination of the various modes of discourse available to the male subject in the text. Having set up a prototype for women's oppression in male discourse, this position will be juxtaposed to that of the Black in the dominant White discourse. This second stage of the analysis is related to the theories of both Carl Jung and Karl Stein.

The third chapter of the thesis will focus upon alternative "feminine" approaches to existence. Télumée's voice here will be seen as a signifier to Toussine's experience (that which is signified). Toussine succeeds in directly transmitting her experience to her granddaughter through a form of modelling which merges the physical (body language) with the symbolic (abstract discourse). Thus Télumée's narrative will indicate a different mode of existence, for her world is defined by "speaking experience", a concept which
dissolves the traditional dichotomy of the rational over the spiritual by stressing the interdependency of these constructs.

As the first three chapters will favor a western "feminist" bias, the fourth and final chapter will examine the work's Antillean roots by dealing with *Pluie et vent* as a contexture of Guadeloupian experience. Simone Schwarz-Bart's style is mimetic as it reproduces the "feminine". *Pluie et vent* transcends both genre and discourse in its transcription of the Guadeloupian oral tradition in a creolized French. Schwarz-Bart imbues her imagery with the sensuality of Guadeloupe, a sensuality which diffuses the abstract, and liberates the "object" (women, Blacks). Once freed, the oppressed may re-appropriate their cultural identity through the intermediary of Antillean myth.
Footnotes - Introduction

1. Schwartz-Bart, Simone. *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972). p. 11. All further references to the novel will be in the text. Subsequent references to the title will be in the shortened form of *Pluie et vent*.


CHAPTER I

The Definition of "Woman"
in Male Discourse
So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.

Genesis

--Autrefois, dit-elle, un nid de fourmis mordantes avait peuplé la terre et voilà, elles s'étaient elles-mêmes appelées hommes, ... pas plus que ça... (61)

... Toutes ces femmes qui se perdaient avant l'heure... on cherchait en vain le nom, le vrai nom qu'elles avaient mérité de porter, sur la terre... (82)

The accession of the subject to language, the symbolic order of communication, guarantees his dominion, through "naming", over all that is "other".

Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of the flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

Woman's primordial exclusion as a naming "subject" in Language has the consequence of relegating her to a role of "object", or that from which the subject is separate. She becomes, in fact, the very reason for the subject's existence in the symbolic order, being assigned to the necessary place of "absence", from which man establishes his presence:
The...cause of desire and support of male fantasy; gets transposed onto the image of the woman as Other...The absolute "Otherness' of the woman, therefore, serves to secure for the man his own self-knowledge and truth. 3

The symbolic encoding of experience has historically been the domain of men, given that woman was initially absent from language as subject, and subsequently "excluded from the production of cultural forms." 4 Therefore, the construct 'woman', with its direct relation to that of "femininity", may actually be a misrepresentation of authentic 'female' experience.

(femininity or being "effeminate") has nothing to do with the reality of living women, but with an awareness on the part of males of an inherent weakness in themselves which they name "femininity" or "effeminacy" or "woman" - and which they attempt to exorcise by projecting it upon really existent women as well as the women of their fantasies. 5

The relationship between the concepts "man" and "woman" becomes one of privileged "Signifier" in "man" (a term which denotes a presence) over a dislocated "Signifier" "woman" (a term which designates an absence).

Turning to Juliet Mitchell's "Psychoanalysis: A Humanist Humanity or a Linguistic Science", it is evident from a lacanian psychoanalytical point of view, that the "wholeness" or unity of the subject himself is but a fiction.

This ego is not centred in itself...it is formed in alienation. The small human infant forms its ego in an identification with an other (person)
who is a whole object. It is thus in its very formation other than itself and is constantly being threatened by its own otherness.

Therefore, the subject's position in language is assured solely through the mechanisms of a rigid social structure which positively defines his role according to the negativity of the "feminine".

...we...divide on the basis of genitalia, we...construct only two sexes, we do insist on a whole range of gender determined behaviors. And we do all this for a purpose. By arranging the objects and events of the world according to these rules we set up the rationale, and the vindication, for male supremacy.

It is impossible to locate the cause or origins of Patriarchy as we know it. Adrienne Rich and Mary Daly posit both biological and psychic "barrenness" in the male, resulting in an absolute desire to control through the agency of cultural structures. (This is evident in the obvious biological reversal apparent in the biblical rendition of the creation of man, where man usurps the position of creator and "gives birth" to woman). Just as language comes to articulate "desire" for an original object, which, according to Lacan, has previously been "lost" to the child, it also assures a more complex articulation of control over that which the subject cannot effectively "know" (feminine sexuality, proof of paternity).

In the novel Pluie et vent, the subject's relation to language is rendered even more problematic. The post-slavery society of Guadeloupe lends itself to the establishment of a unique
symbolic order in which the generally privileged term "man" must
further locate himself within a positive (White) or negative (Black)
category depending upon his colour. The Negro, in this instance,
suffers an alienation not dissimilar to that felt by woman, as the
symbolic register fails to encode his experience. Consider the
following incident, where Amboise is made aware of his non-existence
or objectivity in the eyes of the dominant group (here the Whites
in Paris):

Dès qu'il sortait de cet hôtel, il
lui semblait traverser des lieux
peuplés d'esprits malins, étrangers
à sa chair et à son sang et qui le
regardaient passer avec la plus
parfaite indifférence, comme s'il
n'existait pas à leurs yeux. (p.216)

This negation of his existence as "subject" is akin to the objecti-
fication of women in patriarchal language. As Phyllis Chesler
states: "there is some theoretical justification for viewing
women, or the sex-caste system, as the prototype for all subsequent
class and race slavery."¹⁰ Such "objectivity" where the male Negro
is concerned extends to the economic sphere, just as it does with
women. The evidence for this is the fact that the Negro is able
to earn a living "on show", in much the same way as are women in
professions such as stripping, modelling or prostitution:

...il y en avait un qui gagnait sa
vie à faire carrément le nègre, dans
une cage, s'agitant comme un dérâte
et poussant des cris et c'était ce
que ces blancs-là aimaient voir...(p.215)
The exterior invisibility of the Negro to the White indicates then a rejection of his subjectivity. The "appearance" of the Negro here corresponds to the "appearance" of "Woman" in that they are both manifestations of an "otherness" to the perceiving subject.

All attempts on the part of Amboise to integrate himself as a controlling subject into white Parisian society are destined to failure. Slavery's residual cultural impact, in conjunction with the absence of a symbolic encoding of Amboise's experience in the cultural realm, produces a powerful feeling of alienation. As a result of the institution of slavery, the Negro had become "other" even to himself.

Il disait que des mains ennemies s'étaient emparées de notre âme et l'avaient modelée afin qu'elle se dresse contre elle-même. (219)

Amboise's grandmother's articulation of the well-learned words of the White masters demonstrates the Negro's complicity in the construction of their cultural inferiority; "le nègre est une réserve de péchés dans le monde, la créature même du diable" (215). Her perception parallels the phenomenon of which Mary Daly speaks in her analysis of patriarchal indoctrination.

The Myth Masters are able to penetrate their victims' minds/imaginations only by seeing to it that their deceptive myths are acted out over and over again in performances that draw the participants into emotional complicity... In giving the myth reality by acting it out, the participants become reproducers and "living proof" of the deceptive myths.
Although slavery had been abolished, the internalization of its ideological influences continued to disrupt the conventional subject/object relation found in Patriarchy. The slave's alienation as worker was not easily eradicated, as the means of production stayed in the hands of the White colonials. The Negro male remained cut off from any direct control in the socio-economic order, the control which a patriarchal ideology by rights ought to guarantee him.

The moment of differentiation between the situation of the male Negro and that of woman in general comes with the insertion of the former as "subject" within his own Non-White discourse, where the male/female hierarchy once more dominates.

Quand il revint à la Guadeloupe, il aspirait seulement à aller pieds nus au soleil, à prononcer les paroles d'autrefois, dans les rues de la Pointe-à-Pitre... et puis de se plonger dans l'eau profonde des femmes d'ici... (216)

Here is evidence that the inherent "subjecthood" of a man in Patriarchy goes beyond ethno-geographic boundaries and assures, at some point, his position as the privileged Signifier in his own specific economy.

It is within this spectrum of post-slavery Guadeloupe that Télumée's relationship with Elie, her first "love", comes into being. This relationship signals her initial identification with the Signifier "Woman". The traditional relationship established between Elie/subject and Télumée/object can be taken as a paradigm for the
male/female dichotomy which permeates patriarchal ideology. At the outset of their courtship Télumée is grounded in a non-reciprocal alliance with the privileged term "man".

Il riait tout seul, et, au premier regard qu'il me jeta-Je demeurai inerte, saisie d'une curiosité étrange...(69)

She is frozen or reified by his "regard". Here Elie appears as having the power to perceive and define, and is thus assured of the control allocated to him through the convention of language. Télumée, for her part, must assume the place of "absence" (object) in order that Elie exist as subject. As their relationship progresses Elie will attempt to provide Télumée with a secondary form of "existence", one dependent on his observation and approval.

It becomes evident in the developing stages of their relationship that Elie and Télumée are operating from conflicting perspectives. The discrepancy between their respective visions is confirmed by the following passages:

(Télumée) ...je me sentais envahie par la pensée qu'une petite chose était sur la terre, de la même grandeur que moi, qui m'aimait et c'était comme si nous étions sortis du même ventre, en même temps. (74)

(Elie) ...il poussait toujours devant lui le même rêve, dont je faisais partie... (74)

Télumée here articulates an identification with Elie that is based upon empathy. Her perspective would therefore allow for reciprocity
in the relationship. Elie's view, on the other hand, bespeaks a need for autonomous control. His vision contains a static representation of his ideal life, a life where the acquisition of material possessions is synonymous with success.

-Tu verras, disait-il, tu verras plus tard, quel beau cabriolet nous aurons, et nous serons habillés en conséquence, moi en costume à jabot, toi, en robe de brocart à col châle; et nul ne nous reconnaîtra... (74)

Elie seems incapable of making what Evelyn Fox Keller describes as the "(move) from the egocentricity of a self-dominated contiguous world to the recognition of a world outside and independent of him/herself: a world in which objects can take on a "life" of their own." 13

These two divergent approaches follow closely the patterns attributed to "female" and "male" moral development which Carol Gilligan describes in her book In a Different Voice.

From the different dynamics of separation and attachment in their gender identity formation through the divergence of identity and intimacy that marks their experience in the adolescent years, male and female voices typically speak of the importance of different truths, the former of the role of separation as it defines and empowers the self, the latter of the ongoing process of attachment that creates and sustains the human community. 14

Examples of Elie's "masculine" perception abound in the text, and
these, coupled with his natural empowerment (as male subject) through the terms of Language itself, enable him to project his conception of their common future onto Télumée's consciousness.

Il riait encore, m'entourait, me cernait, me huilait de mille paroles, m'inventait des robes bleues, rouges, vertes, et pour finir disait que je me trouvais devant lui comme un arc-en- ciel... (84)

The ease with which Télumée accepts this particular mode of imparting a dominant view can be attributed to the fact that it concurs with the reigning "Doxa". 15

...ce fut tout comme si elles (laveuses) avaient toujours su, en leur cervelle, que ma destinée était de vivre sur une branche, à Fond-Zombi, sous l'aile d'Elie. (126)

The house Elie builds, however, becomes a prison in which to hold his image of Télumée rather than a shelter. Télumée's self-image afteruapwaphouaue with Elie betrays the fixedness of her life as Elie's "Woman".

...je me sentais...comme si j'étais déjà toute préservée, poudrée, exposée heureuse sur mon lit de mort. (141)

Elie wants to confine "his" Télumée, for she is a construct of his perception and projection which is necessarily in danger of slipping away.

Elie represents the archetypical "male" in patriarchal
society. His perception is based on a process of "objectification", a process traditionally associated with the male.

...it is primarily the father (or the father figure) toward whom the child turns for protection from...the anxieties and fears of disintegration of a still very fragile ego. It is the father who comes to stand for individuation and differentiation for objective reality itself...15

The danger of such unquestioned belief in a dichotomized world is parabolized by Reine Sans Nom in her recounting of "L'Homme qui voulait vivre à l'odeur". The story's title is indicative of the insular perspective held by the main character.

Plus il observait les hommes, plus il les trouvait pervers et la méchanceté qu'il voyait en eux l'empêchait d'admirer quoi que ce fût. (77)

Here is a man who refuses to embrace the totality of existence.

Wvabor's fixed delineation of boundaries between self and other has the effect of cutting him off from any "communion" with his surroundings.

Il vit des contrées que l'œil humain n'a jamais contemplées, des étangs couverts de fleurs rares, mais il pensait à l'homme et à son mal et rien ne le charmait. (78)

Wvabor gives priority to his mare, "Mes Deux Yeux", a female object representing his own vision. His ultimate belief in the definition he has fabricated causes an irrevocable rupture between his self and
the environment, a consequence which precludes any relationship with a "real" woman having her own vision.

...il aperçut une femme aux yeux sereins, l'aima, tenta alors de mettre pied à terre, mais il était trop tard. La jument se mit à braire, à ruer et prenant la cavalcade, l'entraîna ailleurs, bien loin de la femme...La bête était devenue son maître. (78)

The moral Reine Sans Nom draws from the story is the following:

...derrière une peine il y a une autre peine, la misère est une vague sans fin, mais le cheval ne doit pas te conduire, c'est toi qui dois conduire le cheval. (79)

"Le cheval" is representative of forces both natural and ideological to which the individual is subject. It is a symbol of all that man cannot know or control. What Reine Sans Nom is advocating is a flexibility of perspective which will enable an individual to recognize the independent reality of the 'other'.

Elie, however, becomes a victim of his excessive need to delineate between self and other. This need translates itself into physical violence against Télu'mée.

-Tu te crois toujours petite fille au Bassin bleu, mais si tu ne le sais pas, je t'apprends que tu es une grande femme aux seins lourds sous ta robe...et bientôt je te ferai connaître ce que signifie le mot femme sur la terre et tu rouleras et crieras, comme une femme roule et crie quand on la manie bien...Tu essayes de me fuir...mais tu n'éviteras pas l'homme que je suis... (158)
The violence in their relationship places Télumée in an impossible situation; she is forced either to come to terms with her symbolic exclusion from the patriarchal order which Elie perpetuates, or literally to face total annihilation at its hands. A closer look at the text will provide an analysis of Télumée's victimization as "Woman".

As has already been mentioned, in the hierarchical ordering of Patriarchy the "feminine" category is viewed as subservient to the "masculine". This initial division of humanity into two distinct groups reflects a position of biological reductionism. Yet, as man is distinguishable from the natural order precisely through cultural and social institutions, the biological definitions of "male" and "female" ought no longer to suffice. However, rather than going beyond this dualistic approach, the abstract symbolic order serves to uphold and promote it, in favor of the male.

Elie's referral to woman's destiny as being dictated by her "ventre" confirms the overriding preponderance of the biological in male discourse.

-L'homme a la force, la femme la ruse, mais elle a beau ruser son ventre est là pour la trahir et c'est son précipice. (71)

The physical aspect of female sexuality ("ventre") is inextricably bound up with the cultural notion of "femininity" in Language; they both represent aspects of existence "other" than those known experientially to man. In this instance, "feminine"sexuality" can be taken
to stand for that which the male sees in the place of the woman, (i.e. her physical appearance)

La femme apprend au cours de son enfance à se servir de son EXTERIEUR pour signifier son sexe INTERIEUR... elle fait appel continuellement au regard de l'autre pour répondre de son identité sexuelle.  

"Feminine sexuality" therefore can be considered a construct which is divorced from any interior reality specific to a woman. The total abstraction of the concept of "Woman" results in the equating of her sexuality to a mystery of "The Mystery" for man. Not only does it stand for the necessary "lack" in order that he defines, himself as a presence, but as it occurs within the dualistic economy of male discourse (i.e. subject/object, good/evil, dark/light etc.) it further must incorporate the bi-polarity of "purity" (the virgin) and "impurity" (the whore). The Bible re-inforces this limited duality in the construct "Woman", first with Eve (the bearer of original sin - the "knowledge" of the flesh) and then with the Virgin Mary (the purity of the Immaculate Conception).

Père Abel acts as Elie's prime model for his emotional development. Being deprived of the actual physical presence of a mother, he has no experience of reality "other" than the masculine. His struggle for autonomy from the "Mother", therefore, is deferred or repressed, coming to the foreground only when he establishes a relationship with the "feminine" through Télimée. Elie's ignorance of the "feminine" augments his anxieties of reengulfment by this representation of
LEAF 22 MISSED IN NUMBERING.
"Mother". To him, the external or objectified world appears as a dangerous "forêt" in which he risks losing himself. This image was passed on to him by the Father.

...parfois le père Abel lui-même me fait l'effet d'un enfant abandonné sur la terre. Certains soirs il se met à hurler dans son lit: est-ce que je sors du ventre d'une femme humaine?...et puis il se penche vers moi, me prend dans ses bras et chuchote: hélas, où aller pour crier?...c'est toujours la même forêt, toujours aussi épaisse...alors mon fils, écoute les branches comme tu peux, voilà. (72)

Elie's fear of reengulfment recurs whenever the possibility of a sexual encounter between him and Téiumée is imminent.

Nous nous étions baignés ensemble, et le soleil buvait l'humidité sur nous, tandis que nous reposions sur une immense roche plate, toute brûlante, au beau milieu de la rivière...Me tournant vers Elie, je lui vis l'expression hagarde qu'il avait sous le flamboyant de l'école, parlant de son père, de la forêt, de la vie aux mille traces, et de ses craintes de s'égarer...J'ai pensé à me coucher là, sur les galets, afin qu'Elie me recouvrée de tout son corps... (pp.85-86)

Tout en badinant de la sorte, Elie se rapprochait et comme il venait à ma hauteur, me serrait contre lui, je me souvins d'avoir déjà vu cette lueur craintive dans ses yeux, autrefois, sous le flamboyant de l'école, tandis qu'il me parlait de forêt en friche et de traces qui risquaient de se perdre, un jour... (117)

Thus, for Elie, "feminine sexuality" appears as a manifestation of
his anxieties concerning the blurring of boundaries between self and other.

Since the mystery of "feminine sexuality" is perceived and defined by the male subject in the text, from Télumée's point of view, her actual role in Elie's downfall eludes her. She enters their commonlaw relationship certain that it is her destiny.¹⁷

Le lendemain, je m'éveillai avec l'impression de suivre ma destinée de nègresse, de ne plus être étrangère sur la terre. (125)

The ephemeral nature of her position is revealed to her at the moment when Elie succumbs to Laetitia. During Elie's prosperity, Télumée may have appeared to him as the incarnation of "Woman" (with an emphasis on "purity" associated with the role of wife), but in his subsequent state of moral corruption, he is logically seduced by the opposite pole of the feminine mystique, Laetitia the "whore".

The link between Nature and the "feminine" in the text ("la forêt" as metaphor for "feminine sexuality") is further substantiated by the fact that adversity in Nature acts as the catalyst for Elie's ruin. The eruption of forces beyond man's control generates a feeling of anxiety parallel to that which he experiences during expulsion from the mother's womb. In the novel, Elie suffers fear and helplessness when confronted with a force that escapes the bounds of his control. Any allusion to woman as the original creator of man dislodges the subject from the place of self-possession, the position from which he says "I". Woman as mother pre-existed the "I" of the
male subject: he issued from her, and as such, remained passive in his own construction. It is here that the desire to secure a set of laws which will guarantee a subjective control for the male appears to be based on a fallacy, or the rejection of a previously apparent truth (the dominance or even the existence of the "(M)other").

The eruption of Nature in the text engenders the anxiety related to the loss of self which it is the symbolic order's role to suppress.

Elie's actual powerlessness as an individual subject is now revealed to him: he has veritably lost his way in the metaphorical "forêt" of feminine sexuality.

Turning in despair from one limited representation of "Woman" (Télumée) Elie now retreats to its logical opposite in Laetitia. Laetitia will incarnate "Significance" for Elie in her manifest sensuality and ultimate inner complâcity with the patriarchal order.
sexuality as the incarnation of evil, as is evident in the following "Garden of Eden" scene:

Le sous-bois de l'Autre Bord me plaisait particulièrement, à cause de ses palmiers entre lesquels croissaient des bananiers sauvages et des cannes congo. L'endroit me mystifiait un peu, comme si, en un temps révolu et lointain, l'avaient habité des hommes capables de se réjouir des rivières, des arbres et du ciel...
Elle (Laetitia) longeait la rive de sa démarche traînante et souveraine, glissant sur la terre et les pierres et les feuilles comme une couleuvre en vadrouille. (136)

Laetitia's success in diverting Elie is guaranteed by her own complicity with the dominant ideology. She adheres to the prevalent notion that women must make use of their exterior in order to signify their interior. Laetitia's childhood "motherlessness" (akin to that of Elie) has left her defenseless against the influences of patriarchal ideology.

Laetitia, elle, allait d'une case à l'autre, attrapant une lèche de morue, une tranche de fruit à pain, un fruit, une miette de viande, car tout le village était sa maman. (68)

Without a strong maternal bond from which to derive a centred self, Laetitia accepts the role assigned to her in the dualistic economy of patriarchal discourse. Her belief in her own "objectivity" effectively confines her to a role of fixed or "dead" construct.

Laetitia has understood that the only place for a woman on earth is in the cemetery, because she must sacrifice her own interior or
inner reality in order to circulate within the social order of a patriarchal system.

- Petite fleur de coco, dit - elle (Laëtitia), navrée, en quel pays les cloches ont-elles sonné pour toi?...ta case, mais quelle case?...tu n'es pas plus ici chez toi qu'ailleurs, et ne le savais-tu pas, déjà, que la seule place d'une Négressé sur la terre est au cimetière?... (165)

Télumée's inevitable failure to correspond to Elie's vision of her assures her defeat and subsequent "death" as "Woman" in the text. She cannot support the limited definition assigned to her in male discourse. Télumée's bonding with her grandmother, Reine Sans Nom, has provided her with a strong self-image which will resuscitate her after each life crisis.

An additional factor which inhibits Télumée's collusion with the role of "Woman" in male discourse is her sustained state of "childlessness". 19 Her mother, Victoire, was obliged to accept a man in order to provide for her two children.

...après toi, Régina, j'ai accepté l'homme Angebert sur mon plancher, mais c'était seulement du pain que je cherchais; et tu le vois, j'ai récolté viande sur viande, Télumée d'abord, puis celui-ci... (33)

Télumée may resist this mode of "exchange" (man for "pain") as she remains unencumbered by supplementary mouths to feed. She is symbolically initiated into the system where women are seen to possess an "exchange value". In the patriarchal economy, woman's sexuality,
specifically her ability to reproduce, comes under the heading of "goods" to be bought by the male. However, Télumée's failure to reproduce what Sharon Willis calls the "phallus capital" grants her economic independence on a concrete/physical level. This in turn will allow her a certain maneuverability vis-à-vis the symbolic system.

The attempt to imprison Télumée in the role of sexual "truck" begins with an initiation into the symbolic system of exchange in père Abel's boutique. Père Abel attempts, verbally, to construct a vision for Télumée of herself as "passive receptacle".

- Es-tu patiente, petite, demandait-il non sans malice... car avant tout, une femme doit être patiente, c'est ça.
- Et qu'est-ce que l'homme doit être, avant tout?
- Avant tout, répondait-il, un peu fanfaron, un homme ne doit avoir... peur ni de vivre, ni de mourir. (73)

This rape in the symbolic register (the act of establishing the passivity of the woman in opposition to the active male libido) is quickly followed by the exchange of a material gift.
by Patriarchy.

We know that one of the clues prompting Dora's recognition of her father's relationship with Frau K. is his increased generosity towards herself and her mother, in an effort to conceal the motives behind his making expensive presents to Frau K.¹¹

Abel offers Télumée a "gift" in exchange for her acceptance of his perception of feminine sexuality. In this way, man looks to women first to store "his" capital (receptivity in the sexual act) and eventually to reproduce it (by giving birth).

Following Freud's interpretation that the jewel-case is a metaphor for the female genitals, women are receptacles which collect and store the father's jewels, in which his capital accrues and reproduces itself.²²

The initiation of Télumée is interrupted at the physical level, however, when she stays "childless". Despite the fact that père Abel has defined her sexuality in relation to man's "desire", her failure to reproduce biologically precludes any complete actualization of the role of "Woman" in the socio-economic field.

A woman without a biological reproductive function, therefore, is a misfit in a patriarchal economy, for she refuses to circulate according to its rules. Not only will she disrupt the economic system in practical terms, she also causes a disturbance in the symbolic order, for she exists in an "unnamable" state. As Adrienne Richestates:
We have no familiar, ready-made name for a woman who defines herself, by choice, neither in relation to children nor to men.23

Victoire's production of the "phallus/capital" effectively grounds her in a male discourse. Télumée, however, must take up an alternate position outside the regular "order", for although she has been shown her place in the exchange economy, her "barrenness" prohibits her from taking it up.

Télumée sets out first on the road of traditionalism: the idealized male/female relationship appears as the means by which a woman realizes her place on earth. However, being unable to sustain the voyage through life as an objectified male construct, she encounters rejection by her supposed savior, Elie (God's prophet), and as a result she soon finds herself radically displaced from the existing dominant order.

Je n'ai pas le souvenir des jours qui suivirent...Je restai là plusieurs semaines, sans bouger, ne distinguant même plus le jour d'avec la nuit...Lorsqu'on me parlait je restais muette, et l'on disait que la parole m'était devenue la chose la plus étrangère du monde du monde. (166)

After her fall from patriarchal grace, Télumée will be reborn: she will assume an alternative perspective with regard to language. Her new position will be one which understands Language as a system of relatives, rather than of dichotomies. Through an understanding of
existence as a non-hierarchical intermingling of the "abstract" and the "real" (or the "other" and the "self"), Télumée will be able to see herself other than according to the dictates of patriarchal ideology. She will achieve a centred existence as a woman, following the example of Reine Sans Nom, who, "sans nom", was nevertheless "Reine" by her own acts of self-definition, of "autonomy".
Footnotes - Chapter I


2. Ibid., p. 4.


8. Mary Daly's contention that "Patriarchy appears to be everywhere", (Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology, p. 1) helps to establish Patriarchy as the dominant universal ideology which is reflected in and held up by the symbolic order of language as does the following definition of the term by Adrienne Rich: "Patriarchy is the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men - by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male." (Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born (New York: Bantam Books, 1976), p. 40).

9. "The institution of phallocentric law is congruent with the need to prove paternity and authority, to secure property by transforming the child into an alienated object named and possessed by the father, and to secure property by transforming the woman into a mediating instrument of the production and passage of property." Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Displacement and Discourse of Woman" in Displacement, Derrida and After, ed. Mark Krusnick (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1983), p. 184.


15. I am using "Doxa" here in the sense defined by Roland Barthes: "La Doxa...c'est l'opinion publique, l'Esprit Majoritaire... la Voix du Naturel, la Violence du Préjugé" (Roland Barthes, Roland Barthes (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1975) p. 51). The "case" (house) in the novel denotes a pinnacle of achievement in the life of woman according to the Doxa of the local setting.


17. Elie does not formally marry Télumée in the way that Jérémie married Toussine. This is apparently due to lack of financial security on his part and may therefore be construed as reinforcing the "fictional" nature of his role as dominant provider.


19. Although Télumée later becomes the adoptive mother of Sonore she has no "biological" dependants when she is young and unemployed.


CHAPTER II

Alternative Approaches to Language:
The "Other" as Non-Object
The post-freudian "linguistic" approach of Jacques Lacan is useful in analysing the circumstances of man/woman oppression, as a definite subject/object relationship is involved. However, a broader-based analysis of the realm of the subject in Language is necessary in order to deal specifically with alternate modes of discourse available to the male subject in the text. Carl Jung's theories will be relevant in this instance, for through Jung's conception of the operations of the psyche it is possible to examine the relationship between man/woman oppression (which concerns a subject/object relation) and the particular phenomenon of the victimization of one subject by another (here the domination of the male Negro by the White male).

The construct of signifier "Woman" has been established as the referent "object" essential to the formation of the male subject in Language. On a physical level, this phenomenon is mirrored in the act of separation from the Mother (who is a woman) which is necessary for the child to construct his individual identity.

Un homme ne peut se construire dans un premier temps que dans l'opposition à la mère, que dans la contre-identification à la femme.¹

Later on, the notion of "separation" becomes a paradigm for the psychological development of the (male) subject, a development established and continued through the terms of Language itself.
In the order of language, "I" and "You" conceptualize and mark separate persons, as "she" and "he", "mother" and "father" differentiate genders and roles...Discovery of the father's role in the primal scene and recognition of male dominance in the social world conjoin with the integration of the patriarchal child into the systematic organization of language. The interlocking of linguistic with cultural rules suggests an equation between the organization of patriarchal culture and its sexually differentiated oedipal subjectivity.2

From his position of subject, the individual projects the inherent dualism which constitutes his very "coming into being" onto his surrounding environment, thereby establishing an oppositional or hierarchical ordering in Nature itself. Nature comes to be equated with the body, while man as subject signifies the abstract or the "spirit".

Jung defines "cultural development" as man's attribution of priority to the spirit over the body in the oppositional hierarchy of existence. This, according to Jung, is essential to attain higher moral goals.

The ingrained dichotomy of the Greek mind had now become acute, with the result that the accent shifted significantly to the psychic and spiritual, which was unavoidably split off from the hylic realm of the body. All the highest and ultimate goals lay in man's moral destination, in a spiritual, supramundane end-state, and the separation of the hylic realm broadened into a cleavage between world and spirit.3
It is only by leaving behind the body (Mother), therefore, that the subject is able to continue his social development in a world governed by the principles of a patriarchal ideology.

Instead of attachment, individual achievement rivets the male imagination, and great ideas or distinctive activity define the standard of self-assessment and success.

Power itself is guaranteed primarily through separation, for attachment would presuppose a deferral of individual achievement.

In his essay *Refus de la femme*, Karl Stern links this same radical split between mind and body, and the ensuing superiority attributed to the mind, to the development of modern science.

...seule cette radicale séparation entre le sujet connaissant et l'objet connaissable pouvait permettre le progrès des sciences exactes. Il faut d'abord que le sujet se sépare de l'univers pour expliquer celui-ci par les mathématiques...Dans la civilisation médiévale et d'autres encore, tant que l'homme se concevait comme encastré dans la nature et intrinsèquement uni à l'objet qu'il contemplait, l'objectivité scientifique restait impossible.

Stern locates the origin of a desire to give priority to the mind or spirit over the environment (matter or "matière") in the initial formative act of separation from the mother ("mater"). Having equated "mater" with matter ("matière") Stern goes on to develop the thesis that the desire for control in the male subject increases in direct
relation to the amount of negative influence exercised upon him by the mother. In other words, domination over the "female" (female=body=nature) is at the base of individual development and achievement in patriarchal society.

Le puissant; l'administrateur qui non seulement gère des biens mais dirige des hommes; l'homme qui aborde les relations humaines comme si elles relevaient de la technique...ces types d'hommes se refusent à tous les moyens de communion, d'intérieurité.

Jung's conception mirrors that of Stern's in that he labels the feminine the weaker element in the subject which must be repressed in order to gain control in the social order. According to Jung's when an outward or socially powerful role is played, an inward or "effeminate" weakness exists in regard to the unconscious.

Both men relegate the female to the role of Mother, which functions in the pre-symbolic or unconscious realm. The equation man=Logos=culture becomes the formula for "success" or control in the social order with repression of woman=Eros=unconscious as its prerequisite. In order to exist as a "controlling" subject in society, the individual must identify wholly with what is deemed acceptable by a patriarchal Doxa and deny the existence of any alternate interior or inner reality (i.e. the subjectivity of a woman or an integrated masculine/feminine subjectivity in the male). Thus the oppression of women can be seen as intrinsic to the very establishment of the symbolic order of patriarchy and its language.
In order to come to terms with the differences between the two forms of oppression evident in our text (male-female and White-Black) it is useful to look more closely at the implications of Jung's theories. If the symbolic order itself is patriarchal, with woman as object and man as subject, the victimization of women must be a universal given. As already stated, in Chapter I, the moment of differentiation between the oppressed Negro male and woman occurs at the point of insertion of the male as dominant subject within his own discourse (i.e. Amboise's return to Guadeloupe). There is therefore a parallel between the Signifier "subject" and what is signified in the male individual (his inner reality) which does not exist in the case of the woman. Woman ≠ a woman, but Subject Man= a man. This correspondence will at some point guarantee a place of privilege for a male in a specific discourse as it does to Amboise in his own Guadeloupian society. It is through this realization that the following statement becomes possible: Amboise's displacement is geographical and economic in Paris, whereas Téluomée's will be indicative of the symbolic order itself.

Jung proposes the view that the individual is the mediator in an ongoing confrontation between external "social" forces and those of an internal or unconscious reality. In order to survive more or less successfully in the outside world, the individual must adopt a "mask" or "persona" which follows closely the rules of society.
The persona is a complicated system of relations between individual consciousness and society, fittingly enough a kind of mask, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and, on the other to conceal the true nature of the individual. The more the individual identifies with his persona (his "outer" or social self) the less he is able to understand or acknowledge the workings of his unconscious or "inner" reality. The repression of one's "true nature" (all of the natural, yet undesirable character traits according to social precepts) causes a phenomenon of "projection" to occur, whereby the unconscious "projects" itself onto others. This locates all that is unacceptable to the individual in the place of the "other". Jung calls these traits or characteristics the "shadow", and he states that the further away from consciousness (or the more deeply repressed) these traits are, the less able the individual is to recognize them as such. The projections of the shadow most recognizable to the individual are those which are a product of the "personal unconscious". Those which are the furthest away from consciousness (deeply repressed) tend to possess an autonomous nature and belong to what Jung terms the "collective unconscious". The shadow projections of the collective unconscious have a much greater influence over the individual than those of the personal unconscious for they are not necessarily a function familiar to any particular individual, being more closely associated with the "myth producing" or primordial level of the unconscious.
Shadow projections, therefore, are what may allow for the victimization of non-controlling male subjects in society. Because the Whites' power exists culturally and economically as a reality in the text, they possess the means to encode their own specific meanings, leaving out or ignoring those particular to the Negro. If the White chooses to view the Negro as inferior, due to a shadow projection, there is nothing to stop his doing so, nor is there any way to halt the adoption of this perception as a cultural norm. In this respect, the male Negro comes to share a role of victim with women in general. Compare the following statements by Dale Spender with the situation of the male Negro in the text:

...women have not been in a position to have their meanings taken up and incorporated in those of the society. They have not been in the public arena, they have not been the "culture"-makers with the result that any meanings which they may wish to encode, but which are different from or at odds with those that have been generated by men, have been tenuous and transitory; they have been cut off from the mainstream of meanings and therefore have frequently been lost.  

In this case, the dominant subject has the power to "project" his shadow onto the Negro male (and female). This then provides the means for the establishment and continuation of a "justifiable" form of oppression by the White subject, thus relieving him of the responsibility of integrating his shadow.
What the dominant group sees as objectionable in their victims can provide an interesting clue to what they fear in themselves — it's a sort of distorted mirror image of the rejected part of themselves. In his book Blaming the Victim, sociologist William Ryan shows how white Americans treat black Americans as second-class citizens, providing them with inferior education, inferior housing, inferior jobs — and then point to the result, the semi-skilled black living in a ghetto as the proof that the black American is "inherently" incapable of coming up to white standards.  

The alienation experienced by Amboise in Paris marks his initiation into a world where the oppositional hierarchy of positive and negative elements inherent in patriarchal ideology (i.e. subject as good/object or "other" as evil) is but an arbitrary fiction. His realization of the existence of an alternate interior or inner reality (in this case his own) gains him access to a perception whereby apparently "opposing" constructs are seen to coexist.

**Il avait lavé sa tête de toutes idées blanches, mais il n'en gardait nulle amertume. Ces gens-là étaient d'un bord et lui de l'autre, ils ne regardaient pas du même côté de la vie, pas plus que ça, le frère...** (216-217)

Once he accepts the principle of the "shadow" within ("rien ne poursuit le nègre que son propre cœur" (147)) he is able to transcend the oppositional bias of linear, abstract discourse, and go on to replace the notion of separation and opposition with that of
integration. He attains the Jungian ideal of a man who acknowledges the "feminine" within rather than rejecting it as being undesirable and relegating it to an "ailleurs" or "without" beyond the perimeters of his own existence.

Two diametrically opposed relations of the subject to existence are presented in the novel. In the first case, we have the White or dominant approach (linear or abstract discourse): the position of the subject is secured by a controlled, linear vision which represses systematically any eruption of the unknown represented by "le hasard" or the unconscious.

Such a perspective denies the existence within of all that is undesirable or inadmissible according to the pre-established terms of the reigning ideology. In the second instance, there is an acknowledgement of an uncontrollable force which circulates beyond the conscious grasp of the individual and is perceived by him as an integral part of daily existence.
It is only by virtue of this second vision that various modes of textual discourse are available to the subject in Language, for through it he is permitted to relinquish the fixed place of dominator assigned to him within the former linear or abstract perspective.

Since the subject's realm is the symbolic, his way of relating to his environment is articulated through the terms of Language. In the Guadeloupinian economy of the text, this link between subject and environment is explicitly affirmed as being that of "la parole".

...quelqu'un lance une parole en l'air, comme ça, et la folie frappe et elle assaille, et l'on tue et l'on se fait tuer...(38)

Here is a discourse which does not attempt to control or repress the power of Nature, in fact it allows for such eruptions in the individual as well as in the environment. This perspective is a result of the African heritage of the Negro of Guadeloupe. Such a perspective appears to a greater or lesser extent depending on the individual’s predisposition to the cultural influences of the colonial system. Edouard Glissant attempts to explain this phenomenon.

Les structures de la société, ses réflexes, sont ici une résultante de l’acte colonial et ne s’enracinent pas dans un avant (sinon la coupure de la Traite).

Through the agency of institutions (school, government, the economy) the initial cultural difference between the Negro and the White becomes problematized to a point where the male Negro may exist in
displacement within his own social sphere. The text provides specific examples of this alienating influence in terms of the educational system.

Il y avait...dans la bâtisse sombre
de l'école quelque chose de retenu,
de sévère, de futile à la fois qui
nous mettait mal à l'aise... (71)

Nous étions à l'abri, apprenant à
lire, à signer notre nom, à respecter
les couleurs de la France, notre mère,
à vénérer sa grandeur et sa majesté,
sa noblesse, sa gloire... (81)

Glissant discusses the phenomenon of post-colonial displacement with regard to Martinique, but it is equally applicable to the situation of Guadeloupe.

La seule clarté enfin, qui fut celle
de la présence transcendante dell'Autre,
de son évidence - colon ou administrateur-,
de sa transparence mortellement proposée
en modèle...14

When Elie (as subject) appeals to the law of the Father in order to assert his dominance, he does so from the "displaced" position of an "adopted" son.

Le Nom pour nous est d'abord collectif,
n'est pas le signe d'un Je mais d'un
Nous ...ce n'est pas le nom parental,
c'est le nom conquis.15

Unlike Amboise, who is of a different generation, Elie is educated into the linear dominant discourse which denies femininity. As there is no direct "paternal" link between Elie and the dominant
In the order of post-colonial Guadeloupe, he must exist in displacement within his own discourse, for it is the discourse of the conqueror. His frustration concerning his lack of control both economically and culturally can be seen as the root of his violent outbursts against Télumée. Through violence to Télumée, Elie attempts to recover his authorial place as subject - to affect a return to the time when man did the naming. He proposes to show her her designated patriarchal place as "Woman" on earth.

Désormais, il ne laissa plus passer un jour sans me voir, sans venir me faire connaître ce que signifie une femme sur la terre. Je le voyais arriver de loin, son beau visage empli d'un calme qui se défaisaît à mesure qu'il se rapprochait de la case. Et soudain sa bouche se crispait, ses narines frémissaient, une sorte de courroux froid le pénétrait cependant qu'il se jetait sur moi de toutes ses forces, écumant de rage... (159)

Having been rejected by the womb of his mother, he proposes to seek revenge upon Télumée as Signifier for all that he finds unfair in life.

In relation to Jung's theories, Télumée represents Elie's "anima" projection. According to Jung, the anima is a deeply ingrained function of the collective unconscious which manifests itself specifically in "love" relationships.

It belongs to him, this perilous image of Woman; she stands for the loyalty which in the interests of life he must sometimes forego;
she is the much needed compensation for the risks, struggles, sacrifices that all end in disappointment; she is the great illusionist, the seductress, who draws him into life with her Maya... 16

It has already been noted that according to Jung the more the male individual strives for control in the dominant social order, the more he is turned away from his "feminine" inner self. It has also been established that the more actively "repressed" any unwanted traits are, the more the individual is liable to fall victim to his own projections. In this case, as he strives to follow the dictates of the dominant discourse, Elie is in a position to suffer from "anima" projections:

The repression of feminine traits and inclinations naturally causes... contrasexual demands to accumulate in the unconscious. No less naturally, the image of a woman... becomes a receptacle for these demands, which is why a man, in his love-choice, is strongly tempted to win the woman who best corresponds to his own unconscious femininity - a woman, in short, who can unhesitatingly receive the projection of his soul. 17

Télumée receives Elie's "anima" projection in her passive role as "Woman", and thus becomes the personification of all that Elie has fundamentally rejected within himself. By projecting his "feminine" or weaker side onto Télumée, Elie is able to take revenge upon her for his ultimate inability as a Negro, albeit male, to assume the position of "controlling" subject in the symbolic order.
In order to examine the role of the Negro woman within the context of the dominant White order, it is necessary to sketch the relationship of the Whites to their own discourse. Although the White female in the text (Mme. Desaragne) is associated primarily with the discourse of the dominant ideology, her existence is also problematic in that she holds the role of "object" as well in her own patriarchal order.

The initial appearance of Mme. Desaragne in the text has the effect of highlighting the difference between the external façade of White colonial power and the actual physical presence of their descendants. At first the imposing exterior is presented (their overwhelming residence):

Et tandis que j'allais ainsi, d'un pas retenu malgré moi, contrôlé, soudain surgit une vaste demeure à colonnades et bougainvillées, perron surélevé, toit surmonté de deux flèches métalliques, et ces étonnantes fenêtres à vitres et rideaux de dentelle dont nous avions parlé, Reine Sans Nom et moi. Sur toute la façade, les fleurs tapissaient la maison d'un mauve écarlate, éblouissant. (90)

This impressive façade is immediately contrasted with the diminutive reality of Mme. Desaragne herself.

Venant à moi, depuis le perron où elle se tenait, la descendante du Blanc des blancs m'apparut, dame frêle, un peu vieille demoiselle, avec de longs cheveux jaunes et gris et les orteils fardés dans des sandales, qu'elle traînait
The discrepancy between the static representation of power (the residence) and the individual (Mme. Desaragne) mirrors on a physical level the schism between the elaborate system of language and the precarious nature of the subject.

Mme. Desaragne's relationship to Télumée appears as one of superiority, both racially and economically, despite the fact that she shares with Télumée the subservient place of "Woman" in relation to the male of the house. Mme. Desaragne is uniquely occupied with the traditional household or "female" chores, even as her husband attempts to transact sexual "commerce" with the hired help. Mme. Desaragne exists in a state of repressed sensuality or "desire", as is evident in the barrenness and aridity of the atmosphere at Belle-Feuille. But, because she is able to infer that her way of life is superior to Télumée's, it is evident that her position racially is one of power. She is therefore able to affect a shadow projection onto Télumée whereby her own lack appears as an overabundance in the "other". 18

...on vous emmène ici, et comment vivez-vous?...dans la boue, le vice, les bacchanales,...Combien de coups de bâton ton homme te donne-t-il?...et toutes ces femmes, avec leurs ventres à crédit?...drôle de goût, vous vous vautrez dans la fange, et vous riez. (93-94)

The universal sexual rivalry of women is apparent to a lesser degree,
between Télumée and her employer, as its serves to further separate and alienate woman from woman as did within the context of Laetitia and Télumée's relationship.

...balayant son dos de ses longs cheveux en liberté comme pour me dire: où sont tes cheveux, nègresse, pour qu'ils te caressent le dos... (94)

Their relationship, therefore, is typical of the female predicament engendered by Patriarchy where a situation of complicity and rivalry exists between women. They are both accomplices in the fallacy of male supremacy in that they concern themselves with the cleaning of the male's clothes, ("Elle contrôlait alors la fluidité de l'amidon... va, Télumée, disait-elle, ajoute le bleu" (94-95): the combined effort produces the water to clean Mme. Desaragne's shirts). They are also sexual rivals in the exchange system effected by Mme. Desaragne. However, because Mme. Desaragne is White over and above being a woman, when she objectifies Télumée, it is primarily Télumée's status as Black which enables her to do so.

J'étais maintenant entourée d'yeux métalliques, perçants, lointains sous lesquels je n'existais pas. (91-92)

In this case, Télumée's alienating experience as a non-existing "subject" can be seen to parallel that of Amboise's situation in Paris. Her gender is not seen as "other" by Mme. Desaragne, but her colour is. As both she and Amboise are "other" in essence to the Whites, they cannot be heard in the terms of their oppressor's discourse.
Telumée is able to escape the tyranny of Mme. Desaragne's speech by holding on to a sense of her own individuality.

"Je me faufilais à travers ces paroles comme si je nageais dans l'eau la plus claire qui soit... je lui abandonnais la première face afin qu'elle s'amuse, la patronne, qu'elle cogne dessus, et moi-même par en dessous je restais intacte... (94)

Thanks to a strong sense of self, conveyed to her through the actions of her grandmother, Telumée succeeds in combatting the attempt of the dominant White female to objectify her on racial grounds.

Being both Black and female, Telumée's awareness of oppression has been twofold. It is essential to her personal and emotional development, therefore, to understand the double standards required for survival in a society which fails to encode her own meaning.

The words first articulated by her man Cia were often reiterated by Reine Sans Nom: "sois une vaillante petite négresse, un vrai tambour à deux faces, laisse la vie frapper, cogner, mais conserve toujours intacte la face du dessous" (62). Through interiorization of this notion, Telumée is able to arrive at an understanding of the disparity between one's inner reality and the exterior "face" or persona as defined by the dominant ideology (be it White or patriarchal). When she comes to confront her existence as "object" in a White discourse, she approaches it from a somewhat different perspective to that of Amboise. Her sense of original displacement
or "victimization" at the hands of the symbolic order has long been internalized as the condition of her existence. She therefore does not react to the humiliation and alienation produced by contact with the Whites in the same way as would a male Negro, for she was never allowed to perceive at the level of "subject" in her own socio-economic order. Télumée is thus able to manoeuvre around the White woman's attempts to victimize her, through an understanding that the external symbolic "construct" applied to her is a cultural "fiction".

She remains outside the perimeters of the White discourse in much the same way that she resists definition according to Elie's male vision.

Whereas Mme. Desaragne related to Télumée in primarily racial terms, MmeDesaragne perceives her initially as a sexual "object". Télumée is doubly appealing to this male oppressor: she is erotically and racially forbidden to him. M. Desaragne's attraction to Télumée is all the more powerful due to the fact that his White discourse deeply represses Nature and the (forbidden) erotic feminine. He is physically drawn to Télumée as his anima. The blackness of her sexuality represents his own repressed desire. When M. Desaragne approaches Télumée as an "exchange object" he does so on a much more concrete, physical level than does père Abel (whose subtler approach took place primarily in the symbolic order).

Il avait à la main une robe de soie qu'il me jeta en souriant, comme si la chose eût été convenue entre nous. Puis venant à moi il posa ses mains sous ma jupe, marmotta d'une voix
Although Télumée had no means of retaliation in the earlier "symbolic" aggression, in the physical realm she is capable of actually posing a threat to the White man.

Télumée asserts herself as a physical presence, and, succeeds in forcing her oppressor to accept her concrete encoding of a "meaning". Whereas man generally associates "Woman" with the pre-symbolic (thereby disqualifying her as a generator of symbolic or "verbal" meaning), in this case the "act" incorporates meaning into the speech of a woman. This act not only defines Télumée as a non-object or a presence, it also undermines the supremacy of the White discourse, exposing its mechanism of "projection" and reification.

M. Desaragne's final realization that he is faced with a centred "alternate" reality, renders impossible any fulfilment of his original
"desire" (to "possess" Télumée). What he initially sought from Télumée as "object" cannot be attained from Télumée as physical reality! She makes herself heard in his discourse at the moment she incarnates the construct of "Woman as castrator" - a construct which he is forced to acknowledge.

The ultimate importance of words for the male subject in Language denotes a dependency which does not extend to the female characters in the text. Amboise may reject the extreme abstract linear discourse more commonly associated with the White perspective and endorsed by Elie, he nonetheless continues to give priority to the spoken word itself:

...dans ses yeux il y avait alors une sorte de disponibilité perpétuelle comme si à tout instant il risquait d'entendre la parole qui l'apaiseraient pour toujours... (218)

In Elie's case, speech is the "seed" which disseminates his truth where he sees fit.

...il n'est pas bon de planter n'importe quelle graine dans n'importe quel terrain, et il n'est pas sage de dire n'importe quoi à n'importe quelles oreilles. (130)

Elie aspires to the place of "producer of meaning" through Logos, or the place of the Father. Existing, as he does, in a displaced state in relation to the Father, any attempts to establish his authority remain frustrated, he cannot accede to the place of the conquering White as father. The paternity he symbolically wishes
to generate through language is notably a false paternity, which, by virtue of its failure (cf due to Téléumée's barrenness), re-establishes the primacy of the pre-symbolic or the Mother. Amboise, on the other hand, has realized the fiction of any fixed or static "meaning" through Logos and, although he cannot reject the symbolic order of Language altogether as it is the place of the male subject, he can proceed to an understanding of the oppositional bias of its nature. By replacing the hierarchical structure of the system with a notion of synthesis, Amboise is able to achieve an integration of the "anima" (the unconscious or female principle) and the "animus" (the spirit of male principle). He can no longer maintain the arbitrary separation inherent in Patriarchy, which relegates the undesirable to an "ailleurs" outside of the subject's own experience (an "ailleurs" already noted as the place of women): once the unknowable is accepted within, the result is a repudiation of a system which posits the dichotomy of subject as good, object as evil. Amboise, therefore, is able to see Téléumée as an existing alternative "subjectivity" not unlike himself, rather than assign her to a pre-established role following the dictates of linear, abstract discourse:

...je craignais le regard d'Amboise et que ne s'y glisse quelque regret, une déception. Mais il me devinait toujours, il renversait la tête pour recevoir une brise de terre qui se levait, avec le soir, et puis me gratifiant de son regard savant, passionné, innocent, il me disait combien il me trouvait belle dans cette robe à ma forme, sans fard
ni mode... car ce sont les cadavres, ajoutait-il souriant, ceux qui ont quelque chose à cacher, que l'on apprête et grime... (214)

Amboise understands that to constrict one's view to the external reality of the "Other" results in the negation or death of the existence of that particular individual. Elie, however, must continue to subscribe to this system, for it exists in order to support and define the "fiction" of the male subject as a controlling entity:

Tout dernièrement, on m'a prévenue qu'il revenait ici pour mourir, mettre son corps au cimetière de La Ramée, dans l'espoir qu'un nègre se souviendrait de lui, au jour de la Toussaint, viendrait poser une bougie sur sa tombe et lui dire quelques mots... (245) (My emphasis).
Footnotes - Chapter II


4. Carol Gillingan, *In a Different Voice*, p.163.


6. Ibid., p. 11.

7. "This weakness then leaves the individual open to influences from the unconscious and he may fall victim to "moods, vagaries, timidity, even a limp sexuality" (C.G. Jung "The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious" Two Essays, CW7, pars. 305-9 in *The Essential Jung*, p. 96).

8. Ibid., p. 94.

9. "The personal unconscious consists firstly of all those contents that became unconscious either because they lost their intensity and were forgotten or because consciousness was withdrawn from them (repression), and secondly of contents, some of them sense-impressions, which never had sufficient intensity to reach consciousness but have somehow entered the psyche" (Jung, "The Structure of the Psyche", CW8, pars. 317-21 in *The Essential Jung*, p. 67).

10. "The collective unconscious...(is) the ancestral heritage of possibilities of representation, (it) is not individual but common to all men, and perhaps even to all animals and is the true basis of the individual psyche." Ibid., p. 67.


18. The white characters in the novel are more precisely caricatures, as they act and react according to two-dimensional stereotypes. Therefore, when comparing Télumée to Mme. Desaragne on the basis of gender it must be noted that, in the novel, Mme. Desaragne's role is more "white" than it is "féminine".

19. In her book *Man Made Language*, Dale Spender discusses the concept of femininity in a patriarchal society as an "otherness" which a woman must embrace as her own. Spender makes use of the following, quoted from Susan Koppelman Cornillon's "The Fiction of Fiction" (in S.K. Cornillon, ed., *Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives*, Popular Press (Bowling Green, Ohio, 1972) pp. 113-30): "in a male culture, the idea of the feminine is expressed, defined and perceived by the male as a condition of being female, while for the female it is seen as an addition to one's femaleness and a status to be achieved."
CHAPTER III

Women Speak: "Feminine" Discourse in the Text
C'est cela la naissance des femmes: elles se mettent à exister en fonction de leur désir propre... que disent les nouvelles femmes, sinon que leur langage à elles inclut le corps, conserve les affects tout en ne négligeant pas le concept...

The abolition of slavery in Guadeloupe necessitated a re-thinking of existence for the Black. This movement toward a regeneration, as represented in the novel, is a "feminine" act: it is a return to the pre-symbolic affected by a woman which points to the overthrow of White abstract discourse.

Après l'abolition, Minerve avait erré, cherchant un refuge loin de cette plantation, de ses fantaisies, et elle s'arrêta à l'Abandonnée. Des marrons avaient essaimé là par la suite et un village s'était constitué. (12)

L'Abandonnée itself actually pre-existed Minerve. It was originally the dwelling of an outcast Créole who had gone beyond the limits of his own cultural bias by falling in love with a black woman.

...un créole du nom de Colbert Lanony, s'était pris d'amour pour une petite nègresse à tourments, autrefois, dans les temps anciens... Devenu un blanc maudit, il était venu se réfugier sur un morne désert, inaccessible, à l'abri des regards que son amour contrariait... À ceux qui s'étonnaient d'une telle demeure en ce lieu, le peuple prit l'habitude de répondre, c'est L'Abandonnée, nom qui servit à désigner le hameau, par la suite. (25)
L'Abandonnée can therefore symbolize a realm of movement beyond the Doxa or a transgression. It is the place from which creation is accomplished, it is the "feminine" or pre-symbolic sphere. Here the power relationship of dominant over victim is dissolved: the hierarchy of spirit (culture) over body (feminine) is overturned. L'Abandonnée geographically mirrors the oneness of integration characteristic of the unconscious or pre-symbolic state: here solidity (la terre) meets and joins fluidity (la mer).

Ils habitaient un hameau où se relayaient les vents de terre et de mer. Une route abrupte longeait précipices et solitudes, il semblait qu'elle ne débouchait sur rien d'humain. (12)

L'Abandonnée denotes an "other" existence, before the separation and hierarchization achieved through the intermediary of "culture" (more specifically patriarchal culture). It was constituted in a transgression of patriarchal white Doxa and refuses existence (both denies and fuses again - denies the opposition of black and white apparent in linear discourse by fusing together previously opposed aspects of existence).

De toute cette histoire, seules demeuraient de belles pierres qui s'effritaient, en un étrange endroit perdu, colonnades, plafonds vermoulus, dalles de faïence qui témoignaient encore du passé, de la fantaisie d'un blanc maudit pour une nègresse. (25)

At L'Abandonnée chronological time is eclipsed by circular
time, as past collapses into present. The transgression evoked by the impossible unity of Black and White instigates a cultural reversal: the re-establishment or revalorization of the "object". The white oppressor (here Colbert Lanony) becomes a victim of the limits set by his own culture. When oppressor becomes oppressed the order of the symbolic is sabotaged and the initial "object" (here the Black woman) is thus liberated (in a symbolic sense). The cyclical nature of time is confirmed by the re-occurence of "liberation" with the abolition of slavery. This event gives rise to the moment where a woman (here Minerve) takes up a position of re-generating "subject".

Just as the male subject was observed as projecting his dualistic "symbolic" perspective upon the environment, so now the textual environment mirrors the "feminine" perspective of an over-turned ascendency.

Quand il pleuvait, un filet d'eau s'écoulait dans un baquet disposé sous la brèche, et la nuit venue le rez-de-chaussée devenait le refuge des crapauds, des grenouilles et des chauves-souris. (25)

Now exterior enters interior and Nature overruns civilization. Language no longer suffices as a means of control, for the pre-symbolic re-asserts itself.

Télumée is born of L'Abandonnée, the place of the ascendance of Mother, the realm of women. Yet she in turn must enact her own journey into the past in order to define or re-name herself. She
must create her own "history". The accomplishment of her journey can only be possible through a leaving behind of the Mother (L'Abandonnée). Her going however does not constitute an oedipal rejection of the sameness of the Mother, but a re-working of the shared perspective between the Mother (the "Other") and the daughter.

The first stage of Télumée's journey is a further delving into "unconscious" reality, as manifest in the name of the place to which her grandmother takes her (Fond-Zombi). Fond-Zombi represents the depths of the spirit world ("la mythologie du "Zombi"... exprimait l'inconscient des Antillais au fond d'eux-mêmes")

Télumée's mentor during the initial stages of her journey will be, of course, her grandmother Toussine.

Toussine was born into a family whose paternal lineage had been fractured. Xango, not her biological father, assumes the place of the father. He in fact accepts her as if she were his own, thus breaking the traditional parental dyad. Xango relinquishes paternal "ownership" in that he accepts Toussine even though she is not the product of his "seed". Toussine therefore fails to be cast in the role of "reproduction of his phallus capital".

A mesure que la fillette perçait le soleil, avec la grâce d'une flèche de canne, elle devenait les deux yeux de cet homme...(12)

Once the circulation of goods (women) is disrupted in the patriarchal system, the "object" has access to a form of autonomy. Toussine
now "becomes" the "regard" of the Father, rather than "becoming" through his "regard". The usual passive role accorded to women is exchanged for an active participation, as Toussine begins to inscribe herself into history rather than let herself be inscribed by the male.

Toussine's non-objectivity is further supported by her love choice, Jérémie. Here is a man at one with "la mer" ("mère" or Mother). She does not threaten him for he possesses an "instinctual" understanding of this "other"("Il connaissait la mer comme le chasseur connaît les bois." (20). Jérémie does not operate from the "masculine" paradigm of separation and domination. Although their courtship follows conventional lines at the level of ritual (Jérémie asks permission of the parents to wed Toussine, they marry etc.), on a deeper subconscious level the couple are at harmony in equality and a relationship of mutual nurturing/bonding develops between them.

...tous deux s'en allaient ensemble
cultiver leur jardin et tandis qu'il bêchait, elle traçait les sillons et tandis qu'il brûlait les herbes, elle ensemençait, et le crépuscule des 
îles tombait sur leur dos... (20-21)

Their life together reads for a time like a fairy tale:

Leur prospérité commença par une
allée de gazon qu'ombrageaient
des cocotiers, et qu'ils entre-
teniaient aussi bellement que si elle devait aboutir à un château...
Tout devant l'entrée, elle avait
planté un immense parterre d'oeillets d'Inde qui fleurissaient l'année entière...Dans cet espace elle évoluait avec une sorte d'allégresse permanente, de plénitude... (21-22)

However, their prosperity is interrupted by the tragic death by burning of their daughter Méranée. The accident is triggered by "une simple petite phrase" (24) which once again unmasks language as a cover for the forces beyond the conscious control of the individual. In order to survive, Toussine must accept not only the happiness which she has experienced, but the underlying unknown or undesired aspect of existence responsible for "le malheur".

When confronted with the arbitrary sacrifice of her child, Toussine reverts back to a pre-symbolic state. She rejects the notion of an "ordering" in the universe according to language.

Toussine...ne parlait pas, ne répondait même pas à la parole, s'obstinait à regarder ailleurs, maigre à compter tous ses os, déjà morte. (26)

She rejects "life" as such and, refusing to implicate herself in its constitution, she silences herself.

Throughout Toussine's symbolic "absence", Jérémie continues to provide for the family's material needs.

Jérémie prenait encore la mer trois fois par semaine, puis ce fut deux fois, une et plus du toute... (11) tiraient leur nourriture des bois environnants, pourpier, cochléarias, bananes rouges makanya. (26)
He sustains Toussine rather than abandon her (the very opposite of the dynamics operating in the relationship between Télumée and Elie). When she has mourned "life" for three years, Toussine returns.

...Toussine, cette petite barque enlisée, la femme qu'on croyait définitivement perdue, avait quitté sa tour cartonnée et faisait, en plein soleil, quelques pas devant sa maison. (27)

By surviving the "madness" symbolized by her rejection of life, she transcends the traditional definition of "Woman".

Ils songeaient à la Toussine d'autrefois, celle en haillons, et puis la comparaient avec celle d'aujourd'hui qui n'était pas une femme, car qu'est-ce qu'une femme?... un néant, disaient-ils tandis que Toussine était tout au contraire un morceau de monde, un pays tout entier, un panache de nègresse, la barque, la voile et le vent, car elle ne s'était pas habituée au malheur. (28)

Her re-birth, as Reine Sans Nom, is physically consolidated (and socially validated) through the birth of her daughter "Victoire".

The dualistic "fiction" of male discourse is no longer relevant to Toussine, for she has gone beyond the symbolic, to a place where body and spirit are one.

In Lacanian terms, she represents both the Imaginary and the Symbolic poles at one and the same time... she stands for the part and the whole... metonymy and metaphor.5

Her evolution is contrary to the perspective adopted by Amboise after his ordeal as oppressed male Negro in a white society.
(Although he replaces the hierarchical structuring of Language with a model of integration, he still continues to adhere to the notion of "truth" or the "word"), whereas Toussine resurrects herself outside the perimeters of male discourse itself.

Her triumph over death, mirrored in the birth of "Victoire", legitimizes the role of the "body", the rejected place generally assigned to women. Through the merging of the pre-symbolic with the symbolic, the past (re-birth of Toussine) with the present (birth of Victoire), Reine Sans Nom succeeds in imposing herself as a presence "other", thereby rejecting the absence previously designated (in male discourse) as the place of women. Reine Sans Nom will also adopt a perspective based upon integration, as did Amboise, yet it will be an integration of body (touch, look, smell) and speech in its multiplicity (song, allegory, riddles, "paroles mystérieuses"). This approach to existence assures her a presence, not the symbolic place of the subject in language, but a regal position which escapes "naming", yet physically signifies the reality of her experience.

Reine Sans Nom functions as Télumée's primary role model in the text. It is by virtue of her grandmother's ability to transcend
the symbolic that Télu mée will come to realize the fallacy inherent in the words "la seule place d'une négresse sur la terre est au cimetière....". The primary vehicles used by Reine Sans Nom to transmit her perspective are "le regard" and "la parole". In contrast to the confines of a reifying "regard" such as Elie's, "le regard" of Reine Sans Nom serves to liberate Télu mée from those internalized ideological influences which have set limits upon her existence, for, in the words of Adrienne Rich: "The most notable fact that culture imprints on women is the sense of our own limits."¹⁴

Reine Sans Nom acts as a medium between Télu mée and her unconscious. Through her, Télu mée will come to realize what connections exist between what is seen (the "known") and what is unseen (the "unknown").

Sous ce regard (de Reine Sans Nom)
lointain, calme et heureux qui était le
le sien, la pièce me parut tout à coup immense et je sentis que
d'autres personnes s'y trouvaient,
pour lesquelles Reine Sans Nom m'examinait, m'embrassait main-
tenant, poussant de petits soupirs d'aise. (48)

The reciprocity in the act of "seeing" between Reine Sans Nom and Télu mée guarantees its effectiveness as a means of breaking down the one-way active/passive relationship typified in the subject/object dichotomy of male discourse. "Le regard" here is indicative of a movement between, a giving and taking. One is not only physically mirrored back to oneself, there is also a communion with and
through the eyes of the other.

Elle (Reine Sans Nom) vivait par moi, elle respirait ma bouche... (67)

Elle (Reine Sans Nom) regardait Elle avec les mêmes yeux que moi, l'entendait avec mes oreilles, l'aimait avec mon coeur. (73)

This "beyond" the verbal" communication between Reine Sans Nom and Télumée exemplifies what Evelyn Fox-Keller describes as "(the) vital element of ambiguity" indicative of an authentic relationship between the individual self and the other.

Emotional maturity, then, implies a sense of reality that is neither cut off from, nor at the mercy of, fantasy; it requires a sufficient secure sense of autonomy to allow for that vital element of ambiguity at the interface between subject and object... contemporary developments in both philosophy and physics... have made it necessary for us to look beyond the classical dichotomy to a more dynamic conception of reality...

As has already been stated, the essential difference in the perspective endorsed by Reine Sans Nom is the rejection of hierarchical structuring. In order to make manifest this perspective, she de-emphasizes the abstract or "objective" quality of the Word by fusing speech with other aspects of existence.

Elle sentait ses mots, ses phrases, possédait l'art de les arranger en images et en sons, en musique pure, en exaltation. Elle savait parler... avec une parole, on empêche un homme de se briser, ainsi exprimait-elle. (76)
Reine Sans Nom does not use words rationally as symbols in abstraction, she links words with touch and with laughter in an effort to demonstrate the interconnectedness of human experience: "grand-mère se penchait sur moi, caressait mes cheveux et leur faisait un petit compliment" (52), "Et pour assaisonner son mot, grand-mère émettait du fond de sa gorge un beau rire de négresse libre" (127). According to Reine Sans Nom, discourse is not a product of and above the individual, it is at one with lived and living experience. At this level, "la parole", like "le regard", involves communion with the other. Whereas abstract male discourse conjures up "objectified" images through its content (as with Elie and his tableaus of unattainable luxury), female or "feminine" discourse uses form to appropriate content. The creation of meaning in the text occurs precisely at the point of intersection between content and context.

...ma petite braise, chuchotait-elle (Reine Sans Nom), si tu enfourches un cheval, garde ses brides bien en main, afin qu'il ne te conduise pas. Et tandis que je me serrais contre elle, respirant son odeur de muscade, Reine Sans Nom soupirait, me caressait et reprenait lentement, en détachant ses mots, comme pour les graver au fond de mon esprit... (79)

The synthesis of a myriad of support mechanisms ("serrer", "la respiration", "le soupir", "la caresse", "la parole"), assures an authentic internalization of the given concept. "Feminine" discourse proposes a "blurring" of boundaries rather than their delination; it is the textual matrix out of which alternate or "new"
meanings are generated.

Télumée must undergo a return to the pre-symbolic in order to reconstruct her "self" as a woman. Elie's wholesale rejection of her is the catalyst for Télumée's capitulation to "madness". The rejection Télumée experiences involves both a physical repudiation of her womanhood (in that Elie leaves her for Laetitia) and a negation of her symbolic value as "Woman" (i.e. the other chosen by Elie incarnates this male-defined signifier in a way Télumée does not). The dual nature of Télumée's exclusion is evoked in the apparition of the large two-headed silhouette (Elie and Laetitia) which finally succeeds in banishing her from the "case" - a material manifestation of her "destinée de nègresse".

Télumée's "madness" lasts only three weeks, a notably shorter length of time than the three years required by Toussine to mourn "life". Yet this initial trial of Télumée's constitutes a precedence for the survival of her "self" rather than a case for her social renaming as a "presence". Toussine's triumph was manifold and thereby honoured by the community (she not only personally survived "le malheur", she also brought her family through the anguish with her and reproduced "victory"). Télumée's re-birth is of less importance in that it is individual in nature and the outcome of a fairly commonplace tragedy (man leaves woman). This initial ordeal lays the cornerstone upon which to build an authentic self image. Surviving the loss of Elie provides her with the strength to endure subsequent encounters with "le malheur" (the death of Reine Sans Nom,
the cane fields, the loss of Amboise and Sonore, and, finally, her struggle with l'ange Médard).

Télumée's return to the symbolic order is facilitated by the system of support offered equally by the community and Reine Sans Nom. Earlier on in the text, Reine Sans Nom explains to Télumée that she is defined according to her physical and symbolic place in the community.

...(Reine Sans Nom) se mit à tracer une forme à ses pieds...On eût dit le réseau d'une toile d'araignée, dont les fils se croisaient sur de minuscules et dérisoires petites cases... - Tu le vois, les cases ne sont rien sans les fils qui les relient les unes aux autres, et ce que tu perçois l'après-midi sous ton arbre n'est rien d'autre qu'un fil, celui qui tisse le village et qu'il lance jusqu'à toi, ta case. (127)

Reine Sans Nom transposes Lacan’s abstract notion of the symbolic order into which the human child is born ("...c'est l'ordre symbolique qui est, pour le sujet, constituant") into a depiction of human existence as a networking of filaments which supports and sustains the individual. She emphasizes the interconnectedness of the community, rather than the alienation of the "self".

It is this community which initially reaches out to Télumée in an effort to save her from madness.

Ainsi les gens allaient et venaient devant ma case et de temps en temps une femme s'échappait d'un groupe,
levait au ciel des bras suppliants
et modulait d'une voix aigüe...
naissance, naissez pour changer nos
destins... et l'entendant j'avais
le sentiment étrange qu'elle me
lançait un fil dans l'air, un fil
très léger en direction de ma case,
et il me venait alors un sourire. (160-161)

However, it is Reine Sans Nom who finally succeeds in resuscitating
her granddaughter by demonstrating to her that she still does exist
as a physical presence (a woman).

Un jour, venant à moi sans une parole,
elle tira brusquement une aiguille
de son corsage et m'en piqua le
bras. - Tu vois bien, dit-elle,
que tu n'es pas un esprit, puisque
tu saignes... (166)

This more "feminist" rendition of the Sleeping Beauty myth presents
the female voice as savior to women suffering the maléfic influences
of Patriarchy. Immediately after, Télamée's awakening, Reine Sans
Nom proffers spiritual redemption by confirming the value of her
other or inner "face" through "le regard".

Sur l'instant de la piqûre, penché
tout contre moi, le visage de Reine
Sans Nom m'était apparu tout aplâtii,
écrasé, sans bouche ni nez ni oreilles,
e une sorte de moignon informe d'où
saillaient seulement ses beaux yeux,
qui semblaient exister indépendamment
de tout le reste. (166-167)

Télamée replenishes her "self" in her grandmother, and consequently
is able to break her silence. The importance of the abstract thus
attenuated, Télamée is able to effect a return to the socio-symbolic
order (socio-symbolic in that she returns both to the community and to Language). The re-birth of her "self" is inaugurated by "le chant", a subversion of discourse which fuses the word with music and rhythm. The baptism which follows her singing spiritually validates her re-birth.

Toujours chantant ainsi, je pris en courant le chemin de la rivière et m'y jetai, m'y trempai et m'y retrempai un certain nombre de fois. (167)

Télumée is now prepared to infiltrate the realm of the symbolic for she herself has validated what male discourse had rejected.

After Reine Sans Nom's death, Télumée retreats to "morne La Folie". When Amboise approaches her, she hesitates until she is convinced that he sees and wants her as a woman, and does not simply feel sorry for her as a fallen "Woman".

...je me demandai s'il voulait me faire rire moi-même Télumée, Télumée du morne La Folie, ou s'il voulait faire rire une jeune femme une sans espérance. (205)

A relationship of mutual support and nurturing develops between Télumée and Amboise. They achieve the interplay and ambiguity which were characteristic of the bond between Reine Sans Nom and her granddaughter. The practice of give and take in this instance reassures Télumée of her intrinsic self-worth.

When Télumée forgives l'ange Médard ("l'Homme à la cervelle qui danse" (230), she reproduces the movement of the "feminine".)
She transgresses Doxa by resisting a static representation of him as the incarnation of evil. Télumée recognizes l'ange Médard as a mirror image of herself when she admits to him "moi aussi, j'ai la cervelle qui danse" (232). As she validates him as a "presence" she re-enforces her own self-worth.

...je lui dis d'une voix claire et distincte, que je m'efforçai de rendre aussi paisible que son nouveau visage...nous voyons les corbeaux et nous disons: ils parlent une langue étrangère...les corbeaux parlent leur propre langue et nous ne la comprenons pas... (237-238)

By allowing her rival to die in dignity she liberates him from a role of devalorized "object": "elle étend son ombre protectrice comme pour dénoncer la méchanceté du nègre." Télumée's act of forgiveness inaugurates a new perception which confirms the nobility of the Black race. The community re-names her "Télumée Miracle", for through her own courage she has transformed the Black's symbolic absence into a vital presence.

...chère femme, l'ange Médard a vécu en chien et tu l'as fait mourir en homme...depuis que tu es arrivée au morne La Folie, nous avons vainement cherché un nom qui te convienne... quant à nous, désormais, nous t'appellerons: Télumée Miracle... (239)

In Pluie et vent, "Mothering" is a term synonomous with the production of new meaning; textual production. To reinforce this definition, Simone Schwarz-Bart designates the grandmother as primary
nurturer, thereby destabilizing the traditional mother/daughter dyad, and effectively severing "Motherhood" from its biological implications. Télumée's function as a woman is to recreate meaning through the textual matrix which merges form with content. The title of "Télumée Miracle" depicts precisely this movement or merging between the self (Télumée) indicative of form, and the "other" reality (Miracle) indicative of content. As Télumée incarnates the "feminine", she succeeds in displacing the "I" from his position of dominance. The "I" can no longer stand for that which is independent of or isolated from the "other", "I" becomes the point of fluidity between self and other, self and environment, self and unconscious.

...la grande différence entre mon langage et celui de l'homme, est que le mien est fait pour être saisi, pour établir un lien avec l'autre, alors que le sien m'a toujours fait fuir, m'a toujours maintenue à distance.8

The constant textual reiteration of the "feminine" consolidates the role of networking in the generation of new meaning. This networking (the "va et vient" between the "I" and the "other") extends beyond the perimeters of the text to include the reader. The act of reading mirrors the "feminine" of the text in that it also unites content (words) with form (reading). The continuous interplay between reader and text is imitative of the give and take inherent in the relationship of Télumée with Reine Sans Nom.

Télumée has no biological children.
...voyant les enfants des cannes je me demandais où étaient les miens,... dans mon ventre ils étaient, agrippés à mes boyaux et c'est là qu'ils devaient rester, tout au fond de mes intestins, jusqu'à nouvel ordre, me disais-je. (199)

Through her storytelling, however, she sets the framework for the "nouvel ordre". Telumée inscribes herself as the "other" presence, and redefines textual production as a transcendance of linear, abstract discourse. Pluie et vent posits a re-working of the traditional "story" with its coherent, structured narrative.

...les gens...contemplant la scène qui se déroulaient sous leurs yeux et s'efforçant d'en tirer une histoire, déjà, une histoire qui ait un sens, avec un commencement et une fin, comme il est nécessaire, ici-bas, si l'on veut s'y retrouver dans le décousu des destinées. (238)

What the novel relates is the existence of the "féminine", the flux between self and other, self and environment, self and unconscious. Telumée stands for the end (telos), yet not an end in the sense that Maryse Condé views it.

Puisque le monde se clôt avec elles (les femmes Lougandor) point n'est besoin de s'interroger sur son devenir et ses transformations possibles. Alors on devrait voir là l'expression de l'angoisse devant le futur... 9

Telumée represents the end of a traditional hierarchical order which refutes and represses any "other" reality. Her "speech" marks the cessation of biologically assigned titles and fixed gender functions
such as "Mother", "Woman", "feminine sexuality", and carves out a place for women in the socio-symbolic order.
Footnotes - Chapter III

5. Evelyn Fox-Keller, Gender and Science, p. 84.
CHAPTER IV

Return to Guadeloupe
As a consequence of slavery, the Black come to apprehend his universe from the perspective of a "victim". This perspective mirrors that of a woman in that each gives rise to a discourse circumscribed by the limits of socio-economic oppression. Because such a discourse is created in alienation from the power elite, rather than unity with it, it acquires an "inferior" status in the Doxa's hierarchical structure. The dominant ideology thus is able to affix negative value to Black culture due to its subordinate hierarchical position. The outcome of this situation is that, for the Whites, Black society becomes a repository for the "vices" repudiated by their own puritanical dogmas. Sexual inhibition in particular attributes a role of "collective unconscious" to the repressed group.

The following tirade by Mme. Desaragne exemplifies the process of negative projection operative in the White textual discourse.

...savez-vous au juste qui vous êtes, vous les nègres d'ici?...
savez-vous seulement à quoi vous avez échappé?...sauvages et barbares...à danser nus...on vous emmène ici, et comment vivez-vous?...dans la boue, le vice, les bacchanales... (p. 93)

It is not simply word choice here which conveys Mme. Desaragne's aversion to Black culture, it is the assumption of her discourse that its own interpretation is to be privileged at the expense of the (putative) voice of the "other". It is a discourse which takes its own subject as the only possible point of origin for all knowledge. The authoritative nature of White speech stems from the
assumption of power, indicated by the superiority of White socio-economic status. Mme. Desaragne assigns a positive or negative value to what she perceives by virtue of her subjective dominance over the "other". Télumée's discourse represents the other, the submissive, the "feminine": Créole. However, she challenges Mme. Desaragne's authority when she refuses the role of "object". Télumée does not bend to the White woman's will; as Mme. Desaragne speaks to her "otherness", her response incarnates the dignity of her "self".

-C'est bien, savez-vous repasser?
-Oui.
-Je veux dire repasser, c'est pas bourrer de coups de carreaux des drill; sans couleur.
-Je sais, c'est glacer des chemises en popeline avec des cols cassés. (90)

Télumée is not lured into a false complicity with the dominant discourse. In the words of Jean Bernabé: "Télumée refuse de jouer le jeu de la complicité linguistique":

Du point de vue des rapports linguistiques que Télumée entretient avec les gens de ce groupe dominant, il convient de noter que la narratrice s'exprime toujours dans un français grammatical. C'est par la bouche des maîtres et non par celle de la domestique que se produit la remontée du créole.  

For Télumée, Language is a system which embraces the integrity and separateness of the "other" or the "object". Her self-worth literally translates itself through her manipulation of discourse; her own "subjectivity" rises in opposition to the White woman's sovereignty.
Télumée's world view is dynamic rather than static. She incarnates Simone Schwarz-Bart's definition of the Guadeloupian perspective: "(une) façon d'appréhender le monde, de ne pas vouloir calculer, de se donner entièrement à l'instant". In the text, it is the movement or instability of this perspective which uproots the unity of the dominant view. As Language is thus freed from the limited spectrum of White colonial existence, words are unleashed from their positive or negative values. The principle and purpose of this perspective is the "feminine" as defined by Sally Silvers and Abigail Child: "(the feminine defeats) coherent subjectivity on which capitalism idealism is based - (points) up multiple contradictions which are clearly delineated and not unspoken, silent, taped shut".

The "feminine" self experiences Language as a struggle of contraries rather than as a relationship to authority. Pluie et vent as a text mirrors this relationship through a subversion of the traditional whole or unified novellistic "reality". Ernest Pépin describes the narrative strategy of Pluie et vent as "un discours oral rapporté par écrit". In this first instance Pluie et vent subverts genre: it performs a mutual transcendence of the oral and literal. At another level, the text prompts a subversion of "discourse" through the medium of its own "creolized" French.
J'ai l'impression de mettre, dans cette espèce de langue française que j'écris à ma manière créole, l'esprit de notre langue.6

This subversion is omnipresent; it affects both form and content. Pépin describes this process of transcendence as two "codes" which "se côtoient, s'affrontent, s'interpénètrent".7 However, not only does this description dichotomize Schwarz-Bart's universe, Pépin's confrontational masculine terminology forcibly stems/channels the sensation of flow indicative of the author's "feminine" style. Nevertheless, his elucidation of the overall structural process at work in Pluie et vent is quite valid.

Les nombreuses traductions de phrases créoles, les nombreuses phrases à référent créole, les proverbes, les contes, les chants, ressortissent à l'oralité tandis que l'écriture règit de façon complexe l'économie du texte.8

The orality of Pluie et vent challenges the primacy of the abstract. The work's prismatic structure incorporates Language in its multiplicity. The various facétés of the work infect/reflect each other; oral/written, Creole/French, proverb-poetry-parable/narrative, feminine-spirit/masculine-abstract.9 As the spiritual encroaches upon the rational or material, there is a sensual liberation of the abstract. A parallel exists at this point between the "feminine" and the Black for, in the oppressor's eyes, they share a role of sexual/sensual "object". The explicit sensuality of the Black culture both tempts and threatens the White as a manifestation of his own repressed
desires. While the dominant discourse (be it White or patriarchal) rejects the body, the discourse of the "other" accepts and rejoices in it. A Guadeloupian woman, has claimed in her autobiography that "Nos ancêtres étaient nés avec cet amour de la propreté, cet amour pour leur corps." The use of the term "propreté" to depict the Guadeloupian's attitude directly conflicts with Mme. Desaragne's earlier association of "la boue" with Téleméê's culture.

White Christian dogma's equating of the sexual body with evil (due to the advent of Original Sin) is not relevant to the Guadeloupian perspective, for, in the Black world, the flesh and the soul are not separate entities.

L'homme n'est pas composé d'une âme et d'un corps. Son corps perçu, nommé tantôt kò, tantôt kadav, est habité et traversé par les forces spirituelles qui font d'un homme un corps réel et vivant et non pas un cadavre (squelette).

The Guadeloupian Blacks do not view existence as a perpetual battle for control between the soul's "purity" and the wicked ways of the flesh. They understand the spirit as an integral part of "le corps" which animates the physical body through the flux of positive and negative (spiritual) forces.

L'expression kenbe kò (tenir son corps) signifie se contrôler, contrôler sa vie psychologique pour que vivent en équilibre les bons et les mauvais esprits qui la dirigent...
The pertinent phrase here is "vivent en équilibre", for it evokes the notion of synthesis which emerges from Reine Sans Nom's discourse. Reine Sans Nom leaves to Télumée, as her legacy, this belief in the "relativity" of all elements in existence.

(Télumée) - Qu'est-ce qui est donc naturel à l'homme, le bonheur ou le malheur?
- C'est selon, me dit (Reine Sans Nom)...ton affaire est de briller maintenant, alors brille et le jour où l'infortune te dira: me voilà, tu auras au moins brillé. (143)

Her vision of life as a continual struggle of contraries defeats the idea of one unity in discourse.

Télumée's presence creates a (con)textual dissidence in Belle-Feuille's homogeneous atmosphere. Contextual in that, although the reader is aware of an undercurrent to the flow of White authority, the Whites themselves are not. Télumée's refusal to comply with the negative White projections she encounters constitute a personal triumph over the Desaragnes' authority. With Reine Sans Nom as her role model she is able to maintain a positive self-image during her stay at Belle-Feuille.

Je ne songeais qu'à manœuvrer, me faufiler à droite, à gauche, avec une seule idée au milieu de mon coeur: il me fallait être là, comme un caillou dans une rivière, simplement posé dans le fond du lit et glisse, glisse l'eau par-dessus moi, l'eau trouble ou claire, mousseuse, calme ou désordonnée, j'étais une petite pierre. (p. 92)
The power of the White lies in the system which he represents. The name Desaragne is significative: "Le nom Desaragne, renvoie à l'ancien français "aragne" (rappel de la période inaugurale de la colonisation) lui-même dérivé du latin "aranea", qui signifie araignée." Téluémée's self-possession allows her to avoid entanglement in the web of White ideology.

"...je servais et desservais, souriais à la ronde, manoeuvrais, esquissais un pas sur la droite, la gauche, ne songeant qu'à me préserver, à demeurer intacte sous ces paroles de blancs..." (97)

Her victory is both "feminine" and Black for her subject position incorporates gender and colour. The Guadéloupian perspective which she reflects merges with the "feminine" in its subversion of a "dominant" subjective economy.

A luxuriant subtext of poetic imagery re-emerges throughout the novel to mirror, at a structural level, the "undercurrent" of alternate discourse signalled by Téluémée's presence at Belle-Feuille. Simone Schwarz-Bart's intertwining of human and vegetal elements produces metaphors which exude a sensuality not unlike that associated with a "jouissance" of the body. Her metaphors draw a composite picture of Nature which includes "man" in much the same way as the Guadéloupian perception of the body includes "les esprits". The following description of Victoire, taken from the text, illustrates the "organic" interplay typical of Schwarz-Bart's images.
Les années l'avaient juste un peu ouverte, et elle était maintenant, sous le soleil, une gousse de vanille éclatée qui livre enfin tout son parfum. (45)

As the "poetic" or "verdant" subtext permeates the text, it performs what could be termed a sensual "contamination" of the abstract. The metaphors translate an ongoing communion between the body (self) and the environment ("other").

Si elle (Victoire) se tenait dans l'ombre, elle colorait l'air qui l'entourait immédiatement, et c'était comme si sa propre présence suscitait alentour une auréole de fumée. (33)


A mesure que notre sueur pénétrait cette terre, elle devenait nôtre, se mettait à l'odeur de nos corps...
Un carré d'ignames pacala avait surgi le long de la berge, et tout autour, des centaines de vrilles enroulaient leurs lianes tendres et épineuses, à la manière tourmentée de l'âme qui fournit à l'âme les liens qui la ligotent. (212)

The manifest sensuality of these images reclaims "sexuality" from the realm of the abstract. Accordingly, the first sexual encounter between Elie and Télumée is celebrated as a mystical or spiritual interaction with the forest.
Un immense rire qui sortait de toute la forêt s'est emparé de nous, cependant que nos deux cerfs-volants partaient en errance dans le ciel. (118)

The physical act of copulation is not treated as separate from the overall context or environment which generates it. Sexuality is alluded to through a natural sensuality and not named or defined as such.

... je l'arrossais. (Amboise) d'une eau parfumée à la citronnelle que j'avais eu soin de mettre à tiédir au soleil, depuis le matin. L'eau coulait en murmuran contre son corps et l'odeur de l'eau pénétrait l'air, qui s'imbibait comme de verdure, tandis qu'Amboise s'ébrouait et faisait de longues giclées qui me transpergaient, me mouillaient, m'emportaient. (214)

Schwarz-Bart's images defy and subvert abstract, linear discourse. Her style is mimetic as it reflects and reproduces the textual matrix of integration on both a structural level (through the interplay of text and subtext), and on a "linguistic" level (where natural and human elements are portrayed as interdependent). The whole or unified perspective represented by the Doxa is undermined by the multiformity of relations presented and represented in the novel's prismatic structure. This general phenomenon of transcendence, which recurs at every level, recognizes and validates alternative social realities. Pluie et vent's "discourse" embraces diversity and nonconformity within linguistic constructs such as "mother", "woman" and "Black", for it neither assigns nor endorses fixed meanings.
In keeping with this overall perspective, Reine Sans Nom supports her daughter's choice of self-fulfillment over motherhood despite social disapproval.

Cette union fondamentale de l'homme et des éléments de la nature, aspects différents quoique semblables d'une même force vitale, est une caractéristique essentielle du mythe.\textsuperscript{14}

Condé's view of the mythic as "le chant général de la terre" fails to distinguish between Antillean myths and those of the White culture. René Méril, on the other hand, does set up an opposition between the myths of the colonizers and those of the oppressed or colonized. He sees Antillean myth as specific to the context of slavery.

C'est de ne rien contrôler et de n'être sur de rien - ni du passé, ni du présent, ni encore moins de l'avenir - qui fait de la société antillaise le lieu rêvé des mythologies et des névroses passées et futuristes pour supporter, dissimuler, fuir un insupportable présent.\textsuperscript{15}

The mythic or "l'imaginaire" constitutes a collective "symptomatic" reaction to what Méril terms "les mythologies de la colonisation Réactionnelles".\textsuperscript{16}

(les mythologies antillaises) surgissent...en réaction...au sens où l'on dit d'un malade qu'il réagit à son mal par la fièvre ou la névrose.\textsuperscript{17}

Antillean myth developed in response to the insufferable conditions of slavery. It plays a cathartic role in the drama of Guadeloupe. Dany Bébel-Gisler also interprets myth as a defense. She views "l'imaginaire et le symbolique" as essential components of Antillean
existence which subvert and combat the memory of "la violence esclavagiste...cette histoire inscrite dans le corps et dans la langue créole". 18

In Pluie et vent, the cane fields represent the ultimate paradigm of colonial oppression. The omniscient power of the "Usine" permeates the life of every Black worker.

(les femmes) anxieuses d'arriver aux vingt piles qui constituent une journée, vingt piles de vingt-cinq paquets, dix mille coups de coutelas, quelques pièces de zinc aux initiales de l'Usine, morue sèche, huile, sel, farine France et rhum de l'Usine, mélasse de l'Usine, sucre brut de l'Usine au prix obligatoire de l'Usine, passe-passe, deux sous pour un. (199-200)

The physical loss of Reine Sans Nom and man Cia leaves Télumée in a state of material penury. As a result, she has no alternative but to offer herself as an exchange commodity to the White market ("Si je ne voulais pas mourir de faim, avant la récolte, il me fallait rentrer dans les champs de canne de l'Usine" (195) ). Her work in the cane fields brings Télumée face to face with the reality of Black subjugation.

Là, dans le feu du ciel et des piquants, je transpirais toute l'eau que ma mère avait déposée dans mon corps. Et je compris enfin ce qu'est le nègre... (200)

At this point in her life Télumée reaches the stage of "une femme sans espérance". Yet even as she is brought low by the degradation
of "slavery", the voice of collective Black strength reaches out to her.

Le temps était venu de combattre la sueur, la fatigue, la débandade des âmes et brusquement, Amboise lança un caladja entraînant au-dessus du troupeau... (203)

Hearing Amboise's song in the fields shores up her resistance to despair. "Le chant" acts as a lifeline which re-unites Télumée with the positive aspects of her past. It furnishes her with a window onto the Black heritage, and in so doing strengthens her ability to withstand oppression. "Le chant" is an embodiment of Antillean myth which provides a catharsis for her suffering.

...soudain, je ne sus comment, ma voix me quitta et s'élèva très au-dessus des autres, comme dans les temps anciens, pergante, vive et gaie, et Amboise se tourna vers moi avec étonnement, et mon visage était baigné de larmes. (204)

This access to a cultural identity is also achieved through the ritual of dance. Télumée and Amboise's ceremonial "housewarming" incorporates both song and dance in its celebration. The movement of dance liberates the individual from the constraints of everyday existence. Dance possesses a transforming power which purges and cleanses the collective psyche.

Amboise suivait (Olympe) à la trace, et lorsqu'elle semblait redescendre sur terre, il imprimait à son tambour une détente qui l'arrachait de
This articulation of mythic ritual re-enforces the Black's sense of self-worth. The intuitive knowledge of a strong cultural heritage puts slavery into perspective as an imposed system. Black victimization thus is understood to be a condition of White oppression and not a condition of Black existence.

...nous nous sentions pareils au cabri attaché dans la savane, et nous savions que la vérité de notre sort n'était pas en nous-mêmes, mais dans l'existence de la lame. (219)

Myth functions as a network to support the individual when his self-image is threatened by external forces. As a collective show of force, myth is also enough to threaten White authority. Amboise's song translates this latent menace of Black power.

Et son chant monta si haut ce matin-là que les commandeurs à cheval, dans le lointain, s'assurèrent de la présence d'une arme, sous les fontes de leurs selles. (205)

Once again, Black experience comes full circle to be re-united with the "feminine", as subjective presence ceases to be defined solely
in relation to authority. By not speaking Creole to the Desaragnes, Télumée imposes herself as absence within the Doxa, thus undermining its authority.

Télumée ne s'oppose pas à ses maîtres car elle n'attend d'eux ni légitimation ni excommunication. Elle est, et de ce fait, leur résiste. 19

The female characters in the text are equally recognized by their absence from the place of "Woman". The articulation and validation of relative "contextual" truths acts as a catalyst in the subversion of the dominant discourse. The textual tapestry of Schwarz-Bart's images does not portray division: "the synäesthesia essentially (is) a reflection of relations not dichotomies". 20 Pluie et vent describes an unfolding dynamic whose momentum enfranchises the "other" from the confines of an abstract, masculine "objectivity".
Footnotes - Chapter IV


2. Ibid., p. 124.


8. Ibid., p. 91.

9. I am not using the term "Spirit" here in the Jungian sense but rather to denote the animating principle or "will".


11. Ibid., p. 303.

12. Ibid., p. 303.


14. Maryse Condé, La Parole des femmes, p. 66.


16. Ibid., p. 37.

17. Ibid., p. 37.


Conclusion

The name "Lougandor" establishes one more bridge between the realm of human experience and that of Nature, for its etymon "Lougan" signifies "un carré de terre". The Lougandor tradition is one of a wisdom rooted in the body: the founder of the lineage ("Lougan"/ "la terre"/ the "feminine" body) is Minerve, the roman goddess of wisdom. Pluie et vent relates the reunion between what is "known" to man and what lies just beyond his reach ("les esprits", "le miracle"): "Les Lougandor ont toujours aimé survoler, ils s'accrochaint des ailes et ils se hissaient" (32). The Lougandors, a matrifocal family, are the medium of this reunion. Through their re-appropriation of the unknown, an "other" reality, they are able to create a discourse which embraces the totality of existence.

The weaving together of the woof of the "self" and the warp of the "other" is what creates the tapestry of Guadeloupian experience that is Pluie et vent. The medium, or the weaver, is Télumée, and she works with the threads of "speaking experience" passed on to her by Reine Sans Nom. Télumée makes comprehensible in human terms that which the Doxa has rejected or repressed. Her "regard" liberates the object as it pierces the persona or outer "face" - the Doxa's fiction.

...je (Télumée) regardais...man Cia, à la recherche de ce qui en elle différait des autres humain;... et plus je la voyais, plus je la trouvais pareille à tout le monde, une quelconque petite vieille de Fond-Zombi. (58)
Telumée incarnates the complexities of a "feminine" approach to existence. She is the "verre en cristal", the textual matrix of integration; a mirror of the novel's crystalline or prismatic structure.

Pluie et vent retrieves both women and Blacks from the role of "object" as it upholds the relative "truths" of their alternative voices. The novel is an acknowledgement of the Guadeloupian's intrinsic self-worth which becomes a part of the collective unconscious at the moment of reading.

Je pense, voyez-vous, comme les Africains, que lorsqu'un vieux meurt, toute une bibliothèque disparaît... c'est une espèce de mémoire que j'ai voulu restituer...

Pluie et vent is a story of régénération; a regeneration of the female "self". Telumée's affiliation and identification with "la terre" provides her with the support to counter her alienation as "Woman" in patriarchal discourse.

Both the land and woman have been granted the power to produce life. While each must endure the vagaries of existence (souffrir) and ultimately die (mourir), each has the power to begin the process once again (renaître). The three verbs fuse into one another and highlight the theme of endurance: endurance of the land and of the island of Guadeloupe, but more important, endurance of the spirit of the Caribbean and of its people.

Telumée's articulation of her own discourse, the "Miracle", is what
guarantees the survival of her people. An integral part of the Lougandor heritage is a rejection of "le discours fétichiste régnant". When Télumée is objectified at Belle-Feuille as a "faiseuse de béchamel" she need only return to Fond-Zombi, where Reine Sans Nom confirms her existence as "une personne humaine" (102). It is the Blacks' collective recognition of their value as individuals which will ensure the survival of their race.

...si Dieu blâme et s'il tue, qu'il tue,...mais ce qu'il ne peut empêcher c'est qu'un nègre lui montre de quel poids pèse sur la terre, à ses yeux, l'âme d'un autre nègre. (180)

Pluie et vent was the first novel Simone Schwarz-Bart wrote alone (in 1967 she published Un Plat de porc aux bananes vertes in collaboration with her husband, André Schwarz-Bart). Her second solo effort, Ti Jean l'Horizon, appeared in 1979. Ti Jean l'Horizon recounts the mythic voyage of its hero, Ti Jean, across Africa. Ti Jean relives the adventures of the Guadeloupian collective unconscious as he effects a return to his primal roots: "Mother" Africa. Whereas Pluie et vent explores a woman-centred strength, therefore lending itself more readily to an analysis from a "feminist" point of view (since it deals with the sphere of the "object"), the motivating face in Ti Jean l'Horizon, is the development of male or "phallic" power, (the realm of the "subject").
La seule chose qu'ils remarquèrent, ce fut la façon dont sa petite queue se dressait au milieu des combats de son âge... Émerveillés, les gens prirent plaisir à provoquer sa colère juste pour voir l'organe se mettre debout, hérisssé, tendu comme une fronde... Le Bon Dieu fournit toujours davantage que l'esprit de l'homme ne peut imaginer, il fournit tant et plus et voilà, l'enfant d'Eloise (Ti Jean) avait hérité d'une verge en or!... 

However, without Télumée's vindication of the "other" reality (the "feminine", "la terre", "la Guadeloupe"), Ti Jean would not have been assured a centred position of "subject" from which to enact his perilous voyage. It is Télumée's "feminine" discourse which permits Ti Jean to hasard and to survive re-engulfment by the Mother (Africa).

A major theme of Pluie et vent which re-emerges in Ti Jean l'Horizon is that of "communion" between the self and the other.

Le regard de l'homme ne suffit pas, murmura (Ti Jean) un jour en souriant, et il faut être au moins deux pour s'assurer d'une chose, fût-ce de la réalité d'un brin d'herbe...

Both novels highlight interaction or networking as the main purpose of Language: "Une langue est avant tout communication". Séverine Chaillou's works illustrate Language in its fluidity, as they release words from the dichotomy of male discourse. Pluie et vent stands as a testament to courage and liberation against the repression and alienation of the dominant ideology. The novel provides a source of limitless strength to the muted, tentative voice of the "other".
Footnotes - Conclusion


5. Ibid., p. 270.

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