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Babacar Dieng

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**Colonial(ist) Education in Two Caribbean
Bildungsromane : School as a Site of Mis-education in
George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953) and
Merle Hodge's *Crick Crack, Monkey* (1970)**

In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault posits a tight relationship between power and knowledge as he conjectures that the exercise of power is often buttressed by a system carefully organized to docilize the colonized bodies and make them bend to colonial authority. Indeed, Foucault lists the school among the institutions that act as machines that serve to subject the body, use it, and transform it so as to make it docile through enclosure in space, controlled activities, and discipline. Thus, like the panopticon the school is a laboratory of power and a site of docilization and construction of normalized judgement. Docilization is based on disciplining which functions as a double system of gratification-punishment. The colonial powers, the British metropolis in particular, were aware of this subtle relationship between power and knowledge and conscious that they needed to devise systems to make the colonized appropriate their cultural capital and consider domination as a natural phenomenon. Indeed, colonialism was not merely appropriation of lands through violence; it was a vast system accompanied by an incredible production of knowledge and supported by a carefully devised ideological machine.

Scholars such as Edward Said and Frantz Fanon have theorized this hidden face of colonialism. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said argued that colonialism was supported by considerable ideological productions that "include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination" (9). Frantz Fanon also addressed the ideological power of language in *Black Skins, White Masks* (1952) and the colonizer's insidious formation of knowledge to maintain his domination over the colonized in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). He explains in the latter that the colonial enterprise rested, in a large measure, on the colonizer's erasure and negation of the history, civi-

lization, and culture of the dominated as a means of legitimating colonial hegemony as a benevolent mission. As a matter of fact, once he took over the natives' land, the colonizer also put in place a powerful ideological machine aiming at docilizing and subtly convincing them of their innate inferiority and inculture. The colonizer devalued everything that was local and praised the metropolis and western civilization. Although religion played an important role as well, the colonial ideological discourses were mostly disseminated through schools, which played an important function in the docilization of future adults; it was a site of mis-education. For this reason, Ngugi relevantly commented that the colonial system "produced the kind of education which nurtured subservience, self-hatred, and mutual suspicion [...]. Society was a racial pyramid: the European minority at the top, the Asian in the middle, and the African forming the base. The educational system reflected this inequality" (*Homecoming* 14).

Since the mid-century, many creative works produced by writers from formerly colonized territories or dominated categories of the African diaspora have scrutinized, in what can be termed "liberational or awakening narratives," the past to unmask the effects of hegemonic colonial practices—cultural as well as economic—on their people. Amongst others, issues such as identity crisis, cultural exclusion, economic exploitation under dominant powers, and the subtle dissemination of the dominant powers' discourses remain central preoccupations in their narrative discourses. George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953), Merle Hodge's *Crick Crack, Monkey* (1970), Mongo Beti's *Ville Cruelle* (1954), Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *Petals of Blood* (1964), and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) belong to this category of liberational narratives aiming at changing marginalized people's mindsets in their process of analyzing the past. Significantly, all these "liberational" narratives depict school as an important Ideological State Apparatus in the colonial or dominating machine. Indeed, school constitutes a major site of circulation of colonial ideology in Merle Hodge's *Crick Crack Monkey*, George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*, Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *Petals of Blood*, Michelle Cliff's *Abeng*, and Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*. In Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, the author shows that it helps disseminate the Eurocentric ideology of the dominant culture.

In this article, I would like to devote time to the study of the school as a site of propagation of colonial ideology focusing on two narratives: *In the Castle of My Skin* by Barbadian author George Lamming, and *Crick Crack Monkey* by female Trinidadian writer Merle Hodge. My intention is to discuss how the metropolis encoded itself on the colonized bodies through subtle

practices disseminated in colonial schools so as to reinforce its power and make it accepted as natural by the colonial subjects. To achieve this purpose, I will first present the theories I invite in this analysis to illustrate the ideological function of school in general. Then, basing my arguments on narrative evidence, I will endeavour to show how the British colonizer used school to brainwash children and perpetuate its domination over the West Indian colonies, and how the effects of colonial education continued to operate on the colonized subjects even when colonies became autonomous.

It is generally accepted that the primary role of school is to educate and maximize citizens' potential to evolve in society, even though its objectives may vary depending on the types of society. Education is considered not only as a liberator of minds, but also a tool for social mobility in societies, especially industrial ones. Even though they have different definitions and views on schooling, educational scientists more or less agree that it is a "social and cultural enterprise in which different communities and institutional groups instantiate the themes, perspectives, concepts, and routines that organize and give meaning to their lives" (197).

However, scholars have also demonstrated that beyond its performing innocent social and cultural objectives, school has also been instrumentalized as a site of ideological dissemination by forms of powers. Pierre Bourdieu discusses the ideological role of school in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, more specifically in the second part of his work entitled "Structure and the Habitus." Bourdieu's work describes school as a potential tool for the dominant group to strengthen its power over non-dominant ones. Bourdieu posits that the dominant group has exclusive and total control over the discourses circulating in school. As a matter of fact, for Bourdieu, it is the culture of the dominant group that controls the economic, social and political resources that are embodied in schools, and school takes the cultural capital of the dominant group as the natural and only proper sort of capital. He also argues that to succeed, an individual of a non-dominant background has to move from the bottom cycle to the top by appropriating and acquiring the right cultural capital. School is thus a site of appropriation of cultural capital which can take the form of habituses, habituses being the ways cultures are embodied in the individuals. Consequently, it facilitates the process of embourgeoisement in social terms or assimilation when referring to cultural or ethnic groups. It makes the member of the non-dominant group acquire, through habituses, new cultural capital to the detriment of his own.

Neo-Marxist scholar Louis Althusser also presents school as an instrument of propagation and dissemination of ideological discourses and reinforcement of power. He posits that power is not always transparent in its exercise because it operates in open and disguised ways. For him, power is a force which functions in manners that are subtle, disguised, and accepted as ordinary everyday practice. Althusser distinguished two main structures of power that operate simultaneously and complementarily in modern societies: (Repressive) State Apparatus (SA) and Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). The Repressive State Apparatus is the state power exercised through its potential capability to cause harm or pain instrumentalizing repressive administrative and political bodies such as the law and the police. The second structure of power or ISA—the one we are interested in—operates through ideology, and it can include school systems, films and news media. Their stated objectives and accepted roles are to educate, entertain and inform, but they can help indoctrinate people into seeing the world in a certain way and/or accepting certain identities as their own within that world.

In Althusser's view, the ISA which is a site where the state's ideology is disseminated in hidden ways is the most influential of the two power structures. For him, the ideological power conveyed through ISAs is far more extensive and potent than the coercive one of the SA. It is concealed in the textbooks we read, the films we watch, and the music we hear. It makes us accept a particular world. Ideology thus becomes a machine by which we structure ourselves and define who we are (Althusser 143-47). Thus, from Althusser's perspective there is a clear and tight link between state-formation and individual socialization and school constitutes one of the most important tools to shape the individual in a certain way and make him accept as his own and appropriate an identity.

Scholar Anne Allison, in her article entitled "The Lunch-Box as Ideological State Apparatus," reinforces the position of Althusser when she argues that the universe that we live in is symbolically constructed and the constructions of our cultural symbols are endowed with or have the potential for power because culture is not necessarily innocent and power not necessarily transparent. She also conjectures that the way we see reality depends, in a large measure, on how we live the latter because "the conventions by which we recognize our universe are also those by which each of us assumes his or her place and behavior within that universe" (195). For her, ideology makes us accept the way the world is and naturalizes our environments by making the daily routines of our life "familiar, desirable, and simply our own." Allison elaborates that culture is thus doubly constructive: it con-

structs people and specific worlds. Building on this theoretical approach, she shows how school is instrumentalized in Japan to shape children.

In the same vein, this article intends to demonstrate how school has been used in colonial society to disseminate knowledge aiming at docilizing the colonized and making him accept domination as a natural phenomenon for centuries. It will first analyze significant and relevant parts of George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953) before discussing Merle Hodge's *Crick Crack Monkey* (1970). It is worth noting that both Lamming and Hodge exploit the same genre—the novel of development or *Bildungsroman*—a genre privileged by liberational novels aiming at unmasking the impacts of “colonial” or hegemonic legacies in the African diaspora because it allows the authors to encompass longer story times. Indeed, the *Bildungsroman* allows the depiction of a child's development from younger age to adulthood, thus allowing the reader to see how the past shapes the future. In addition, both stories are recounted by autodiegetic narrators looking back at their past. Thus, we have a juxtaposition of voices: although the story is told from the child's perspective, we also notice the intrusion of the critical and political voice of the adult narrator reflecting on events and sometimes guiding the readers' attention towards specific slices of his life.

In Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*, the story is told from the perspective of G, a Barbadian child growing up in colonial times. Following the child's development in Barbadian society, the critical and ideologically aware adult narrator, most probably the author himself looking back at his past, depicts school as an ISA used to buttress the colonial enterprise through docilization of the colonial subjects. Indeed, Lamming's narrative exposes the colonizer's exclusive and total control over the discourses circulating in Barbadian schools. The curriculum is shaped in such a way as to only embody British culture: in G's school, children sing God save the King; they learn about British history and they are taught about the Battle of Hastings. However, they have no knowledge about their own culture: for example G wonders if slavery ever existed. Thus, like in most post-colonial Caribbean works, the narrative draws attention to the inappropriateness of the syllabus, a syllabus tailored by the colonizer in such a way as to brainwash and alienate the Barbadian children, as well as make them adopt the cultural capital of the metropolis. The acceptance of the British conventions made the Barbadian children accept colonialism as a natural phenomenon.

The narrator also draws attention to the operation of discourses in Barbadian schools—discourses aiming at making children perceive colonialism

as a benevolent and beneficent mission for the colonies. To focalize this constructive aspect of school, which has lasting effects on the Barbadians, Lamming presents how the older people and the child perceive their tie to England:

Good old England and Little England. They had never parted company since they met way back in the reign of James or was it Charles? [...] Three hundred years, more than the memory could hold, Big England had and held Little England and Little England like a sensible child accepted. Three hundred years, and never in all time did any nation dare interfere with these two. Barbados or little England was the oldest and purest of England's children, and may it always be so. The other islands had changed hands. Now they were French, now they were Spanish. But Little England remained steadfast and constant to Big England. (29)

This false relationship between colonizer and colonized illustrates to what extent school serves as an ISA buttressing the colonial conquest because it is the site where the colonial power constructs it. Colonialism is naturalized as a motherly and protective relationship devoid of violence, expropriation and exploitation. Sandra Paquet Pouchet, in *The Novels of George Lamming* (1982), shares our analysis when she notes that the inspector's speech builds fantasy and myth about Britain and the British Empire. In addition, the children develop a sense of belonging to the Empire as they feel they have a special connection with the Mother Country. This naturalization of colonialism and development of the children's sense of belonging to the Empire are achieved not only through the teachings in school, but also through the construction of a fictive reality during the celebration of significant events such as the Queen's birthday. Each year, on the twenty fourth of May, the traditional Queen's birthday or Empire Day was celebrated at school. On Empire Day, the students lined up like soldiers, the yard was crowded with relatives and other children, and the whole school was decorated with British flags. In his speech, the British inspector presented colonization as a God-blessed mission to maintain peace in the world. He insisted that the "British Empire [...] has always worked for the peace of the world. This was the job assigned by God" (30). In his speech, the inspector did not fail to make allusions to the second war between Ethiopia and Italy, which was trying to reconquer for the second time Ethiopia after a first defeat at Adoua. This reference constitutes an attempt to cut short all vague desires of independence inspired by the image of the King of Ethiopia in newspapers or news of the war in Abyssinia. He reassures the older students who might have read about the event that God blessed Barbados and England with a

peaceful and strong tie. Using flattery, the inspector further asserts that Barbados is “the pride and treasure of the Empire.” It is thus clear that the inspector instrumentalizes Empire Day to docilize the bodies of the Barbadian students, as Michel Foucault would say, and make them obedient to the Empire.

The use of school as ISA is further instantiated in the narrative’s depiction of the end of the Empire Day commemoration. After the military rituals of saluting the flag and marching under the orders of the teachers, the celebration ended with the distribution of pennies, supposedly gifts of the Queen. The military ritual that characterizes the whole commemoration of the event and the final scene in which the student is punished are reminiscent of Foucault’s panopticon in *Discipline and Punish*. The students are influenced, controlled, and disciplined through a double-system of reward-punishment so as to turn them into bodies docile to colonization. It is also important to note the symbolic value of the penny: between 1971 and 1984, period which coincides with the historical setting of Lamming’s text, the penny was stamped with the head of Queen Elizabeth II wearing the Girls of Great Britain and Ireland Tiara. The distribution of these coins with the stamp of the Queen reinforced the tie between the colonized and the Empire in several ways: it reinforced the inspector’s message and made the children accept the Queen as a generous surrogate mother.

Set in post-independent Trinidad, Merle Hodge’s *Crick Crack, Monkey* (1970) also deals with the potent effects of the colonial and neo-colonial education on a young girl and the community. Beyond discursive practices, Merle Hodge’s creative work shares similarities with its literary ancestor, George Lamming’s *In the Castle of My Skin*. Hodge’s narrative is a *Bildungsroman* told from the perspective of a child with occasional intrusions of the adult narrator/author. Hodge’s story describes the growth of T from childhood to young girlhood in Trinidad. As in Lamming’s text, the young protagonist also departs for the metropolis at the end of the narrative. In Merle Hodge’s novel as well, the story is recounted by the main protagonist of the novel: Tee or Cynthia. However, as the narrative is set in post-colonial Trinidad, it does not so much focus on the operation of the colonial school as Lamming’s does. Rather, it paints how much the neo-colonial Trinidadian educational system was stamped by the British influence.

Following narrative order, the first illustration of the Trinidadian community’s alienation is made through the characterization of Mr. Hinds, the headmaster of Coriaca EC. Mr. Hinds not only stands as an embodiment of the

neo-colonial school, but also as a crystallization of the educated community's experience. His description is eloquent when the narrative reads:

Everyone knew that Mr. Hinds had been up in England in his young days, that was why he talked in that way, that he had fought in the war and that he has nearly got to be a lawyer but instead he had come back to be the Headmaster of Coriaca EC. High on the wall behind Mr Hinds hung a large framed portrait of Churchill. It was Mr Hinds' daily endeavor to bring the boys to a state of reverence towards this portrait; when they became rowdy he would still them into shame at their unworthy behavior in the very sight of the greatest Englishman who ever lived etc. (26)

This description presents Mr. Hinds as the prototype of the alienated Trinidadian who has fully adopted the cultural capital of the British metropolis. He acts, speaks, and lives like a British. The child now adult narrator's use of up in the phrase "had been up in England in his young days" refers to a hierarchy putting Great Britain at the top and Trinidad at the bottom. His description also gives the reader a taste of the British orientation of the Trinidadian educational system.

Like *Abeng*, *The Bluest Eye* and *In the Castle of My skin*, *Crick Crack* represents school as a major site of alienation, an alienation that is reinforced by religious education. Despite the advent of independence, the curricula remained entirely British. From Tee's story, we gather that the Caribbean Reader Primer is populated with English children like Jim and Jill or Tim and Mary; on afternoons, the children would recite "Children of the Empire Ye are Brothers All," or sing "God Save the King" and "Land of Hope and Glory." The teaching of religion also partook in children's alienation and confusion. Tee identified The Mother Country to Heaven because at Sunday-school they were given pictures with blonde children standing around Jesus. Ketu H. Katrak, who studied the impact of English education on female socialization in *Crick Crack, Monkey*, points out this collapsing of education and religion that results in Tee's growing alienation and disorientation when she observes:

The education of the mind was reinforced by a saving of the soul, particularly since colonial education was often conducted by missionaries and this often continued after independence. Some of the confusion that Tee feels is related humourously: "Now at school I had come to learn that Glory and The Mother Country and Up-There and Over-There [London] had all one and the same geographical location [...]. And then there was 'Land of Hope and Glory/Mother of the Free.'" (30) (Katrak 66-7)

Tee's alienation and mental confusion culminate as she progresses up the educational ladder and later on moves to Aunt Beatrice's middle-class world. When she reaches Third Standard and starts being more exposed to the British world through the books she reads, Tee starts developing a complex of inferiority resulting from her identification with the western world she is exposed to in books. This identification with the British world is accompanied by a growing distancing from her world, a world she becomes ashamed of and considers not proper. Indeed, the books she reads transport her to the "envious normality of Real girls and Boys who went a-sleighting and built snowmen, ate potatoes not rice, went about in socks and shoes from morning till nights and called things by their proper names."

Furthermore, these books carried her "the reality and Rightness," which could only be found Abroad (67). Her adoption of western standards and rejection of her culture makes her mimic the way English girls behave: she starts wearing shoes all day and putting on socks to go to the shop. As Bourdieu would say, T adopts the cultural capital of the British, and her behaviour shows how desirable the British world is. Tee constructs a new identity: she becomes Helen. Helen as the narrator explains, is not a Double but rather a "Proper Tee," that is, a westernized version of the young girl, a projection of the version she would like to be. When she moves to Aunt Beatrice's urban and middle-class world, Tee distances herself from her identity.

The narrator plays on the movement from a rural to an urban environment to paint the effects of colonial school on the community. The narrative paints as a watermark the potent effects of colonial educational system through the behaviour of the citified bourgeois Aunt Beatrice, an epitome of the dominant Trinidadian group. Whereas T experiences a neo-colonial educational system, Beatrice is by excellence a product of colonial school. In Hodge's text, Beatrice's middle-class milieu is presented as a binary opposite of Tantie's working class rural world and the one of the grandmother rooted in Trinidadian values. Through the contrastive representation of the three spaces, the narrative illustrates that the effects of the colonial and neo-colonial education are more pervasive in the urban area, particularly among the Trinidadian elite. In Auntie Beatrice's middle-class urban environment, all forms of vestiges of rootedness are negated to the benefit of western values. The adoption of the British cultural capital even leads to some form of inter-racism as people are ranked according to their skin colour. Carol, Auntie Beatrice's light-skinned daughter is considered as the nice one, whereas Jessica is simply the "other." Beatrice's motto further reveals

the alienation of the Trinidadian elite resulting from their education. For her, the darker someone is, the harder he/she has to try to mimic British culture because “what you do not have in looks you have to make up for otherwise” (92). Beatrice prides herself for having a white ancestor in her lineage. Her veneration of British things shows through the fact that she displays to visitor’s sight her white ancestry:

The large oval photograph, reddish-brown with age and encircled in a heavy frame of gilded foliage, that hung high up on the wall and leaned over into the attention of all who entered the living room was that of The White Ancestress, Elizabeth, Helen Carter. The photograph was as faded as a photograph could manage to be, but Auntie Beatrice said that the minute Carol came into the world everybody could see that she resembled her... (90)

In “One Mother, Two Daughters: The Afro-American and the Afro-Caribbean Female *Bildungsroman*,” Geta Leseur relevantly points out that the *Bildungsroman* fulfills the exiled writer’s need to “reassess one’s childhood from the vantage point of maturity” and “wish to establish an authentic basis of experience: to repossess or reinterpret a past that seems broken and fragmentary to the adult” (26-27). Leseur further states that whereas the Afro-American novels of development serve as platform of protest, the West Indian *Bildungsroman* are not primarily political (27).

An analysis of two West Indian *Bildungsroman* set in colonial and neo-colonial times—George Lamming’s *In the Castle of My Skin* and Merle Odge’s *Crick, Crack, Monkey*—does not make us concur with Leseur as far as the apolitical nature of the West Indian *bildungsroman* is concerned. Indeed, both novels reveal a great preoccupation on the part of the exiled Caribbean looking back at his experience during and after colonialism to denounce the alienating effects of colonial(ist) education in the process of looking back at his or her past. In their respective *Bildungsroman*, Lamming and Odge reassess their childhood with the mature and critical eyes of adults to expose the devastating effects of their British-oriented education in the formation of their selves and the Caribbean community in general. Beyond differences related to gender, both authors paint school as a site of mis-education and an ISA buttressing the foundations of colonialism. They reinforce the view that the “British colonial aggression consolidated itself with the chalk and the blackboard” and set up conditions of mental exile of the Caribbean within his own society (Katrak 62).

George Lamming exposes how the colonizer disseminated the British cultural capital in Barbadian schools. Looking back at his own experience

growing up in Barbados, Lamming, in his autobiographical novel written in exile attempts to liberate his people from the grips of an oppressive past. He also does not fail to draw attention on the British-orientation of the curricula and activities in the Barbadian school. Referring to school in *In the Castle of My Skin*, Sandra Paquet Pouchet says that it serves as an instrument of colonial administration. Instead of being a “source of knowledge and understanding,” it rather “functions to perpetuate ignorance, confusion, and a destructive dependence on the mother country among its pupil” (19). The narrative illustrates the negative effects of colonialist education on children, but also on adults whose veneration of the Mother Country and subjugation is signified through their mimicry of the white landlord. Lamming also instantiates how the colonizer constructed a false reality through celebrations of events such as Empire Day to make the colonizer naturalize British presence and domination.

Similarly, Merle Hodge performs a return to her childhood to denounce the devastating effects of colonial(ist) education on a young girl growing up in post-colonial Trinidadian society. For Hodge, literature should serve liberational purposes. In “Challenges to Sovereignty: Changing the World Versus Writing Stories,” she asserts that as foreign fiction occupies the Trinidadian world, fiction “which affirms and validates” her “world is therefore an important weapon of resistance” (202-06). Further, she also defends that art can be used for activism because there exists no fundamental contradiction between the two. In her narrative, Hodge uses the perspective of the child superposed with the critical comments of the mature adult looking back to the past to expose the vagaries and absurdities of the neo-colonial school system. She did not only want to show the impact of the educational system on the child, but also on “budding” Trinidadian culture as well because the child is the representative of the culture (Balutansky 654).

The narrative illustrates that the ideological power conveyed through the British-oriented Trinidadian educational system is very potent because despite the advent of independence, school continues to bring about children’s alienation, as the case of Tee illustrates it so well. Tee’s progressive alienation and rejection of her Trinidadian culture when she begins going to school clearly shows the constructive dimensions of a neo-colonial school system based on British cultural capital. In addition, the representation of the urban space allows the narrative to paint the erasure of native culture and full adoption of the British cultural capital. Auntie Beatrice’s middle-class

world testifies how colonial education has succeeded in alienating the Trinidadian generation that grew up under colonialism.

Babacar Dieng⁴²

⁴² Ph. D, Maître-Assistant, enseignant-chercheur à l'UFR de Lettres et Sciences Humaines, section Anglais, Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis, BP 234 (Sénégal).

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