

**French Caribbean Women and the Problem of Empowerment:
A look at *Moi, Tituba, sorcière...Noire de Salem* and *Pluie et vent sur Têlumée
Miracle***

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(ABSTRACT)

This thesis explores the problem of self-empowerment for the French Caribbean Black woman as presented in the novels *Moi, Tituba, sorcière...Noire de Salem* and *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*. The respective authors, Maryse Condé and Simone Schwarz-Bart, use fiction to convey the plight of women in the French Caribbean. They successfully create characters who refuse marginalization imposed by their patriarchal and oppressive societies. Condé's novel, set in the 17th century first in Barbados, and then in Puritan New England depicts the challenges Tituba overcomes in reaching liberation. Schwarz-Bart presents the story of Télumée, set in Guadeloupe at the beginning of the 20th century. My study focuses specifically on the characters of Tituba and Télumée to show ways that they thwart the dominant social structures and norms that seek to disempower them. It reveals ways that Condé and Schwarz-Bart make use of literature to reverse European perceptions of gender and race. Consequently, the literary fictions they create suggest possible ways of escaping marginalization and refusing racial and gendered subjugation.

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Social Reality through Fiction	10
Chapter 2: Social Perceptions of the Sorcière.....	21
Chapter 3: Creating a Space through Fiction.....	29
Chapter 4: Writing Women into Empowerment.....	41
Conclusion	50
Works Cited	55
Curriculum Vitae	58

Introduction

This study of the problem of self-empowerment for the French Caribbean Black woman as presented in two novels by Maryse Condé and Simone Schwarz-Bart draws on contemporary critical race theories, which posit different ways of understanding how marginalized groups may assert their own moral agency. Contemporary critical race theories, such as *mujerista* theology and *mestiza* theory, posit different ways of understanding how marginalized groups may assert their own moral agency. One of the major ideas that arises takes the form of identification from without versus identification from within, relative to the social construction of identity. Specifically, the concept of identity politics upholds the union of individuals that face oppression owing to race or gender, for example. Borrowing from Peter Barry, identity politics indicates: “...those which campaign for and by groups disadvantaged by some aspect of their identity, such as their gender, their race, or their sexual orientation” (146).¹ Similarly, bell hooks addresses critical identity for oppressed groups and the imperative of self-empowerment, or liberation for marginalized individuals and groups. She urges the assumption of voice: “Part of our struggle for radical black subjectivity is the quest to find ways to construct self and identity that are oppositional and liberatory” (133).

Applying the concepts of identity politics to two novels of Simone Schwarz-Bart and Maryse Condé reveals the process of self-determination, or the assumption of moral agency, by their two respective main characters: Télumée and Tituba.² Schwarz-Bart’s novel *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* is set in post-slavery Guadeloupe at the beginning of the 20th century. Télumée, raised by her grandmother Reine Sans Nom, learns from the solidarity of her matrilineal legacy, the Lougandor women. She begins and ends her story as a reflection on her life, recounted as she stands proud and wise as an old woman revered in her community. Condé’s novel, *Moi, Tituba sorcière...Noire de Salem*, presents the story of Tituba, whose love for a man pushes her into slavery. Her

¹ The reverse, then, of identity politics would be “...class politics, where the campaign is on behalf of people disadvantaged by some aspect of their situation...” (Barry 146).

² In doing this analysis, it is not my intention to suggest that either Schwarz-Bart or Condé explicitly subscribes to the ideas of identity politics or postcolonial theory; though I am using these theoretical approaches to glean methods of achieving voice from their novels.

union with her lover leads her from her native Barbados to Puritan New England of the late 17th century. Displaced from her indigenous surroundings, Tituba turns to the guidance of the spirit of her mother, Abena, as well as her mentor Man Yaya. Both Tituba and Télumée eventually succeed in asserting their own moral agency. They create identities for themselves which defy the norms of their situations. Although they overlap, Tituba's moral agency could be perceived as oppositional, while that of Télumée may be seen as liberatory.

Before examining details of the characters in question, an overview of postcolonial theory is useful. With respect to identity politics, Franz Fanon writes with an emotional tone as he searches the meaning of Black identity and seeks to establish agency in *Black Skin, White Masks*. He demonstrates his internal torment, or cognitive dissonance, by reporting the effects of colonization on his subjugated body and psyche. As he writes, he contemplates the "myth of the negro" representing "Negroes [as] savages, brutes, illiterates." Fanon urges that the "myth...must be destroyed at all costs" (117). He presents the plight of the Black man in the White world, and the manner in which he is identified from without rather than from within. He demands a place for himself when he exclaims: "where am I to be classified? Or, if you prefer, tucked away?" (113). Fanon's emotional struggle focuses on escaping marginalization, exploring his racial identity, and affirming his own agency rather than accepting what has been assigned to him.

Considering Fanon's emotional explanation of his oppression owing to the color of his skin and the stigma that the colonizing society succeeded in assigning to him leads to the consideration of the identity struggle of the French Caribbean Black woman. Not only does she suffer from oppression resulting from the color of her skin as does Fanon, but she also faces subjugation owing to her gender. Valerie Key Orlando explains that we have "no greater example of historic hind[e]rance placed on feminine identity than that of colonialism and its oppression" (7). The problem of voice for the French Caribbean Black woman is often that dominant society silences it. With respect to discourse, Orlando expresses such a viewpoint by explaining that "feminism must strive to articulate the glossed over feminine perspective of the colonized Other in order to excavate the historically buried feminine voice" (27).

The process of subject formation and the effects of subjugation are of special interest for understanding the effects of colonization on the perceived role of Black women in Caribbean society. Literature provides a unique opportunity to understand the construction of a racialized and genderized subject. Moreover the study of oppression as a result of colonization assumes new meaning when we consider the plight of the Black French Caribbean woman who finds herself oppressed owing to her gender, race, and colonized status.

In this regard, some background information concerning the literary (and social) movement of *Négritude* is useful. Largely led by Aimé Césaire in the 1930's and tapering off in the 1970's, this movement represented a period "in which the poetics of self-repossession, nationalist and racial affirmation went hand in hand with an emphasis on the themes of virility, potency, verticality, and legitimacy" (Shelton 427). Participants of *Négritude* aimed to empower the Black race, thus allowing them to affirm their moral agency and pride as members of the race. The movement created a masculinized view of a Black Caribbean identity. Although many early works that contribute to *Négritude* take the form of poetry, writers eventually turned toward the novel and the movement witnessed a rise of female writers. Shelton explains: "After the affirmation of negritude, the dominant themes in the literature become illegitimacy, impotence, alienation, and madness" (Shelton 428).

While the hopeful aim of *Négritude* is an affirmation of Black identity, encouraging "the black race...to stand upright," it failed to create a space for female writers (Shelton 427). For Blacks in the Caribbean, *Négritude* offered the potential to shape a new understanding of self-determination, as long as that self-determination included enforcing a masculinized version of the individual. The male-centered perspective, which does not permit room for women or homosexuality, constructs a sort of super masculine male symbol of resistance to oppression.

Out of *Négritude* comes *créolité*, a movement that "inherited from its antecedents...a sharply gendered identity" (Arnold 21). Though *créolité* prizes writings that portray heroic and strong male characters, Schwarz-Bart and Condé reverse the norm and create heroic and strong female characters. Although the fathers of *créolité* interpret "cultural production [as] as masculine production," Schwarz-Bart and Condé produce

works of fiction that represent female cultural production. Moreover, they succeed in creating “examples of fictions in which the transmission of creoleness in all its complexity...is a female activity” (Arnold 37). Female writers such as Maryse Condé and Simone Schwarz-Bart use fiction to encourage change regarding female subjugation, and they “came on the scene to write their own story in the middle of a man-dominated history, and to sound their own cry” (Shelton 428). Furthermore, a theme that surfaces repeatedly in novels written by French Caribbean women is “the problematic of feminine exclusion and dispossession” (Shelton 430). The theme of female exclusion and the manner of resisting relegation to the margins of society represents not only a literary theme found in novels but also, one can assume, a theme found in the French Caribbean itself.

I intend to examine the two novels written by Maryse Condé and Simone Schwarz-Bart as female voices in the cultural politics of *créolité*. In Condé’s novel, *Tituba* is a Barbadian woman who must cling to her sense of identity when thrust into the harsh society of New England during the time frame of the Salem Witch Trials. The title itself, *I, Tituba...Black Witch of Salem*, shows a certain affirmation of identity. The character of Tituba not only boasts a name that is authentically Antillean, but also demonstrates a level of self-pride and acceptance, which is crucial in creating and adhering to a strong moral agency. Within Condé’s novel one observes the principle theme of hypocrisy and the mixing or opposition of two cultures. Condé reverses the points of view of civilized and barbaric in her text in order to maintain Tituba’s subjectification (rather than objectification). She presents the barbaric tendencies of New England society, of the European tradition. Furthermore, Condé presents a main character that would have been considered a barbarian from a European viewpoint in a manner that uplifts her behavior and her culture.

One particular scene demonstrates Condé’s reversal of socially (European or Western) accepted perceptions. Tituba witnesses the execution of a supposed witch. She tries to find reason in a world that she doesn’t understand exclaiming: “Quel était ce monde qui avait fait de moi une esclave, une orpheline, une paria? Quel était ce monde

qui me séparait des miens?” (Condé *Moi* 81).³ As Tituba grapples with the barbarism of the New England community, she also finds herself forced to contemplate her moral agency. Through the experiences of Tituba as presented by Condé, we observe the objectification of a marginalized person and the manner in which such a person attempts to reject the predetermined social status of "oppressed." Tituba finds herself in a society where she is oppressed to the extent of not existing: “Elles parlaient de moi, mais en même temps, elles m’ignoraient. Elles me rayaient de la carte des humains. J’étais un non-être. Un invisible” (45).⁴ How can a marginal member of society assume voice?

Another glance at Fanon and his presentation of identification from without may provide a clue or answer. Condé’s Tituba demonstrates the tendency to refuse dominant and accepted patterns of Western thought. She reverses perceptions, elevating the status of the Black woman from Barbados so that she has more self-determination than the members of a powerful society of a New England community. Condé’s novel is a revisionist story taking historical aspects and re-presenting them from a different perspective.

Furthermore, Condé presents female characters from differing social, religious and cultural backgrounds in order to contrast them and empower the Black woman. In presenting White women, she includes such characteristics as frailty, illness, lack of joy for life, and hypocrisy. The narrator’s description of Susanna Endicott, the widow of a wealthy plantation owner for whom Tituba works in Barbados, and her friends as having “skin the color of curdled milk” and “multicolored eyes” demonstrates the perception a Black woman has of White women (Condé *I* 24). On the other hand, Condé presents women of color in a manner that valorises Tituba and her experiences. As Condé plays with socially accepted stereotypes to reverse and revise them, we witness a world without any fixed reference point. Condé’s decentered world undermines the ability to believe in reason and in logic.

Scrutinizing Condé’s portrayal of the main character Tituba provides a better understanding of the manner in which colonization poses problems of agency and

³ “What kind of a world was this that had turned me into a slave, an orphan, an outcast? What kind of world had taken me from my own people?” (Condé *I* 49). All citations in English will come from this text, whereas citations in French will come from the original text denoted (Condé *Moi*).

threatens empowerment for the colonized French Caribbean woman. For Condé only two human races exist: the oppressor and the oppressed. A differing perspective appears in Schwarz-Bart's novel *Pluie et vent sur Téliumée Miracle*, with its idea of the French Caribbean woman who resists the oppression imposed by her own society. In it, Téliumée demonstrates characteristics of a strong and proud woman, who learns to function within her native Guadeloupe on the verge of the twentieth century. From a stylistic point of view, Téliumée recounts her own story (just as first person narration is also used by Condé for Tituba). The character Téliumée affirms her place in society and demonstrates that she can survive in spite of the miseries and oppression of her life as a Black woman in a post-slavery society. Téliumée refuses to accept the domestic role of the stereotypical woman who serves as the care-giver for both men and children. She refuses confinement to the (feminine) private realm by creating a place for herself in the (masculine) public realm. Schwarz-Bart also presents the idea of intra-communal solidarity among women as a strategy of assuming a voice, as seen in certain postcolonial and critical race theorists.

In attaining subject status and creating one's own identity politics, the concept of solidarity plays a significant role for the marginalized individual. Certain theorists explore methods of escaping marginalization in terms of critical race theory. In this regard, aspects of *Mujerista* (Womanist) theology as presented by Ada María Isasi Díaz may prove useful. Among other issues that she discusses, Isasi Díaz insists upon the crucial component of solidarity for Latinas: "Solidarity starts with recognizing the commonality of responsibilities and interests that all of us have despite differences of race, ethnicity, class, sex, sexual preference, age" (5). Just as Isasi Díaz encourages solidarity to escape oppression despite certain differences, Schwarz-Bart also encourages the solidarity of women in her novel.

Examining the novels of both Schwarz-Bart and Condé with reference to the historical fact of colonization provokes puzzling, challenging questions, which must be addressed. To what extent should one consider these novels indicative of life, of lived experience? Are the first person accounts of the main characters Tituba and Téliumée

⁴ "They were talking about me and yet ignoring me. They were striking me off the map of human beings. I was a nonbeing. Invisible" (24).

comparable to the discourses of the French Caribbean Black woman? How does one perpetuate a self-identity that conflicts with the identity that society has already assigned? The following chapters examine the ways in which Condé and Schwarz-Bart present female characters who succeed in assuming their own agency rather than having identities thrust upon them by dominant, patriarchal society.

In order to create a well-rounded inquiry into the perspectives presented by Condé and Schwarz-Bart, one must also consider theoretical as well as historical perspectives which illuminate the problem of female empowerment, specifically in relation to race and colonization. Yvonne Knibiehler and Régine Goutalier's text, *La femme au temps des colonies*, investigates the effects of colonization on women, both from the perspective of the colonized and the colonizer. Because of a shared colonizing perspective, aspects of their research on African colonization enhance the understanding of colonization of the French Caribbean. Their study proves interesting owing to the focus on women in a realm that is typically reserved for men. Knibiehler and Goutalier's text explains their approach of considering women during colonization and their mind-set: "Coloniser est un acte essentiellement masculin: c'est conquérir, pénétrer, posséder, féconder...." (17).⁵ The consideration of women's perspectives during colonization presents a new point of view. The co-authors present the idea of "la bonne sauvage," which is also perceived in Condé's text with Tituba. The words "noble savage" translate the phrase without indicating the feminine gender of the adjective, which is lost in translation. This perception of the female noble savage takes form as colonizers perceive the woman indigenous to the land being colonized. Knibiehler and Goutalier's perspective presents the objectification of the woman, as colonizers convey stories of native women who emanate allure and exoticism. Knibiehler and Goutalier explain that travelers' stories led the Europeans to believe that the overseas colonized territories offered men an abundance of women at their disposal:

Grâce aux récits des voyageurs, l'Occidental pouvait donc croire que les pays d'outre-mer lui offraient en abondance des femmes aimables, amoureuses, et

⁵ To colonize is an essentially masculine act: it is to conquer, to penetrate, to possess, to impregnate..."
Translation mine.

toutes nues. Le mythe de la bonne sauvage transformait d'avance toutes les colonies en paradis du sexe.⁶ (29)

The novels of both Condé and Schwarz-Bart as well as the text of Knibiehler and Goutalier, portray the temptation provoked by the island woman. The perception of the seductive woman of color further perpetuates the objectification of the Black Caribbean woman and further marginalizes her as "other." On the other hand, Knibiehler and Goutalier also consider the reputation of the White female settler who must tolerate her husband's infidelity with native concubines (35). The "bonne sauvage" poses a threat for the White woman, although in terms of social acceptability, the latter suffered much less oppression.

In a critical aspect, postcolonial theory relates to the views expressed both in the novels of Condé and Schwarz-Bart, as well as in the text of Knibiehler and Goutalier. The critic Kwame Anthony Appiah explores aspects of identity and thwarting marginalization in his article "The Postcolonial and the Postmodern." Appiah begins with an explanation of the Postcolonial as a kind of double gaze: "In the West they [the intelligentsia who dominate Western thought] are known through the Africa they offer; their compatriots know them both through the West they *present to Africa* and through an Africa they *have invented for the world, for each other, and for Africa*" (119).⁷ Appiah's critical perspective enhances the concept of moral agency in a postcolonial world. The Africa "invented for Africa" stretches the concept of social construction of identity.

Appiah examines the role of African novels and their implications for creating identity. He explains that the postmodernist trend in novels signifies also postcolonial tendencies: The postcolonial novelist is "anxious to escape neocolonialism" and commits to the "continent and its people" rather than a sort of nationalism or traditionalism.⁸ Moreover, postcolonial writers seek "a *transnational* rather than a *national* solidarity" (Appiah 123). Appiah's idea of a transnational solidarity prompts us to reconsider Isasi Díaz's encouragement for solidarity among Latinas in general.

⁶ "Owing to travelers' accounts, the West could believe that overseas colonies offered an abundance of kind, loving and naked women...the myth of the female noble savage transformed the colonies into sexual paradises." *Translation mine.*

⁷ *Italics mine.*

Examining the problems of empowerment for the French Caribbean Black woman, in particular, sheds light on the social construction of identity. Even as fiction, the situations of both *Télumée* and *Tituba* relate to the experience of French Caribbean women recuperating from colonization and attempting to gain status in a patriarchal system. The construction of identity remains a crucial topic in modern society, and it continues as a problem for marginalized groups who find themselves on the sidelines of dominant culture. Analyzing the construction of identity and the approach of identity politics in the novels by Condé and Schwarz-Bart shows how identities are historically constructed. In turn, understanding the concept of construction can help individuals attain subject status. This study contributes to a better understanding of marginalization, alienation, and “otherness;” and it suggests a means through which one could gain a voice.

The following chapters study different, yet linked, aspects of *Tituba* and *Télumée* as models for empowerment. Chapter 1 addresses the ways in which fiction allows Condé and Schwarz-Bart to depict valid portrayals of the French Caribbean Black woman through their main characters. Chapter 2 picks up the concept of alienation through the characters’ association with sorcery, which allows them to establish centered perspectives, and to rely on their alienation for liberation. The third chapter explores *Tituba* and *Télumée* as models for achieving moral agency and examines how, through their relations with others, the characters find a space for themselves. Chapter 4 continues to explain how *Tituba* and *Télumée* are made to demonstrate self-determination through the authors’ use of language.

⁸ Postmodernism is marked by fragmentation and by a blur between previously distinct literary genres. As Barry explains: “Postmodernity thus ‘deconstructs’ the basic aim of the Enlightenment, that is ‘the idea of a unitary end of history and of a subject’” (87).

Chapter 1: Social Reality through Fiction

To consider the practical application of the novels by Condé and Schwarz-Bart in order to examine the significance of the main characters Télumée and Tituba, one must first question the use of fiction as an indicator of social reality, or history. Typically, historians shy away from fiction, labeling it as constructed or invalid. However, as Rosario Ferré explains in her book *The House on the Lagoon*:

History doesn't deal with the truth any more than literature does. From the moment a historian selects one theme over another in order to write about it, he is manipulating the facts. The historian, like the novelist observes the world through his own tinted glass, and describes it as if it were the truth. (Ferré 312)

Contemplating the significance of the two main characters Télumée and Tituba leads to a need to address this issue of fiction in order to perceive the beneficial nature of this search in understanding the perspective of the French Caribbean Black woman and the manner in which she may escape subjugation.

In addition to Ferré's perspective, one should also consider that of Gayatri Spivak. Addressing the issue of fiction, Spivak explains that the "...language of historiography is always also language." That is, the discipline of History and the creation of historic texts rely on the same language as Literature and the creation of a fictional text like a novel (242). Furthermore, Spivak describes the important concept of "historical fiction," or "history imagined into fiction." This applies directly to the novels of Condé and Schwarz-Bart. Although the stories of Tituba and Télumée derive primarily from the imaginations of the authors, there are factual elements woven into the texts, intertwining "fiction" with historical "reality."

That said, one must also point out that both Condé and Schwarz-Bart partly base their main characters on real people. Condé's rendition of Tituba revises the history of the Barbadian slave imported to New England. Schwarz-Bart bases the character of Télumée on the life and experiences of an aged Guadeloupean woman named Stéphanie Priccin. As Karen Smyley Wallace explains, Priccin "had fascinated and intrigued the

author during her childhood.” From Schwarz-Bart’s memories of Priccin, she “reproduced a collection of what she calls ‘des moments privilégiés’ in the life of [Priccin]” (Wallace 428). Both Condé and Schwarz-Bart rely on actual people, but they enhance or alter the lives and actions of these people to emphasize the strength and resilience of the women they choose to portray. Why, then, should one consider their renditions of what *might* have been in order to understand better the reality of the French Caribbean Black woman?

History, in general, is considered more factual as a discipline than literature. Spivak explains the need to revisit perceptions: “[that] history deals with real events and literature with imagined ones may now be seen as a difference in degree [rather] than in kind.” However, she maintains that the use of two different words, *history* and *literature*, perpetuate the dichotomy. The use of separate words guarantees: “What is called history will always seem more real to us than what is called literature” (Spivak 243). She explains that the resistance to fiction on behalf of historians “relates to the fact that the writing of history and of literature has a social connotation even when these activities do not resemble what we understand by them today; and that historiography and literary pedagogy are disciplines” (243).

Condé and Schwarz-Bart write novels that go beyond entertainment. Their novels present emancipatory histories, wherein they fashion characters who create and implement identity politics. The conception of a politics of empowerment is often seen in Black women’s writing. Moreover, studying fiction and novels reveals what literature provides that history does not. Black female writers contribute aspects of reality through their literature to create a perspective centered with respect to members of their communities. Katie Cannon explains: “As the creators of literature these women are not formally historians, sociologists, or theologians, but the patterns and themes in their writings are reflective of historical facts, sociological realities, and religious convictions...” (63). In forming literature that reflects the social reality of Black women in the French Caribbean, Condé and Schwarz-Bart challenge not only racial constraints, but also the gendered nature of *créolité*. Their novels convey the ways Tituba and Télumée utilize identity politics to achieve moral agency.

Examining specific aspects of the novels by Condé and Schwarz-Bart reveals how the two novels can provide indications as to the reality of the French Caribbean Black woman. Both authors' fictions disclose the plight of the women portrayed: Tituba and Télumée. With Schwarz-Bart's text one observes Télumée explaining the role of women in a society of men. Télumée speaks to the "saving grace" of marriage for the young women of her island: "Pour ces négresses à l'abandon, le mariage était la plus grande et peut-être la seule dignité" (Schwarz-Bart *Pluie* 19).⁹ The character of Télumée, however, resists this social expectation, determined to avoid the confining role of the woman dominated by man. At first, Télumée evades the trap into which many of her peers fall, becoming pregnant at a young age and seeking the security of marriage. Although she eventually succumbs to the charms of her childhood love, Élie, she attempts to maintain a stronger feminine identity than the character of Laetitia. The latter assumes the role of the coquette who lures Élie into deceiving Télumée, while explaining to the young wife: "...où est-il écrit qu'un homme est fait pour une seule femme?" (143).¹⁰ Though Schwarz-Bart creates a fictional character in Télumée, she conveys an example of a woman who tries to refuse compliance with the expectations of a patriarchal society.

Another blatant reference to the objectivity of women within the French Caribbean society surfaces when the narrator, Télumée, explains the fall of the woman: "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" (74).¹¹ Schwarz-Bart's powerful words convey the superiority yet subversion of women. Despite her cunning, woman typically finds herself in the traditional role of child bearer and caretaker for the family. Télumée's explanation of her society and its tendencies to view woman as betrayed by her womb and subjugated into the role of mother provides a glimpse into the plight of the French Caribbean Black woman. Schwarz-Bart creates in Télumée a force that resists the role of motherhood, despite her strong matrilineal association and the focus on mother/daughter relationships

⁹ "For these lost Negresses, marriage was the greatest and perhaps the only dignity" (Schwarz-Bart *Bridge* 11). All subsequent translations will come from the text denoted (Schwarz-Bart *Bridge*), whereas the original French text will continue to come from the novel denoted (Schwarz-Bart *Pluie*).

¹⁰ "...where is it written that a man's made just for one woman?" (134).

¹¹ "Man has strength, woman has cunning, but however cunning she may be her womb is there to betray her. It is her ruin" (64).

among the Lougandor women. Télumée remains childless, refusing to conform to her society's expectations that she have and raise children.

Critic Karen Smyley Wallace explains that her failure to bear children, despite her three significant lovers creates the perception of her as the mother figure to the town by which she is considered increasingly wise: "...it is the inhabitants of the small mountain top community of Fond-Zombi and the Caribbean people in general who become the direct heirs to her wisdom. They are her symbolic offspring" (431). Schwarz-Bart has created an example of a strong woman to serve the entire island. Télumée grows into the role of a respected woman, sharing her wisdom with her townspeople. In this, Schwarz-Bart provides the reader with an example of a strong willed woman refusing to accept the role expected of her. Towards the beginning of Télumée's story, the narrator describes the "fall" of grown-ups as favoring the men:

Nous savions comment elles [les grandes personnes] faisaient l'amour, et puis nous savions comment elles se déchiraient...suivant une trajectoire immuable...à la chute. Mais la balance penchait, me semblait-il, en faveur des hommes et dans leur chute même ils conservaient quelque chose de victorieux.¹² (74)

Even as a child, Télumée perceived and understood the domination of man over woman, whose downfall exceeds that of man. She mentions "une trajectoire immuable" or "an unchanging course," which indicates its repetitiveness in society. With Télumée's perceptions, one begins to understand the perpetuation of female subjugation by a patriarchal (postcolonial) society.

Valerie Key Orlando discusses the social construction of the feminine, a theme that we can also observe in the novels. As Orlando addresses the thoughts of Donna Haraway on "becoming woman," she also considers the effect of colonization on women. With Haraway's idea of *cyber politics* in mind, Orlando explains: "Such cyber politics conceptualizes the feminine as being socially embodied and linked to all that influence, affect, and determine her existence in this world" (7). For Orlando, colonization serves as "the greatest example of historic hindrance placed on feminine identity" (7).

¹² "We knew how they [grown-ups] made love, and we knew how they tore at...and trampled on one another afterwards, following an unchanging course that led from the chase to weariness and downfall. But it seemed to me the balance was in favor of the men, and that even in their fall there was still something of victory" (64).

Schwarz-Bart's novel takes place in a postcolonial period, despite which it makes clear the relations of servitude between Télumée and the White family for whom she works at Belle Feuille. Despite the abolition of slavery, the Desaragne family imposes obvious power and influence over the Black population of the island. The significance of identity politics reappears, as Télumée struggles with self-empowerment in her racist and patriarchal setting. The characters of Monsieur and Madame Desaragne, and their actions and words make clear the objectification of the young girl, Télumée. For Monsieur Desaragne, she appears as a means of obtaining sexual pleasure and fulfilling his desire. For Madame Desaragne, Télumée poses a threat, representing that which is evil and wrong. Télumée defends her sense of self despite marginalization at the hands of the Desaragnes as well as within her own community. As she adjusts to working in the Desaragne household, Télumée remarks: "J'étais maintenant entourée d'yeux métalliques, perçantes, lointains sous lesquels je n'existais pas" (94-5).¹³ In her new situation of "not existing" and yet somehow still receiving abuse from her employers, Télumée develops survival skills. She imagines herself as a pebble in a stream as well as a two-sided drum. The simile of the pebble demonstrates not only Schwarz-Bart's fluid use of prose, but also the sustaining of Télumée's sense of self. The narrator explains: "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" (95).¹⁴

As Télumée tries to remain a little stone, allowing water to flow over her, she is nonetheless unable to escape completely the confrontations with Monsieur and Madame Desaragne. She must also imagine herself as a two-sided drum in order to emerge whole from verbal attacks. As Madame Desaragne launches into an assault, lashing out at the Black inhabitants of the island, Télumée allows the venting. Madame Desaragne exclaims with vehemence:

...vous [les nègres d'ici] mangez, vous buvez, vous faites les mauvais, et puis vous dormez...un point c'est tout. Mais savez-vous seulement à quoi vous avez

¹³ "I was surrounded now with piercing, steely, distant eyes under whose gaze I didn't exist" (85-6).

¹⁴ "...I must be like a pebble in a river just resting on the bottom. Let the water flow over me, clear or troubled, foaming, calm or turbulent—I was only a little stone" (86).

échappé?...sauvages et barbares que vous seriez en ce moment, à courir dans la brousse, à danser nus et à déguster les individus en potée....¹⁵ (Schwarz-Bart 96)

Having assumed her two-sided drum identity, Télumée escapes unscathed: “Je lui abandonnais la première face [du tambour à deux peaux] afin qu’elle s’amuse, la patronne, qu’elle cogne dessus, et moi-même par en dessous je restais intacte...” (97).¹⁶

As Schwarz-Bart creates specific mechanisms by which Télumée may endure and overcome discrimination and oppression, the reader must question how such concepts may benefit the current situation of French Caribbean Black women. Geta Le Seur’s article, “Wild Women in the Wilderness,” addresses both characters: Télumée and Tituba. LeSeur also addresses the dilemma of “history,” which we can apply to our examination of the divide between literature and history. She critiques historical accounts of escaped slaves (Maroons), who fought against the imposed structures of colonialism. Distinguishing between “his” story and “her” story, LeSeur explains how writers such as Schwarz-Bart and Condé hope to illuminate “models of womanhood” that resisted subjugation by “reclaiming these historical models of women’s resistance” (94). For LeSeur, Télumée and Tituba demonstrate the reclamation of voice for the Black Caribbean woman. LeSeur links the “historical” voice to the “literary” voice: Such a link provides “challenges to the colonial and postcolonial power structure and systems which work against the establishment of the female subject” (94).

LeSeur establishes such a link between “historical” and “literary” voice. Of differing accounts of Caribbean history, most ignore or minimize the significance of female Maroon leaders “or the presence of women in this anti-colonial resistance movement [against] oppression” (94). Nonetheless, “fictional” texts and novels explore the significance of such female subjects, and they re-view “history” through a new lens. Schwarz-Bart and Condé rely on Télumée and Tituba, respectively, to assert new establishments of self-determination. LeSeur describes how Télumée and Tituba refuse marginalization: “The characters move against oppressive social norms and move

¹⁵ “You [Negroes] eat, you drink, you misbehave, and then you sleep—and that’s it. But do you even know what you’ve escaped? You might be wild savages now, running through the bush, dancing naked, and eating people in stewed pots...” (87-88).

towards 'locating places of authority,' namely their own individual authority" (95). Both Télumée and Tituba spend time isolated from their "own" communities, and both seek refuge in nature at some point in time.

Schwarz-Bart's and Condé's fictions provide aspects of reality for women in the Caribbean. J. David Danielson describes Schwarz-Bart's novel as "remarkable" owing to its "brutal reality." It presents a "strikingly vivid and authentic evocation of the Antillean Creole world..." (Danielson 35). Based on his own personal experiences in Guadeloupe, Danielson adds in a footnote that after having read the novel, he encountered no surprises with his actual and personal experiences on the island. He recounts: "Thus, when I visited Guadeloupe...I was not surprised to find that it looked and felt almost exactly as I had expected it would" (45). With Danielson's explanation of the realistic nature of Schwarz-Bart's novel, readers can appreciate the significance of fiction for portraying social reality. Another scholar, Jeanne Garane, notes how Tituba embodies the dilemma of the Caribbean people searching for a sense of self and belonging. Garane explains that:

...Tituba symbolizes West Indians who can look neither to Africa nor to Europe for an affirming mirror.... Born collectively of imperialist aggression, many West Indian nations are an 'offspring' rejected by both the aggressed (Africa) and by the aggressor (Europe)...Caribbeans must search for an independent identity, looking to neither Europe nor to Africa, but to a Caribbean past for its (fictional) origins. (98)

Garane and LeSeur both emphasize the role of fiction in representing reality or history.

One is then prompted to wonder about Condé's motivations for presenting history through this slave from Barbados. Marie Naudin indicates political reasons, explaining Condé's use of fiction as a means to encourage change:

...la romancière a déclaré être membre du parti de l'Union Populaire pour la Libération de la Guadeloupe...fondé en 1978...et faire de ses fictions

¹⁶ "I left one side to her, the mistress, for her to amuse herself, for her to thump on, and I, underneath, I remained intact..." (88).

une oeuvre de combat, une oeuvre démystificatrice qu'elle rattache aux problèmes politiques et sociaux. Ses narrateurs et personnages peuvent donc être considérés comme ses porte-paroles.¹⁷ (77)

One can contend that Condé's story of Tituba's life and struggles is a means to encourage change. However, Tituba's experiences and the challenges that she overcomes provide an understanding of the lifestyle of one in her circumstances.

Tituba's story addresses the marginalization of women by men in Guadeloupe. The idea of the woman who constantly relies on the man arises often, as Tituba's mother constantly asks: "Pourquoi les femmes ne peuvent-elles se passer des hommes?" (Condé *Moi* 31).¹⁸ When Tituba meets John Indien, the slave whom she will eventually marry, Man Yaya warns "Les hommes n'aiment pas. Ils possèdent. Ils asservissent" (30).¹⁹ Tituba grapples with her choice regarding John Indien, since joining him would require leaving her self-imposed isolation in nature to rejoin the unjust world of hypocrisy. She lucidly and analytically explains her attraction to him as physical yearning, thus reversing the binary opposition of man who objectifies woman.

As Tituba contemplates her choice to take John Indien as her lover, she reveals the many injustices she has suffered as a Black female in Barbados. Her inner torment allows the reader to understand her better:

Ma mère avait été violée par un Blanc. Elle avait été pendue à cause d'un Blanc...Mon père adoptif s'était suicidé à cause d'un Blanc. En dépit de tout cela, j'envisageais de recommencer à vivre parmi eux, dans leur sein, sous leur coupe. Tout cela par goût effréné d'un mortel. Est-ce n'était pas folie? Folie et trahison?²⁰ (37)

¹⁷ "...the novelist declared her membership in the party of the Popular Union for the Liberation of Guadeloupe..founded in 1978...and uses her novels as a means of combat, a demystifying work whereby she addresses political and social problems." (Translation mine)

¹⁸ "Why can't women do without men?" (Condé *I* 15). All subsequent translations for Condé will come from this text while the original French citations will come from the novel indicated as (Condé *Moi*).

¹⁹ "Men do not love. They possess. They subjugate" (14).

²⁰ "My mother had been raped by a white man. She had been hanged because of a white man...My adoptive father had committed suicide because of a white man. Despite all that, I was considering living among white men again, in their midst, under their domination. And all because of an uncontrollable desire for a mortal man. Wasn't it madness: Madness and betrayal?" (19).

The distance that Tituba maintains between herself and her experiences as well as the analytical skills she uses to describe them counter typical constructions of the woman as the emotional, even hysterical being. As Condé plays with perspective to create a strong and resilient character, a marginalized individual may enjoy the shifting and apply it to her own situations to encourage the conscious choosing of direction among women.

Although Condé plays with the historical figure of Tituba to create a character for her novel, the literary character demonstrates particular aspects of the society in which a Black French Caribbean woman must have found herself. Critic Bukoye Arowolo explains basic background information of the French Caribbean islands and the tendency there to cling to patriarchal structures. He briefly outlines the history: The French Caribbean islands “are relatively modern creations artificially put in place by capitalism” (Arowolo 220). The islands currently include “Europeans (béké) who colonized the islands, exterminated the aborigines and took possession of the land; and the Blacks who were transported to the colony as slaves to work in white plantations” (220). Despite the newness of the colonies, European social structures were maintained, which perpetuated the perception of the woman as inferior.

Arowolo clarifies the typical role of the woman in French Caribbean society. Her duties include: “to make and educate children, transmit the local tradition through story-telling and help her husband in all ways” (221). Even Condé illuminates the “inferiority” of the French Caribbean woman on two planes: “...the Black Caribbean Woman finds herself as a victim of her black colour as well as a prisoner of her woman condition...” (Arowolo 221). In response, Condé creates in Tituba a character willing to challenge the concept of inferiority. Like Schwarz-Bart, Condé presents her main character as vehemently refusing certain standards by which she is expected to live and abide.

Condé reverses perspectives, championing the French Caribbean Black woman over the patriarchal Barbadian man as well as the Puritan society in general. As Tituba struggles to maintain her sense of self once in New England, she reveals the hypocrisy of the town of Salem: “C’était cela, Salem! Une

communauté où l'on pillait, trichait, volait en se drapant derrière le manteau du nom de Dieu" (Condé 134).²¹ Despite the fictional nature of Condé's rendition of Tituba, New England hypocrisy is exposed through the Salem Witch Trials.

Both Condé's and Schwarz-Bart's fictional accounts and situations are relayed through first person narration. The characters of Tituba and Télumée champion women in the face of oppression. Insofar as the novels belong to the categories of "literature" and "fiction," the examples set by Télumée and Tituba can be used to demonstrate how the French Caribbean Black woman may claim her voice. This is because both Télumée and Tituba present thorough, analytical descriptions of their situations, examining their own roles in society as well as the roles of others.

Through other characters invented for the purpose of reinforcing the fictional confrontation with a historical reality, the reader may still gain a better understanding of the struggle to attain self-empowerment and escape objectivity. Certainly, in Télumée's case, the character of Monsieur Desaragne may be taken for a realistic account of how influential, affluent Western White men in a postcolonial society often behaved towards young Black women working for them. Also, the character of John Indien portrays a typical Caribbean Black male lover, who forsakes Tituba in the end. In these secondary characters, fiction allied with realistic aspects of society can demonstrate behaviors and attitudes of individuals, both real and created. Furthermore, this alliance between fiction and literature could allow a French Caribbean woman to claim a voice by showing her how, and by presenting characters such as Télumée and Tituba who face alienation by individuals similar to Monsieur Desaragne or John Indien. Understanding how Télumée and Tituba succeed in spite of such challenges may provide guidance to real women seeking liberation.

The novels of Condé and Schwarz-Bart certainly inform the reader with the marginalization of the characters portrayed as well as the ways in which they may refuse oppression. This "social reality," presenting what "might have been,"

²¹ "That was Salem! A community that stole, cheated, and burgled while wrapping itself in the cloak of God's name" (84).

gives the reader a better understanding of the struggle for the French Caribbean Black woman to attain subject status. Spivak's explanation of "historical fiction," makes clear her idea that the use of two separate words, *history* and *literature*, perpetuates the arbitrary classification of texts into one category or the other. By portraying imaginary events, fiction enriches history, or social reality. From it, we can glean significant concepts and ideas, in this particular case, the concept of helping a subjugated group escape the margins of society. Through fiction, Schwarz-Bart and Condé have given their characters voice. They develop into resilient women who successfully attain the status of subject rather than object.

Chapter 2: Social Perceptions of the Sorcière

With the hope of better understanding the problem of empowerment for the French Caribbean Black woman, one should analyze differing aspects of Tituba's and Télumée's personalities and behavior. Although Tituba and Télumée are set in very differing time periods, one observes several traits that link the two characters, such as the affiliation they both have with the supernatural. Their ability to work in the world of spirits allows both Tituba and Télumée to distinguish themselves from their communities and from their oppressors. Although the label *sorcière* isolates both characters to some extent, they use their isolation to escape oppression, and to refuse traditional roles that would otherwise have been delegated to them.

Many French Caribbean novels portray aspects of spiritual or supernatural allure, including voodoo. Karen Smyley Wallace's discussion of magic claims that the "...linkage between woman, magic, and sorcery is characteristically seen in black francophone literatures of the Caribbean and Africa" (433). Carole Boyce Davies also explores the association of women with witchcraft, explaining that witches gain the status of alienated because they challenge society's norms and expectations. The title of *witch* represents "how society defines those women who break conventions" (Davies 74). Davies explains that association with witchcraft in Afro-American cultures indicates a challenge to the system, or "a political revolt by women against 'category maintenance' " (74). With Davies' concepts in mind, one can grasp the manner in which Tituba and Télumée demonstrate their refusal to have their societies assign them a place. The affiliation with magic alienates both characters, while at the same time elevating them above their social constraints. Rather than allow alienation to subjugate them, Tituba and Télumée affirm their own social standing as *sorcière*, which allows them to define themselves in terms other than those mandated by a dominant society. Members of society of both female characters come to depend on their affiliation with the spirits. Adhering to a link with witchcraft, Tituba and Télumée succeed in creating their own

places outside of their immediate societies. Ironically, with this affiliation, both characters can function within their societies if they so choose.

The significance of the *sorcière* in identity politics is seen in the character of Tituba, who has her first experiences in the realm of magic with Man Yaya, the aged woman who raises her after her mother, Abena's death. The narrator explains Man Yaya's comfort with the invisible world as a result of suffering the loss (the murder) of her lover and two sons: "En réalité, elle avait à peine les pieds sur notre terre et vivait constamment dans [la compagnie de son compagnon et ses fils], ayant cultivé à l'extrême le don de communiquer avec les invisibles" (Condé *Moi* 21).²² As Man Yaya introduces Tituba to the world of the spirits and begins to teach her the ways of the *sorcière*, the novel indicates a new perspective towards the superstitious tendencies, which presents the *sorcière* in a positive manner. Man Yaya explains magic to Tituba: "...tout doit être respecté. Que l'homme n'est pas un maître parcourant à cheval son royaume" (22).²³ The careful instructions and lessons that Tituba receives under Man Yaya's guidance paint a favorable depiction of magic, different from the negative way in which it is often viewed. Man Yaya insists that one should resort to magic only when doing good (26). Though Tituba learns the ways of the *sorcière* and the use of her craft to help others, the typical European and Western perceptions of witchcraft appear in Tituba's confrontations with the Whites that she encounters. As Condé reverses perspective to champion the concept of magic and the individual capable of performing it, and she criticizes the dominant hypocrisy of the Western perceptions demonstrated both by Susanna Endicott in Barbados and the Puritans in Boston. While in the service of Susanna Endicott, John Indien explains to Tituba the situation of two slaves having been accused of dealing with Satan, which for the dominant White members of society is synonymous with being a witch: "...car pour les Blancs, c'est là ce que veut dire être sorcière..." (48).²⁴ Demonstrating the absurdity of the link between sorcery and Satan, Tituba frantically

²² "In fact, she was hardly of this world and lived constantly in [the company of her man and sons]. She had cultivated to a fine art the ability to communicate with the invisible" (Condé *I* 8-9). All citations in English will come from this text, whereas all citations in French will come from the text denoted (Condé *Moi*).

²³ "That everything must be respected. That man is not the master riding through his kingdom on horseback" (9).

²⁴ "For the whites that's what being a witch means...!" (27).

exclaims that she had never heard of such a being before having set foot in the Christian house of Susanna Endicott.

Not only does Man Yaya insist that Tituba use magic only for good causes, she also condemns the world that oppresses Tituba, including the dominant social system that doubly shuns Man Yaya and Tituba for being *sorcière*, as well as Black women. When Tituba begs Man Yaya to aid her in using witchcraft to harm the bitter and prejudiced Susanna Endicott, a source of great suffering for Tituba, Man Yaya warns Tituba firmly against seeking vengeance. She shows her critique for the Whites' world when she exclaims to Tituba that she risks losing herself: "Tu seras pareille à eux, qui ne savent que tuer, détruire" (53).²⁵ Condé plays with perspectives and reverses the way in which a witch is typically socially perceived in the West. Tituba's character, who with the help of Man Yaya does only good with her magical powers, contrasts significantly with the townspeople of Boston and their views of witchcraft or of the *sorcière*. Tituba takes a gentle approach to the supernatural world that surrounds her, explaining to the young and troubled ("possessed") Abigail the harmlessness of the spirits: "Les invisibles autour de nous ne nous tourmentent que si nous les provoquons" (74).²⁶ Abigail retorts that the Devil remains a constant threat: "Le Malin nous torment tous...Nous serons tous damnés..." (74).²⁷ The young girl's reference to "le Malin," or the Devil, demonstrates the immediate connection that her Puritan community has taught her to make between the idea of a supernatural and the idea of "evil." Although Tituba tries to use her sorcery to help the children around her, they eventually denounce her and publicly accuse her of witchcraft and evil doing.

Davies links Tituba's role as a *sorcière* to feminist discussions that associate the *sorcière* with resistance to the oppression of dominant patriarchal systems. For Davies, Condé helps by "associating 'witchery' with the transgressive knowledges of women resisting dominance" (77). Davies also mentions the association of the *sorcière* with evil, as we observe with Tituba's experiences in the Puritan community. Though the witch has "transgressive power," in Western cultures she is, nonetheless, "allied with evil or identified as consorting with the devil, a very specific Christian definition of the limits of

²⁵ "You will have become like them, knowing only how to kill and destroy" (30).

²⁶ "The invisible world around us only torments us if we provoke it" (44).

female power” (Davies 78). Although Tituba faces imprisonment and punishment owing to her identity as a witch, Condé justifies Tituba’s magical powers while denouncing the hypocrisy of the New England community. As Davies indicates, witchcraft provided a direct link to the devil for the Puritan (Western) mindset.

To reject the association of witches with all that is evil, Condé insists on presenting a centered perspective. Tituba herself wonders at her own resistance to harming others, her devotion to adhering to her own virtues:

Ceux qui ont suivi mon récit jusqu’ici, ont dû s’irriter. Quelle est donc cette sorcière qui ne sait pas haïr, qui est à chaque fois confondue par la mechanceté du coeur de l’homme? Pour la millième fois, je pris la résolution d’être différente, de pousser bec et ongles. Ah! Changer mon coeur! En enduire les parois d’un venin de serpent... Au lieu de cela, je ne sentais en moi que tendresse et compassion pour les déshérités, révolte devant l’injustice!²⁸ (232)

Tituba’s adherence to Man Yaya’s instructions to respect all living beings and to employ magic for the purpose of helping and doing good creates a contradiction to the traditional Western link of witchcraft and evil. Her identity as *sorcière* allows her to refuse the typical marginalization that she would have faced on some level.

Geta LeSeur also addresses the significance of dealing with the invisible world for both Tituba and Télumée. LeSeur begins her argument by addressing the two female characters’ status as marooned figures. Their act of *marronnage*, or escaping slavery by settling in a remote location, helps the characters assert their moral agency. Linking the marooned nature of Tituba and Télumée to their actions of *sorcellerie*, LeSeur explains:

Both characters seek refuge in the forests of their respective islands, communicate with the invisible world, take a physical and/or spiritual journey, resist fatalism, and seek physical or mental liberation. Télumée and Tituba occupy a limited space on the margins of their societies at large and sometimes their own island communities. (96)

²⁷ “The devil torments us all...We shall all be damned...” (44-45).

²⁸ “Those of you who have read my tale up till now must be wondering who is this witch devoid of hatred, who is misled each time by the wickedness in men’s hearts? For the nth time I made up my mind to be different and fight it out tooth and nail. But how to work a change in my heart and coat its lining with snake venom?...Instead, I could only feel tenderness and compassion for the disinherited and a sense of revolt against injustice” (150-151).

By their combination of refuge and *sorcellerie*, the characters refuse definition from without: It permits them to have claim to their own empowerment, to find their voices.

LeSeur's idea of *marronnage* and its direct link to the assumption of voice for Télumée and Tituba invokes thoughts of real Maroon communities. For slaves in the French Caribbean, as well as in the wider Caribbean, escape symbolized the most significant and poignant form of resistance. As Bonham Richardson explains: "Maroons, runaway slaves, were adjuncts of every West Indian slave society...Maroons staged raids from their palisaded villages, cultivated their own crops, and occasionally achieved formal autonomy from the colonial government" (15). Just as real slaves sought liberation in the form of *marronnage*, Télumée and Tituba seek their own kind of freedom. For LeSeur, the liberation of *marronnage* parallels the two fictional characters' search for liberation.

In light of Bonham Richardson's observations, the reader can make a link between the *marronnage* of Télumée and Tituba and that of real people and historical figures. He describes the crucial nature of the state of *marronnage*: "It is probably safe to assert that the freedom and independence associated with *marronnage* was an irresistible and unending source of inspiration for the plantation slaves" (15). Not only does one observe the symbolic state of Télumée and Tituba as Maroons, one also sees how Tituba actually actively engages in the revolt of a Maroon village in Barbados upon her return from New England. Richardson and LeSeur explain why *marronnage* is crucial to Télumée's and Tituba's attainment of moral agency. Linking sorcery with *marronnage* is also pivotal to understanding alienation as a form of empowerment. Separating oneself intentionally can result in liberation, and is a strategy of identity politics (Fox-Genovese 165).

Examining the ways in which Tituba relies on her ability to communicate with the invisible world leads to the consideration of Télumée and her identity as a *sorcière*. The character man Cia, close friend of Télumée's grandmother Reine Sans Nom, plays an integral role in teaching Télumée the world of magic. Upon meeting Télumée for the first time, man Cia recognizes the young girl's resilience. She describes the encounter:

...man Cia...me dévisagea longuement et se mit à m'embrasser, un premier baiser sur le front, pour elle-même...; puis un deuxième sur la joue gauche, puisque

j'étais de celles dont on ne tire pas la ficelle pour les faire danser,...et un dernier parce que, elle le voyait déjà, j'étais une vaillante petite négresse.²⁹ (60)

Man Cia continues to declare the strength and resilience that she observes in Télumée as a young girl, saying: "...tu seras sur terre comme une cathédrale" (60).³⁰ Télumée reflects back on man Cia's words throughout her childhood as well as her experiences as a young woman; and she refuses subjugation with her encouraged strength.

Télumée does not converse with man Cia regularly until the death of her grandmother, Reine Sans Nom. After suffering the loss, Télumée seeks the strong guidance of man Cia and begins to learn of herbs and spirits. A Sunday ritual begins in her weekly visits to man Cia's isolated home. Télumée describes her lessons in becoming adept with herbs and spirits:

...nous nous promenions dans la forêt où man Cia m'initiait aux secrets des plantes. Elle m'apprenait également le corps humain, ses noeuds et ses faiblesses, comment le frotter, chasser malaises et crispations, démissures. Je sus délivrer bêtes et gens, lever les envoûtements, renvoyer tous leurs maléfices à ceux-là mêmes qui les avaient largués.³¹ (194)

Though Télumée eventually adjusts well to the idea of being a *sorcière*, she refuses to follow man Cia's example and relinquish her human form. Tired of her human form, man Cia decides to live the rest of her life as a dog. Despite the latter's transformation, Télumée resists and continues to face life with her human form. Her resistance to transformation demonstrates her determination to refuse marginalization, to keep her voice. She will not avoid the oppressive constraints of her society by changing forms, rather she will create her own social niche to which she can belong.

²⁹ Translation: "...Ma Cia noticed me at last, gave me a long look, and began to kiss me: a first kiss on the brow—for herself,...a second one on the left cheek, because I was not one of those who danced when others pulled the strings; ...and a last one because she could already see I was a fine little Negress" (Schwarz-Bart *Bridge* 51). All citations in English will come from this text.

³⁰ "You will rise over the earth like a cathedral" (51).

³¹ "...we'd get up and go for a walk in the forest, where Ma Cia initiated me into the secrets of plants. She also taught me the human body, its centers, its weaknesses, how to rub it, how to get rid of faintness and ties and sprains. I learned how to set people and animals free, how to break spells and turn sorcery back on the sorcerers" (185-6).

In time, Télumée adapts to her new role as a *sorcière*, and she begins to serve the members of her community with her knowledge and abilities. In her adult life, having lost her dear husband, Amboise, she begins to help those around her despite her grief. Télumée narrates the manner in which the townspeople of La Folie begin to perceive her as a *sorcière*:

Mais lorsqu'on m'amena des vaches écumantes, le garrot gonflé de croûtes noires, je fis les gestes que m'avait enseigné man Cia et l'une d'abord, puis l'autre, les bêtes reprirent goût à la vie. Le bruit courut que je savais faire et défaire, que je détenais les secrets et sur un énorme gaspillage de salive, on me hissa malgré moi au rang de dormeuse, de sorcière de première.³² (232)

As Télumée adapts to her identity as *sorcière*, the title serves both to alienate her from her society, yet at the same time to elevate her above social constraints whereby, she can construct a place for herself. Télumée, like Tituba, adheres to her standing as a *sorcière* accepting the "alienation" that the term brings as "empowerment." Because alienation represents a key to developing a centered perspective, the characters can benefit from it in their search for liberation. By welcoming the identification of *sorcière* on their own terms, Tituba and Télumée elevate themselves above the typical social constraints. Wallace sums up nicely that, owing to her ability to work magic: "Eventually, she is proclaimed by the village inhabitants as 'Télumée Miracle'" (433). Though at first reluctant to claim her identity as a *sorcière*, Télumée ultimately succeeds in using it as one of her methods of self-empowerment. In a similar fashion, Tituba embraces her identity as a *sorcière* in order to find her voice. In addition to using her status as a witch to affirm her identity, Tituba reaches out to individuals within and beyond her community to help them.

Magic allows both Télumée and Tituba to escape the oppression that they face in their own societies as well as in others. The title *sorcière* gives Télumée and Tituba the opportunity to seize alienation on their own terms. As Nikki Giovanni explains, alienation can serve as the greatest strength (Fox-Genovese 165). Jean Franco describes the

³² "But when people brought me cows foaming at the mouth, their withers covered with black scabs, I did what Ma Cia had taught me, and, first one and then another, the animals began to want to live again. The rumor spread that I knew how to do and undo, that I knew secrets, and with a vast waste of saliva I was raised in spite of myself to the rank of seer and first-class witch" (223).

powerful social role of mysticism as linked to sorcery. Franco claims that mysticism "has been considered the space of the feminine in some contemporary theory" (xv).

Mysticism, like sorcery, allows women to demonstrate authority over others. It gives females in the French Caribbean the power to escape marginalization. Télumée's and Tituba's adherence to the identity of *sorcière* provides them freedom to speak and act against social expectations. It gives them a place.

Chapter 3: Creating a Space through Fiction

The previous two chapters have examined the manner in which literature presents a viable tool for studying agency as well as the way that sorcery both marginalizes and liberates the characters Tituba and Télumée. In another aspect, these two novels create fictional spaces for their characters. Specifically Tituba and Télumée are models that can help us better understand the problem of empowerment for the French Caribbean Black woman. In addition, examining the two characters reveals the means by which they resolve (or attempt to resolve) the problem, how they assume voice, and how they find a space for themselves.

Condé and Schwarz-Bart have invented spaces for their female characters. The fictional nature of a novel proves crucial in this analysis, as it enables the author to sidestep social constraints in imaginative ways. Critic Jean Franco performs a similar analysis of the manner in which Mexican women attain liberation. Her insights apply to the characters of Tituba and Télumée in that she examines postcolonial Mexico and the impact of colonialism on the struggle for power among marginalized groups. Franco's aim is: "...to trace those moments when dissident subjects appear in the social text and when struggle for interpretive power erupts" (xii). One may likewise examine the paths that Tituba and Télumée take in order to affirm their own identities or to find their voices. They manage to separate themselves from the oppression that the other females in their stories face. Although both succumb to the charms of men and eventually marry, both also refuse the typical role of subservient female who occupies her life by taking care of her man, her children, and her home.

Speaking in the first person, both heroines "own" their stories. Renée Larrier explains the significance of first person narration, which leads to a sort of dual or two-fold authorship. For Larrier, the two-fold authorship shared by the writer and the narrator empowers both women. They move together "...toward subjectivity, empowering them, thus conferring authority on women and their communities" (2). Furthermore, the partnership in story telling allows the author and narrator to "...challenge constructions of

women and their experiences found in orature, literature, and popular culture” (Larrier 2). Larrier’s term *orature* links the significance of an oral culture conveyed through graphic symbols to the way whereby such a culture is then eventually transcribed into "letters on a page." Tituba and Télumée both speak not only of themselves and their experiences as French Caribbean Black women, but they also both tell of a strong matrilineal line that encourages and strengthens them.

The use of first person creates credibility for the characters as well as presenting an intimate picture of their lives and the challenges they face. Condé and Schwarz-Bart have allowed their heroines to address the reader. This personal link between the reader and the narrator allows the narrator to assume her own space, which is then acknowledged and upheld by the reader.

From the beginning of Condé’s novel, one feels a personal connection to Tituba as she explains her arrival into the world. Abena, Tituba’s mother, suffers rape at the hands of a White sailor, becoming pregnant with Tituba en route to Barbados. Violently conceived, Tituba learns early that pain goes with the color of her skin as well as her gender. As Tituba begins on her story, one understands her marginalization. Though Tituba seeks and receives guidance and support from her mother, Abena, the latter provides support for her daughter only after her own death. Tituba explains her mother’s resentment of her as a child owing to the vicious way in which she was conceived:

Quand découvris-je que ma mère ne m'aimait pas?...Peut-être quand j'atteignis cinq ou six ans. J'avais beau être <<mal sortie>>, c'est-à-dire le tient à peine rougeâtre et les cheveux carrément crépus, je ne cessais pas de lui remettre en l'esprit le Blanc qui l'avait possédée...au milieu d'un cercle de marins, voyeurs obscènes. Je lui rappelais à tout instant sa douleur et son humiliation.³³ (Condé *Moi* 18)

Tituba grows resilient and refuses to remain on the margins of a society that shuns her. With the guidance and support of her mother’s spirit and the aged but magical Man Yaya, Tituba gains strength and courage. One witnesses a strong sense of solidarity, as

³³ "When did I discover that my mother did not love me? Perhaps when I was five or six years old. Although the color of my skin was far from being light and my hair was crinkly all over, I never stopped reminding my mother of the white sailor who had raped her...while surrounded by a circle of obscene

the two older women lead Tituba in her efforts of self-exploration. The characters repeatedly and directly note the plight of the woman and the irony that surrounds her desire to liberate herself. Abena continuously wonders why women cannot do without men: “Pourquoi les femmes ne peuvent-elles se passer des hommes?” (31).³⁴

Clearly demonstrating the irony of the French Caribbean Black woman’s plight, Tituba mentions her mother’s sorrow that she had not been born male. Women’s struggles embody such sadness that Abena worries about introducing a girl into the world. Tituba relates her mother’s concerns and considers the situation of women in the face of male domination and control: “Pour s’affranchir de leur condition [féminine], ne devaient-elles pas passer par les volontés de ceux-là même qui les tenaient en servitude et coucher dans leurs lits?” (17).³⁵ Tituba’s clear reference to the ironic idea that a woman must rely on a man even if it is to escape oppression suffered at his hands demonstrates a major dilemma. The woman must outsmart the patriarchal system that marginalizes her, relying on that very system for liberation.

Condé complicates Tituba’s character when she voluntarily enters slavery in order to remain close to her lover, John Indien. As Tituba endures the loathing eye while in servitude to Susanna Endicott, she laments her choice and explains her double suffering as a result of her choice. She describes other slaves as having greater freedom:

Les esclaves qui descendaient par fournées entières des négriers et que toute la bonne société de Bridgetown s’assemblait pour regarder, afin d’en railler en chœur le démarche, les traits et la posture, étaient bien plus libres que moi. Car ils n’avaient pas choisi leurs chaînes. Ils n’avaient pas marché,...pour se livrer aux trafiquants et offrir leurs dos à l’étampage.³⁶ (45)

voyeurs. I constantly reminded her of the pain and humiliation" (Condé *I* 6). All subsequent translations will come from this text while citations in French will come from the original text denoted (Condé *Moi*).

³⁴ “Why can’t women do without men?” (15).

³⁵ “In order to free themselves from their condition, didn’t they have to submit to the will of those very men who kept them in bondage and to sleep with them?” (6).

³⁶ “The slaves who flocked off the ships in droves and whose gait, features, and carriage the good people of Bridgetown mocked were far freer than I was. For the slaves had not chosen their chains. They had not walked of their own accord...to give themselves up to the slave dealers and bend their backs to the branding iron” (25).

As Tituba laments her decision, the reader tries to grasp her complicated situation. Before willingly subjecting herself to slavery in order to remain with her lover, Tituba had been free, although isolated to the margins of society owing to her lifestyle of herbs, plants, and “hoodoo.”

Despite this enslavement of her own accord, Tituba’s dehumanization and objectification first at the hands of Susanna Endicott and then the Reverend Samuel Parris, she manages to survive intact. Once in New England in the service of Parris, Tituba describes his frail and ailing wife Elizabeth, whom Tituba befriends in a way, as “...une jeune femme d’une étrange joliesse” (64).³⁷ Although the dominant Puritan society remains disdainful of such a friendship, Tituba maintains her gentle nature of helping others. She manages in some ways to dissolve certain barriers of race between herself and her mistress. Though Tituba acts as a confidante and sometimes a companion of Elizabeth Parris, Samuel Parris demonstrates his loathing of the idea of a slave, a Black woman, becoming a confidante of his wife. As Tituba and Elizabeth Parris sit side by side and try to understand one another, Parris enters and abruptly exclaims vehemently: “Elizabeth, êtes-vous folle? Vous laissez cette negresse s’asseoir à côté de vous?” (66).³⁸ Despite Parris’s humiliation of Tituba and his rejection of her as a disdainful object, the bond between Tituba and Elizabeth Parris stands.

Tituba expresses surprise at Elizabeth Parris’s initial words of compassion. The mistress exclaims: “Comme cela doit être cruel pour toi d’être séparée des tiens....de ton peuple” (64).³⁹ Such sympathy startles Tituba, who responds that she imagines herself lucky to at least have John Indien nearby. As the two women embark on a discussion about marriage, Tituba’s portrayal to the reader of her mistress’s treatment by her husband demonstrates her suffering, as Samuel Parris (as well as Puritan society) relegate her to the realm of “other,” of weaker, of object. Tituba and Elizabeth Parris find themselves linked by their female nature, although they do not enjoy the same privileges and rights.

Condé plays with typical perceptions, though, presenting Tituba’s situation somewhat more favorably insofar as she knows the essence of her femininity. Elizabeth

³⁷ “...a young woman who was pretty in an odd way” (38).

³⁸ “Elizabeth, are you mad? Letting this Negress sit next to you” (39).

Parris describes marriage as a dismal, even dreadful component of life as a woman. She explains her doubt that a husband has the ability to make a good companion, specifying that her husband's touch comprises a completely unpleasant experience as she marvels: "Bienheureuse si tu crois qu'un mari peut être un compagnon plaisant et si le contact de sa main ne te fait pas courir un frisson le long du dos!" (64).⁴⁰ Tituba, on the other hand, reveals the joy of being a woman and having a companion. Even though society pushes her into the category of other (according here to her gender), she nevertheless maintains the ability to find joy in sexuality.

Some feminists argue that a woman's ability to relate to her sexuality actually serves as a source of empowerment. Luce Irigaray, for example, encourages women to write their bodies and to recount aspects of their sexuality. For Irigaray, "writing the female body" empowers the woman by allowing her to address issues of female sexuality, which have been suppressed or ignored by a dominant, patriarchal society. In this respect, one sees another component of identity politics. Specifically, Irigaray's revelation of empowerment through female sexuality links directly to the gender affirming component of identity politics. Irigaray writes: "Thus a woman's (re)discovery of herself can only signify the possibility of not sacrificing any of her pleasures to another, of not identifying with anyone in particular, of never being simply one" (104). By giving Tituba the voice to describe her sexuality, and the physical and personal nature of pleasure that she seeks and receives as a woman, Condé allows Tituba to use aspects of her gender to attain a sort of self-empowerment. Condé arms Tituba with the power to use her discovery of sexual pleasure in order to escape the confines of a narrowly defined identity, which the New England community tries to thrust upon her.

Tituba presents somewhat of a puzzle to the society in which she finds herself. Although she does, indeed, endure the oppression of slavery, of the color of her skin, and of her sex, she still manages to present aspects of personal liberty. She seeks a space apart for herself. In some ways, her marginalization allows her to assume a place despite the efforts to keep her exiled from the realm of humanity. Not only does Tituba befriend the mistress, Elizabeth Parris, she even feels pity and empathy for her. She welcomes the

³⁹ "How cruel it must be to be separated from your own family....and your people" (38).

kindness that Mistress Parris offers, but she somehow also manages to appear as the stronger, more enlightened, and less victimized of the two women. In this way, the very characteristics that allow mainstream society to label Tituba as different enable her to gain a small triumph.

Jean Franco's attempts to study "dissident subjects" in texts may better explain Tituba's victory. Franco describes the significance of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz in the Mexican perception of women. As Franco addresses the importance of this postcolonial Mexican figure, one may look at Tituba with Franco's aid. Franco explains the significance of Sor Juana, who "...defended the rationality of women and was able to do so because the slippage between her devalued status as a woman and her empowerment by writing led her to understand gender difference as a social construction, and interpretation as a rationalization of male interests" (xv). Similarly, Tituba manages to take advantage of her own situation as a woman to create a space for herself. Although dominant and mainstream society attempts to subjugate her, she defies its efforts by affirming her own "self." Furthermore, Tituba relates her story directly to her audience so that one grasps her situation. Though Tituba does not gain empowerment through writing, thanks to Condé, she certainly gains power through her direct narration of her life. As she describes the events of her life, the reader senses a quality of orature present in her accounts and those of other female characters. In Tituba's context, the idea of orature functions largely as a traditional aspect of her female community (of herself, of Man Yaya, and of Abena) in conveying information and exchanging ideas.

Just as Condé conveys a sense of orature, or spoken cultural components, Schwarz-Bart creates a text with similar traits. The weekly tales of Reine Sans Nom recounted regularly to Télumée and Élie every Thursday, capture the significance of orality in Caribbean culture. Télumée describes how her grandmother savors each word and gives her stories life: "Elle sentait ses mots, ses phrases, possédait l'art de les arranger en images et en sons, en musiques pure, en exaltation" (Schwarz-Bart *Pluie* 79).⁴¹ Schwarz-Bart bridges the gap between the spoken word and the written word,

⁴⁰ "You are most fortunate if you believe that a husband can be a pleasing companion and if touching his hand does not send shivers up your spine" (38).

⁴¹ "She was conscious of her words, her phrases, and possessed the art of arranging them in images and sounds, in pure music, in exaltation" (69). All subsequent translations will come from this text.

showing the reader the significance of voice (oral tradition): "Les contes étaient disposés en elle comme les pages d'un livre..." (79).⁴² Aside from simply incorporating significant aspects of oral culture (the telling of tales, for example) into her novel, Schwarz-Bart also allows Télumée to connect directly with the reader, thus allowing her to claim her space.

Télumée begins her story by presenting her heritage, "Présentation des miens." One immediately learns of the strong Lougandor line of women, to which Télumée belongs. Such matrilineal ties indicate that Télumée benefits from a network of females in her life, and that the women influencing her insist on the innate inner strength of women. An image of resilience repeats itself in the words of Reine Sans Nom: "...si lourds que soient les seins d'une femme, sa poitrine est toujours assez forte pour les supporter" (26).⁴³ This statement essentially remarks upon the resilience of women, and emphasizes their sex as a strength rather than a weakness. Kitzie McKinney explains that the first person narration allows Télumée to thwart the label of "other" to a certain extent. McKinney maintains that: "...the link between voice and memory is not broken by personal exile; her story is interwoven with that of the rural black communities in which she lives. Instead of being the marginal 'Other' in this text, Télumée is at the center, and her voice controls the narrative from beginning to end" (27). McKinney's thoughts relate to Larrier's idea of dual authorship, which can lead to affirming one's own space.

Larrier traces Télumée's "displacements" throughout the course of her life. Télumée changes location several times, serving for a while with the Desaragne family at Belle Feuille, then moving back to Fond Zombie, and afterward moving to La Folie, etc. Among her many moves or "displacements" within her native Guadeloupe, Télumée finds solace in the support and encouragement she receives from the women in her life. As Larrier explains, "Each trial is overseen by an older woman who provides direction: her grandmother Reine Sans Nom or Toussine, followed by her mentors Man Cia and Olympe" (57). Télumée's "displacements" are largely represented as voyages that will eventually lead her to respectability, self-determination, and wisdom. Benefiting from strong female guidance, Télumée learns to adjust to the various trials and miseries that

⁴² "The stories were ranged inside her like the pages of a book" (69).

she encounters in her life. With Télumée as the central focus of attention, the novel gives her the space to recount her story and to assume her voice. The reader also grasps the significant role of female solidarity in Télumée's success.

A quick comparison to Tituba's own "displacements" demonstrates a difference between the two characters and their journeys of self-empowerment. While Télumée seems to take a series of voyages, Tituba's displacements are more abrupt and violent. Tituba's migrations do ultimately lead to her attainment of moral agency; but Condé creates more brutal events, to which Tituba responds with a more aggressive and "revolutionary" approach.

Although Télumée appears triumphantly at the conclusion of her story, beginning and ending her personal account as an aged and respected woman, she certainly faces her share of hardships. Where Télumée encounters trying times, she falls back on the support of the strong women that love and support her. After Télumée decides to marry Élie, her childhood friend and first love, she eventually suffers at his hands and faces the abused fate that many women endure. Télumée describes the ways in which Élie would reduce her to nothing: "...Élie me traitait de nuage noir...il avait des violences étranges, des cruautés choisies qu'il appelait ses caprices, ses petites joies" (154).⁴⁴ Eventually, Élie would beat Télumée without even acknowledging her existence: "Élie me frappait maintenant sans aucune parole, sans aucun regard. Un soir, je sombrai dans le néant" (154).⁴⁵ Though Télumée begins to lose her sense of self, becoming like an apparition, she finds support and healing in Reine Sans Nom. The latter caringly attends both physical and emotional wounds inflicted by Élie, as Télumée explains:

Sitôt qu'elle entendait le galop du cheval, grand-mère se précipitait vers ma case pour voir si rien n'était arrivé, et puis elle m'ondoyait les membres, massait, à l'occasion, les endroits où avaient porté les poings ou les pieds d'Élie...à me faire reprendre odeur et couleur aux yeux de mon homme.⁴⁶ (159)

⁴³ "However heavy a woman's breasts, her chest is always strong enough to carry them" (17). All subsequent translations will come from this text.

⁴⁴ "...Élie would call me a black cloud...He would indulge in strange kinds of violence, choice cruelties that he called his specialties, his little pleasures" (146).

⁴⁵ "Élie beat me now without a word, without a look. One evening I sank into the void" (146).

⁴⁶ "As soon as she heard the horse galloping away, Grandmother used to rush over to my cabin to see if anything had happened, and then she'd anoint my arms and legs, massage if necessary the places bruised by Élie's fists or feet...to give me back scent and color in the eyes of my man" (150).

Critic Patrice J. Proulx also addresses the significance of female solidarity, remarking that the “Présentation des miens” illuminates the necessary support of the Lougandor women for one another. He describes the function of the novel’s first part, which “...souligne la spécificité de chacune des femmes concernées, tout en témoignant simultanément de l’articulation d’une communauté féminine originaire, suggérée par la représentation des ancêtres telles que Minerve, Reine Sans Nom, et Victoire” (136).⁴⁷ This idea of a “feminine community” within Télumée’s strong matrilineal background gives her support in her efforts to find her place, to assume her voice. Proulx continues to explain that with strong support of her female mentors, Télumée succeeds in voicing her story, which subsequently allows her to create her own space. Proulx writes that it is ultimately “...la position discursive de Télumée qui structure son espace dans la communauté générale. Dans son rôle griotte, elle occupe une place d’énonciation privilégiée; elle a la possibilité de construire un espace communicatif par son discours” (136).⁴⁸ For Proulx, although Télumée recounts her own story, her success in maintaining her sense of self throughout her various trials in life relies heavily on her Lougandor legacy. More specifically, her grandmother, Toussine, largely paves the road that Télumée takes to find herself and her place. Toussine serves as a crucial model of resistance for Télumée as well as an example of a woman who succeeds “à synthétiser son espace communal et individuel” (Proulx 137). Télumée has Toussine as an example of one who succeeds in fashioning a place both in the context of the individual as well as that of the community. In essence, Schwarz-Bart integrates the personal and communal spaces, whereas Condé has Tituba actually resist and attempt to change society.

It becomes clear that, for Télumée to find her own space, she must not exclude the significance of the people in her life. Her connection with the people around her, with her community, helps her in her quest for empowerment or liberation. Though her community oppresses her and relegates her to the margins of society at times, she must

⁴⁷ “...underlines the specificity of each woman, while simultaneously attentive to the articulation of an original feminine community, as suggested by the representation of ancestors such as Minerve, Reine Sans Nom, and Victoire.” (*Translation mine*)

⁴⁸ “...Télumée’s discursive position that structures her space in the general community. In her role as repository of an oral tradition, she occupies a privileged place of enunciation; she has the possibility to construct a communicative space by her discourse.” (*Translation mine*)

function within it. She asserts her voice within the chorus of others without losing her distinct voice or sense of self. McKinney speaks of both Télumée and her grandmother, explaining their influence on those around them: “Both women gain mythic and political status in their communities not just because they prove themselves as exemplary figures of moral strength and integrity, but also because they remain active forces in the lives of others” (30). Although Télumée learns to function within her community as a way of creating her own space, she shows her tendencies at times to desert her community as she grapples with the way in which she may best find her voice.

Télumée’s occasional search for solace in nature away from her native society relates to Tituba, as she performs a similar method of retreat. Both Télumée and Tituba find comfort in the isolation of nature, as mentioned in the discussion of the way others perceived their affiliation with the spirits or sorcery. Geta LeSeur maintains that both Télumée and Tituba take “similar paths of *marronnage*.” As such, they “occupy a limited space on the margins of their societies at large and sometimes their own island communities” (96). LeSeur explains that both female characters’ close affiliation with nature and solitude at times allows them to connect “to their personal histories.” Moreover, both “seek their own space and connection to the land and nature” (96). As LeSeur asserts, both Tituba and Télumée do seek refuge away from society. Their retreats into nature in some ways further their marginalization. Yet, of course, such retreats allow the women to assert their own moral agency away from others.

Télumée and Tituba both seek refuge in nature, but they do so in different ways, or to different ends. Télumée eventually assimilates into her society. Therefore, her seeking solace in nature proves a means by which she can ultimately (re)join her community. As such, she can attain subject status as a member of the group. Tituba, on the other hand, seeks refuge in nature because she does not ultimately wish to join the communities that marginalize her. She attempts to affirm her agency outside of those communities and demonstrates tendencies toward revolt or rebellion rather than assimilation.

The ideas of LeSeur somewhat contradict those of McKinney and Proulx. How, then, should one view the efforts of Télumée and Tituba to find their own space? Both characters rely on a combination of methods to create a place for themselves. They must

set themselves far enough away from the society that seeks to oppress them, yet they must still be able to function in that society to a certain extent. Both Tituba and Télumée rely on the strong sense of solidarity they have developed among the influential women on whom they come to depend. For Tituba, Abena and man Yaya serve as the most significant female counter-parts; while for Télumée, Reine Sans Nom and man Cia play essential roles. Neither Tituba nor Télumée is willing to forgo the sexual pleasures of being a woman and of enjoying a male partner. However, Tituba finds herself eventually wronged by John Indien, after which she takes other lovers. Similarly, Télumée experiences abuse and belittlement at the hands of Élie. She also takes another lover afterwards. Although both Télumée and Tituba seek a place for themselves that does not directly correspond to the place that their societies would have imposed on them, they must function to an extent within the constraints of their societies in order to gain and maintain their spaces. Both women rely heavily on a strong network of women, which supports them in their endeavors. Yet, both also deviate somewhat from the examples of their predecessors in making a way for themselves.

Télumée's and Tituba's methods of creating fictional spaces for themselves differ from one another as well. Studying the problem of empowerment, one realizes that Schwarz-Bart and Condé work with different models that lead to the assumption of voice. Télumée's community eventually accepts her, and comes to revere her. Both the fictional community and the reader honor the space that Schwarz-Bart has allowed Télumée to create for herself. In rapport with the respect and standing that she has earned, Télumée must function within her community to maintain her voice. Tituba, however, works in other communities trying to establish a place for herself. The reader recognizes her space, and Tituba insists on its reality by refusing to be silenced; but the communities against which she works do not recognize it. Tituba, therefore, represents a more revolutionary character. She adheres to her own moral agency and encourages change in the standing system of classification. On the other hand, Télumée functions diligently within her community, adjusting aspects of her persona to remain heard. Both techniques eventually lead the characters to gain voice and to find their own spaces, but in different manners. One must decide for oneself which technique aids the problem of

empowerment the most: learning to function as a subject (rather than object) within a standing society *or* completely refusing standing systems in hopes of change.

Chapter 4: Writing Women into Empowerment

The ways in which Schwarz-Bart and Condé create fictional spaces for their respective characters Téliumée and Tituba lead to a discussion of their medium. Language (or discourse) plays a significant role for Téliumée and Tituba in their successful efforts to attain subject status. They refuse to be silenced. They tell their own stories from the first person point of view, wherein language is the tool by which they assert their moral agency. The specific uses of discourse in the two novels lead to the discovery of ways their protagonists assume voice.

If the concept of gender refers more specifically to an issue of language rather than an issue of biology, then a brief explanation about the question of language and its use with respect to marginalized groups, specifically women, will prove useful. As Peter Barry explains, feminists of differing viewpoints argue whether or not “there exists a form of language which is inherently feminine” (126). Within the basic debate of an inherent feminine language, an argument supporting its existence may claim that men write in a way that is “characterised by carefully balanced and patterned rhetorical sequences;” whereas a woman’s writing demonstrates “...clauses [that] are linked in looser sentences, rather than carefully balanced and patterned as in male prose” (Barry 126). Barry continues to write that female writers are perceived as “suffering the handicap of having to use a medium (prose writing) which is essentially a male instrument fashioned for male purposes” (126). The idea that women face a barrier to expression within the realm of prose leads the examination of Téliumée and Tituba to another level. Finding their voices involves challenging the ways in which rules and norms of patriarchy have succeeded in inscribing themselves within language and discourse. Schwarz-Bart and Condé create their respective “fictional” characters and allow them to tell their own stories; yet, they are largely confined to male forms of prose or literary discourse within the boundaries of their novels. How, then, can one interpret the language strategies used by the authors to arm their characters in the struggle for voice?

Moreover approaching the topic of discourse (and its possible limitations), one should also look at ways by which female writers attempt to escape the confines of a “male” tool of expression. Feminists such as Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, although not directly linked to the theory and tenets of postcolonialism, provide perspectives that further the analysis of Condé’s and Schwarz-Bart’s use of language. Both Cixous and Irigaray address the question of language for women, as they engage “in a political project designed to create an alternative, nonphallogocentric discourse” (Grodén 243). In addition to attempting to create a form of discourse that escapes the constraints of a masculinized language, both Cixous and Irigaray look at aspects of female sexuality as a source of empowerment. They rely on the idea of *jouissance*, that of a woman’s “instinctual economy” or sexuality, which cannot be identified with a man’s (Grodén 245). This example of *jouissance* also links back to the concept of identity politics in that women may rely on their gender or sexual orientation to achieve moral agency.

One of the methods a woman writer may use, *l’écriture féminine* suggested by Hélène Cixous, claims to oppose an essentialist view of the feminine, or the idea that male and female characteristics are “given” essences.⁴⁹ Essentialism in general refers to an intrinsic nature, or a real or essential presence. With respect to the “male-ness” of language, Cixous claims that “a feminine practice of writing” refuses specific definition in terms of a male-oriented system and that *l’écriture féminine* “...does and will take place in areas other than those subordinated to philosophico-theoretical domination.” She continues to explain that a feminine form of writing refuting patriarchal systems “...will be conceived by subjects who are breakers of automatism, by peripheral figures that no authority can ever subjugate” (Cixous 253). In considering Cixous’ ideas regarding *l’écriture féminine* with respect to Condé and Schwarz-Bart, it matters how language use may have inhibited or helped the process of Télumée and Tituba assuming their voices. One must, therefore, consider the assumption of “openness” in *l’écriture féminine*.

Openness as a term assumes a lack of repressive categories, and asks what the *feminine* is. The idea that the female body transcends rules and transgresses boundaries is one that both Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray would encourage: they both attempt to

⁴⁹ Although Cixous’ feminine economy has been accused of harboring essentialist assumptions, the focus of this particular study is the way Cixous challenges sexual oppositions of male and female.

“write the female body” (Barry 128). Cixous urges women to do just this, explaining that women “...must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetorics, regulations and codes...” (256). In a similar manner, Luce Irigaray invokes erotic discourse and speaks through her body. From a stylistic and discursive point of view, Irigaray uses many commas, constantly adding to her thoughts without necessarily concluding previous ideas. Such a writing style aims to demonstrate fluidity in language and break down logical structures.

Aside from her writing style, which we might venture to say is feminine, Irigaray also addresses the sexuality of a woman and writes explicitly about the woman’s body in an attempt to refuse patriarchal norms. She aims to construct female voice through the female body. Not only does Irigaray deconstruct typical (White, Western, male) perceptions and paradigms, she also sets out to redefine the feminine. Irigaray explains that the binary opposition following Western phallo-centrism is problematic owing to the classification of woman as the opposite of man. For Irigaray, the singular nature of the opposition poses a problem owing to the plural nature of a woman’s sex: “Thus woman does not have a sex. She has at least two of them, but they cannot be identified as ones” (102). As a result of her plural nature, woman “...is indefinitely other in herself” (103).

With the perspectives of *l’écriture féminine*, and the plural nature of woman (within herself) in mind, one may examine the ways in which Schwarz-Bart and Condé use discourse to create female characters who succeed in achieving self-empowerment. Let us first examine the character of Télumée and the language that she, as the narrator, uses to express her world, her experiences, and her triumphs. In her “Présentation des miens,” Télumée describes the perseverance exhibited by her grandmother, Toussine, in the face of adversity. As the members of Toussine’s community reflect upon her determination to overcome life’s miseries, they refuse to categorize her as a woman, acknowledging the limitations of such a category. Calling Toussine simply a “woman” would fail to encompass her entire identity or existence. The townspeople compare her after she overcame the death of one of her daughters to what she was before the loss:

...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 négresse, la barque, la voile et le vent, car elle ne s'était pas habituée au malheur.⁵⁰ (Schwarz-Bart *Pluie* 29)

After this reflection by members of her community, Toussine earns the name "Reine Sans Nom," which expresses her prestige among the people around her.

In addition to grappling with what constitutes being a *woman*, and the ways in which calling an individual by that title may confine her to a social space with limited room to deviate, one also observes the use of nature as a metaphor for a woman. As Télumée narrates her strong matrilineal support by describing the women who guide her, she compares them to nature out of respect for their determination. As she describes the beauty of her mother, Victoire, Télumée frequently refers to “la femme arbre” or the “woman tree.” Describing women in a manner that provokes thoughts of a tree signifies both strength and the wisdom of age. Télumée describes her mother in elegant and flowing prose:

...à bien observer son regard, on y lisait sa détermination à demeurer sereine sous la violence même des vents, et à considérer toutes choses à partir de ce visage haut levé...Quand elle se tenait assise au soleil, il y avait dans la laque noire de sa peau des reflets couleur de bois de rose, comme on voit aux anciennes berceuses.⁵¹ (33)

With Télumée’s description of Victoire, one imagines a woman who stands tall and proud (like a tree with strong branches that reach towards the sky) in the face of adversity (or strong winds). Metaphorically equating Victoire to a rocking chair also invokes ideas of maternal protectiveness, as one can imagine a mother rocking her child in an old rocking chair fashioned from rosewood. Schwarz-Bart’s fluid prose allows Télumée to describe *la femme arbre*, in this case, her grandmother.

⁵⁰ “They thought of the old Toussine, in rags, and compared her with the Toussine of today—not a woman, for what is a woman? Nothing at all, they said, whereas Toussine was a bit of the world, a whole country, a plume of a Negress, the ship, sail, and wind, for she had not made a habit of sorrow” (Schwarz-Bart *Bridge* 21). All subsequent translations for Schwarz-Bart will come from this text while the original French citations will come from the novel indicated above as *Pluie*.

⁵¹ “But if you looked into her eyes well, you saw her determination to stay serene however harshly the winds might blow, and to see everything from the point of view of that head held high...When she sat in the sun the black lacquer of her skin had glints the color of rosewood, like those you see in old rocking chairs” (25).

Another example of Schwarz-Bart's use of imagery from nature is the symbolic characteristic of a woman imagining herself as a stone or pebble at times in order to persevere. As presented in the first chapter of this thesis, Télumée imagines herself as a small rock, over which water may pass: "...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" (95).⁵² The image of Télumée likening herself to a pebble that allows troubled water to flow over her, while remaining unscathed and unharmed, presents a poetic literary metaphor that Cixous might describe as feminine. It also enables the reader to understand a source of Télumée's inner strength. Although some may argue that this metaphor actually objectifies her, owing to the passive nature of allowing the current to flow overtop this is the narrator's coping strategy for survival. Allowing "troubled waters" to flow past her, leaves her intact. She survives and eventually succeeds in achieving self-empowerment.

Schwarz-Bart's flowing metaphors include another example of her use of language for the benefit of women in general, as well as for Télumée's search for liberation. Télumée reflects on life, empowered by "Toutes les rivières, même les plus éclatantes, celles qui prennent le soleil dans leur courant, toutes les rivières descendent dans la mer et se noient. Et la vie attend l'homme comme la mer attend la rivière" (83).⁵³ After her beautiful reflection upon life waiting for the individual to invoke it, to discover it, Télumée describes her entrance into womanhood. She speaks of her body and the distinctive traits of her femininity: "J'avais quatorze ans sur mes deux seins et sous ma robe d'indienne à fleurs, j'étais une femme" (83-84).⁵⁴ Not only does Télumée affirm her identity as a woman, returning to the poetic likening of life to the ocean, she wonders what meandering path her life will assume: "Et je réfléchissais, supputais toutes choses, me demandant quelles courbes, quels méandres, quels reflets seraient les miens tandis que je descendrais à l'océan..." (84).⁵⁵

⁵² "I must be like a pebble in a river just resting on the bottom. Let the water flow over me, clear or troubled, foaming, calm or turbulent—I was only a little stone" (86).

⁵³ "All rivers, even the most dazzling, those that catch the sun in their streams, all rivers go down to and are drowned in the sea. And life awaits man as the sea awaits the river" (74).

⁵⁴ "I was fourteen, with my two breasts, and beneath my flowered calico dress I was a woman" (75).

⁵⁵ "And I pondered, calculated everything, wondering what loops, meanders, and gleams would be mine on my way to the ocean" (75).

Schwarz-Bart allows Télumée to develop with her body, to cling to her nature that defines her as woman, and to be proud of it. Schwarz-Bart's gift of poetic *parole* to Télumée posits the latter's interpretation of life comparable to an ocean as a lyrical and flowing form of prose. The reader does not observe strict, patterned, and sequential sentences, which, Barry, explains stereotypically mark male writing. Rather, Schwarz-Bart captures the reader with fluidity and loosely gliding prose. She also uses descriptions of the female body to indicate inner strength as well as situate her female characters in nature.

Cixous, as she encourages women to feel pride owing to their bodies and to write as such, describes the distinct nature of a woman writing. According to Cixous, "In women's speech, as in their writing, that element which never stops resonating, which...retains the power of moving us—that element is the song..." (251). Cixous continues to link the song element of a woman's writing to her voice. Expressing herself through language establishes her as an assertive subject, not as a passive object.

As Schwarz-Bart relies on a flowing examples of writing to help Télumée find her voice, Maryse Condé refers largely to a woman's body and sexuality to create a text that will empower Tituba. Not only does Condé give Tituba the voice to speak of her own body, she also plays with certain oppositions. Typically, the male succeeds in establishing himself as the subject while relegating the female to the passive context, to the status of object. However, as Tituba describes her desire for John Indien, her words reverse the opposition, positing her as the active subject while she examines John Indien, who becomes passive and objectified. Tituba narrates her sexual desire as she describes John Indien's physical attributes:

Qu'avait-il donc,...Pas très grand, moyen, avec ses cinq pieds sept pouces, pas très costaud, pas laid, pas beau...Des dents splendides, des yeux pleins de feu!...Je savais bien où résidait son principal avantage et je n'osais regarder, en deçà de la cordelette de jute qui rentait son pantalon konoko de toile blanche, la butte monumentale de son sexe.⁵⁶ (Condé *Moi* 36)

⁵⁶ "What was there about John Indien...Not very tall, average height, five feet seven, not very big, not ugly, not handsome either! A fine set of teeth, burning eyes...I knew all too well where his main asset lay and I dared not look below the jute cord that held up his short, tight-fitting *komoko* trousers to the huge bump of

Tituba's explanation of her passionate desire for sexual pleasure leads us back to Cixous and Irigaray. The latter urges the writing of the feminine body. Tituba expresses her own femininity by examining John Indien's masculinity. Moreover, Condé reverses the typical concept of the "male gaze." As Tituba inspects John Indien's physique, she reclaims visual pleasure for women.

Irigaray explains that visual pleasure has typically been reserved for men. The dynamics usually include an active (male) gaze projected onto a passive and objectified female, who "will be the beautiful object" (101). Irigaray also describes the sensual nature of women, claiming that a woman "finds pleasure more in touch than in sight and her entrance into a dominant scopic economy signifies...her relegation to passivity" (101). Keeping Irigaray's thoughts in mind, one realizes that Condé creates a character that completely defies norms. Not only does Tituba assume the active role by initiating the gaze, but she also maintains the necessity of sensual as well as visual pleasure.

Before encountering John Indien for the first time, Tituba admits that she had not really considered her body, her femininity, beforehand. After having encountered him, she ventures into self-examination. She explores and studies her body. She explains her own discovery of her sexuality:

Jusqu'alors, je n'avais jamais songé à mon corps...J'ôtai mes vêtements, me couchai et de la main, je parcourus mon corps. Il me sembla que ses renflements et ses courbes étaient harmonieux. Comme j'approchais de mon sexe, brusquement il me sembla que ce n'était plus moi, mais John Indien qui me caressait ainsi. Jaillie des profondeurs de mon corps, une marée odorante inonda mes cuisses. Je m'entendais râler dans la nuit.⁵⁷ (30)

Tituba's erotic description of discovering her own womanhood leads back to Irigaray. Just as Irigaray argues that a woman is "other" in herself, Tituba imagines that some inner force is driving her to pleasure. Tituba explains that it feels as if she is no longer

his penis" (Condé *I* 19). All subsequent translations for Condé will come from this text while the original French citations will come from the novel indicated above as (Condé *Moi*).

⁵⁷ "Up until now I had never thought about my body...I took off my clothes, lay down, and let my hand stray over my body. It seemed to me that these curves and protuberances were harmonious. As I neared my pudenda, it seemed that it was no longer me but John Indian who was caressing me. Out of the depths

touching herself; she imagines John Indien is pleasuring her. Actually, though, Tituba's erotic experience comes from within herself, from a place heretofore unknown to her.

Condé gives Tituba a powerful voice to explore her sexuality. She invokes eroticism in the language itself with which she arms Tituba. Paradoxically, Tituba speaks more erotically and poetically about her own discovery of her sexuality than of her first night with John Indien. Neglecting the personal and provoking detail that she reserved for her own, self-guided pleasure, she merely mentions in passing that her first experience with her lover had not disappointed her; it had almost resembled a "battle" owing to their furious love-making. Her very personal and intimate description of herself before John Indien seems to empower her. She maintains control as she learns the secrets to her own body.

As Tituba adjusts to life in New England under the servitude of the Reverend Samuel Parris, she mentions differing aspects of her femininity to which she clings, as it helps her to constitute her moral agency. Tituba's powerful descriptions of the ailing and weak wife of Samel Parris, Elizabeth, starkly contrast to the way she speaks of her own vibrancy as a woman. In one scene, which clearly shows Tituba's pride of her womanhood, Goodwife Parris asks: "Tituba, ne penses-tu pas que c'est malédiction d'être femme?" Surprised, Tituba replies: "Maîtresse Parris, vous ne parlez que malédiction! Quoi de plus beau qu'un corps de femme! Surtout quand le désir d'un homme l'anoblit..." (72).⁵⁸ This exchange clearly demonstrates the value and self-worth that Tituba places on her body as a woman. Condé creates a character who maintains heterosexual relations, which some theorists may argue automatically objectifies her as a woman. But, Tituba's willingness to know her own body and to seek corporeal pleasure on her own terms allows her to thwart, in some aspects, the objectification of intimate relations. Tituba expresses pride both for her body and her sexuality, conveying her sexuality through her descriptions to the reader.

Examining Condé's discourse has shown that she side steps the limitations of a "male-constructed" language by giving her character the voice to discuss her own body,

of my body gushed a pungent tidal wave that flooded my thighs. I could hear myself moan in the night" (15).

her own sexual experiences, and her desires as a woman. Such direct discussion of a woman's sexuality remains somewhat taboo in certain societies; yet, Tituba boldly asserts her identity through her "woman-ness." While Schwarz-Bart also mentions aspects of Télumée's body, she tends to rely more on a fluidity of prose to escape linguistic constraints. Both Condé and Schwarz-Bart use different approaches to creating a *feminine* text, which aids their heroines in their search for self-determination.

Essentially, Condé seems to write in a way that perceives women's moral agency at the level of sexual pleasure. Tituba's voice presents a unique example owing to her refusal to be locked away in specific categories created by patriarchal societies. With her ironic self-empowerment reached largely by adhering to sexual pleasure, Tituba may avoid typical objectification techniques of a masculine economy. As Condé liberates Tituba through her sexuality, Schwarz-Bart liberates Télumée largely through her strong matrilineal ties and her perseverance to learn to function within her society. Télumée eventually finds her space within her community and achieves a sort of inner peace. Both Télumée and Tituba succeed in establishing their identity as individuals and achieve empowerment.

⁵⁸ "Tituba, don't you think there's a curse on being a woman?"... "Goodwife Parris, all you talk about is malediction. What is more beautiful than a woman's body! Especially when it is glorified by a man's desire" (43).

Conclusion

After having examined the two novels by Schwarz-Bart and Condé, one should reiterate the findings in an attempt to bring the various ideas together. Essentially, the main goal in examining the female characters of *Télumée* and *Tituba* is to identify the ways in which the two characters attain voice and achieve moral agency. *Télumée* and *Tituba* both grapple with the dilemmas of agency, and both resist passive definition of self from without. It does prove useful to study how these fictional characters function within their novelistic settings. Examining the characters' functions in their societies (and outside of their societies) leads to the realization that the novels do provide the reader with paradigms that do not conform to traditional stereotypes for females. This approach allows us to understand that fictional constructs do actively contribute to constructing a social reality and can promote change.

As I set out examining the two novels, I repeatedly returned to concepts of Franz Fanon and his eloquently emotional journey to liberation. Returning to his ideas once again helps to bring this analysis to full circle. Fanon passionately demands a place for himself, asking: “where am I to be classified? Or, if you prefer, tucked away?” (113). Just as Fanon suffers in a society that tries to classify or define him from without, *Tituba* and *Télumée* also face the challenge of the desire to claim their own identity rather than having one thrust upon them. *Tituba* and *Télumée*, however, encounter more of a challenge than does Fanon owing to their gender as well as their race.

We discovered, for example, that *Télumée* and *Tituba* both succumb to the charm of men and take lovers and husbands. With *Tituba*'s case, we learn that John Indien forsakes her as she faces charges of witchcraft in New England. *Télumée*'s husband, *Élie*, eventually beats and abandons her. Neither *Tituba* nor *Télumée* succumb to the typical role of the woman as the reproducer. Neither gives birth. Examining the different ways that *Télumée* and *Tituba* refuse to conform fully to a mold that has been prefabricated for them indicates how the two characters counter the major problem of the

French Caribbean Black woman as presented by Valerie Key Orlando, the idea that typically the colonizing society would have silenced the women's voices.

Télumée and Tituba demonstrate some similarities in their determination to assume their voices, and yet they do display several differences. Both rely on the aid of supernatural powers of sorcery, but Télumée works within her own society in her native Guadeloupe. On the other hand, Tituba exercises her powers both within her native Barbados and outside of her community when in New England. Both characters reverse the stigma of the *sorcière* as inherently evil by clinging to the space that marginalization allows them to claim. Tituba eagerly learns of herbs and medicinal practices of the *sorcière* at an early age, while Télumée resists until adulthood. Both characters, however, seize the marginal identity of *sorcière* in order to claim voice and speak on their own terms.

In addition to the aspects of sorcery, which both alienate the characters and affirm their identities, Schwarz-Bart and Condé also employ certain narrative and linguistic techniques in their discourses to give voice to their heroines. Both female characters recount their stories in the first person point of view, thereby actively claiming their lives and the events therein. Each asserts ownership of her story and refuses to let it fall into oblivion.

Each seeking her own place, Télumée and Tituba function differently among their communities. For both, solidarity of women is an important resource for thwarting subjugation. However, Schwarz-Bart has created a character who depends more heavily on the strong women around her, whereas Condé's Tituba relies primarily on herself in her search for empowerment. Critic Kathleen Baluntansky explains how Télumée draws strength only from the group of women that supports her. Baluntansky indicates that, as an individual character, Télumée does not exhibit the necessary independence to assume voice. In her own words:

...Télumée accepts the social order that oppresses her, and she overcomes her trials and tribulations only because she emulates the correct Lougandor model....For Télumée, the miracle of life is the endurance she inherits from Reine Sans Nom, and not one that she creates through her own actions. (272)

Although Baluntansky's explanation does not give Télumée due credit for her own individual triumphs, she does present an important aspect of the character—that she functions almost entirely within the Lougandor tradition.

As Télumée attempts to carve out her own place within her society and among her people, Tituba faces a different challenge of self-empowerment. Tituba, thrust into the harsh conditions of New England as a slave to the Reverend Samuel Parris, functions largely independently of her native society. But, despite her independence she calls upon the spirits of her mother and Man Yaya for support and guidance from time to time. In contrast to Télumée, Tituba not only functions within a different community, but she also branches out and seeks (as well as gives) support for women of other backgrounds. Condé reverses Western perceptions of beauty by presenting Tituba as a radiant, sexually thriving, and self-determining woman. This contrasts to Mistress Parris's frail, ailing, and weak physique, compounded by her fear and disdain for her husband.

Kathleen Baluntansky also addresses the character of Tituba, explaining that Condé "...effectively creates a woman who embodies both the fear and the power inherent in the struggle between a young black woman and the combined religious and political forces of Puritan Massachusetts" (277). Taking the study of Tituba and Télumée a step further demonstrates Tituba's desires to revolt against the system that oppresses her, she refuses to conform. On the other hand, Télumée seeks to function within the system that oppresses her, she refuses to let it identify her; but she also does not attempt to change it. Both Tituba and Télumée, therefore, achieve different levels of voice assumption. Télumée does indeed affirm her identity as a Black woman respected in her community; and she manages to overcome the obstacles her experiences have thrown her way. Tituba functions in a system not her own as she adheres to her own beliefs and values, attempting not only to survive, but to triumph. The degrees of attaining subject status among the two characters are therefore not congruous. However, both narratives are essential in understanding the problem of empowerment for the French Caribbean Black woman.

Condé and Schwarz-Bart succeed in creating characters that embody strong traits on which they rely in order to thwart subjugation or marginalization. Tituba's inner strength lies largely in her powers as a *sorcière*, her firm beliefs of helping others, and

her success in maintaining her sense of self despite her status as secondary, or as a "non-*être*," a non-being. In contrast to Tituba, Télumée relies on a line of strong women coming before her. With the legacy and support of the Lougandor women, she gains status among the members of her community. The characters carefully created by Condé and Schwarz-Bart are relevant to the real situations of marginalized women in the French Caribbean. Attaining liberation does not necessarily involve a sole path, and assuming voice does not require a specific set of steps. These novels indicate how fluid the concepts of identity, of agency, of empowerment actually are. For some individuals, functioning within the actual standing structure or system is the most accessible way of demanding and receiving subject status. Such individuals might relate to the character of Télumée. For other individuals, however, defying the current system and working outside it may be necessary to overcoming marginalization. Such an individual may relate to Tituba's and rely on the aspect of alienation in order to assume actively her own liberation.

Condé and Schwarz-Bart have not created Tituba and Télumée in a vacuum. Their novels call attention to the problem of empowerment for women in the French Caribbean. The literary movement of *créolité* serves as a challenge to both female authors owing to its dismissal of works created by women. In effect, the gendered nature of the Caribbean literary movement reverberates through the novels. A. James Arnold explains the domination of the movement by men such as Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé, and Raphaël Confiant. He continues to note the failure of such male authors to include significant social roles of women in their texts. According to Arnold, their readers find little mention of "...all those grandmothers or elderly aunts, those repositories of oral history, folk medicine, and stories of all sorts..." that Condé and Schwarz-Bart clearly present (30). The typical male or gendered arena of *créolité* blocks these important "...female figures of cultural transmission [from finding] their way into the history of *oraliture* that Chamoiseau and Confiant have constructed" (Arnold 30).

Arnold's explanation of *créolité* and its significance with respect to women underscores the importance of writers such as Condé and Schwarz-Bart. By writing novels that champion the important roles of women in the Caribbean societies, both female writers refuse to submit to a masculine literary movement. Condé and Schwarz-

Bart succeed not only in creating characters that readers may examine to understand self-empowerment, they as authors also refuse to remain in the margins of a literary movement that would ignore or silence them. Condé and Schwarz-Bart are doubly essential to understanding the problem of self-determination for the French Caribbean Black woman. Their characters in their novels serve as examples of women who successfully assume voice. These authors challenge a literary system of subjugation by their insistence upon making women visible and heard.

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