



The Colonial State Apparatus of the School: Development, Education, and Mimicry in Patrick Chamoiseau's "Une Enfance Créole II: Chemin-d'École" and V.S. Naipaul's "Miguel Street"

Author(s): Roberto Strongman

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The Colonial State Apparatus of the School: Development, Education, and Mimicry in Patrick Chamoiseau's *Une Enfance Créole II: Chemin-d'École* and V.S. Naipaul's *Miguel Street*

— Roberto Strongman

The status symbols and educational system in colonial Trinidad are inappropriate to the reality. Its Britishness is mimicry.

— Bruce King, *V.S. Naipaul*

The school has always occupied an important place in the work of European colonization as one of the sites utilized for the reproduction of colonial ideology abroad. Marxist theorists, such as Althusser, have remarked on the tremendous power of education as an “ideological state apparatus,” one of the institutions in which ideologies are generated and in which the relations of production are reproduced. While his analysis remains focused on class and class struggle, Althusser’s Marxist terminology can be easily translated into the discourse of colonialism in which ethnicity and imperial domination are the central organizing concepts. Althusser’s “ruling” and “exploited classes,” in the colonial context become, geographically, the “West” and “the Rest,” and ethnically the “European” and the “Other,” who in the Caribbean often means “African,” “Amerindian,” or “Asian.” In this way, Althusser’s idea of the reproduction of ideology through education to serve the goal of the ruling class translates in the colonial context as the interpellation and hegemonic domination of colonial subjects into European ideologies through the colonial school.

This colonial domination was achieved through the formation of a local elite, Westernized through education and serving, in the words of Lord Macaulay, as “a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.” (Macaulay 729). Bill Ashcroft in his article “English Studies and Post-Colonial Transformation” describes how this statement of Macaulay’s to Parliament in 1835, known as Lord Macaulay’s Minute, resolves the long dispute between Anglicists and Orientalists originated by the Charter Act of 1813 which charged the colonial administration with the responsibility for Indian education. Supporting the Anglicists’ educational agenda, Macaulay’s Minute instituted English language and literature as the mechanism for ideological control and subjugation of imperial subjects. As Ashcroft comments, “[t]he advancement of any colonized people could only occur, it was claimed; under the auspices of English language and culture, and it was on English literature that the burden of imparting civilized values was to rest” (113).

For some Postcolonial Anglophone Caribbean and South Asian cultural critics, this emphasis on English language and literature was the most crucial element in the formation of local elites. As Gauri Vishwanathan points out in *Masks of Conquest: Literary Studies and British rule in India*, ideological colonization of imperial subjects was accomplished through the implementation of English Literature—a subject which displaced native literature, coding it as an inferior cultural form. Tejaswini Niranjana in *Siting Translation* reiterates Vishwanathan’s point, highlighting the original intention of English education as being the formation of a class of interpreters who would mediate between the British and the colonized (30). In the Caribbean context, the rivalry between the French and the English for control of the Windward Islands in the late Eighteenth Century meant that in these territories victory would be marked linguistically. The accomplishment of English domination of the former French colonies of Dominica, St. Lucia, and Trinidad was marked by a linguistic shift from French to English among the elites. In *The Young Colonials: A Social History of Colonial Education in Trinidad and Tobago 1834-1939*, Jamaican scholar Carl C. Campbell notes that “soon after the English captured the island in 1797 there began a movement to anglicize its institutions” (229). In both the South Asian and Caribbean scenarios, the adoption of English by the

local elites enabled the formation of the caste of translators that Lord Macaulay proposed.

This model of colonial education through the formation of Westernized local elites that the British utilized in their colonies from India to Trinidad, was also used by the French whose colonial schools “serve[d] almost exclusively the sons of chiefs and notables, and school authorities were called upon to sustain this elite through the years of primary education” (Altbach 11). With the end of the Age of European colonization has also come the end of this particular form of colonization through the formation of local elites. Making links between the Postcolonial and Postmodern, Lyotard declares that:

the transmission of knowledge is no longer designed to train an elite capable of guiding the nation towards its emancipation, but to supply the system with players capable of acceptability, fulfilling their roles at the pragmatic posts required by its institutions.(48)

It becomes important to note that this “training” towards nationhood and independence that took place during the Colonial Age was a project that ultimately did not promise the equality of the educated local elite with the colonizer but instead guaranteed their inferiority by eliciting an approximating, derivative discourse that would never be esteemed as highly as the original European version. This process is what Frantz Fanon in the *Les Damnés de la Terre* referred to as “cette imitation caricaturale” (375) and Homi Bhabha considers “a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized is emphatically not to be English” (87). This “colonial mimicry,” as Bhabha calls it, “is the desire for a reformed, recognizable other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite” (86).

Two Caribbean novels, Patrick Chamoiseau’s *Une Enfance Créole II: Chemin-d’École* (1994) and V.S. Naipaul’s *Miguel Street* (1959) explore the theme of colonial education with a keen awareness of its role in the reproduction of ideologies which uphold the rule of European culture and ethnicity over the subordinate and exploited local Caribbean culture. In these two texts, education—and particularly, linguistic education—is presented as a dangerous form of development complicit with colonization whose goal is the production of compliant and imitative colonial subjects. Colonial education is exposed as being underwritten by a developmental narrative in which the Caribbean is an

infant growing towards a maturity which is decidedly European. The child protagonist's critical stance towards the developmentalist aims and mimetic effects of this education is allegorical of their islands' desire for cultural independence from colonial ideologies and political rule. With education functioning as an allegory for colonialism and the criticism of this education as an allegory of political independence aims, both novels extend the essentialist notion of allegory treated by Aijaz Ahmad and Fredric Jameson, theorists who do not take into account the counter-discursive potential of this literary form.¹

In his autobiographical novel *Miguel Street*, V.S. Naipaul presents a microcosm of the colonial world through the extended character-profiles of individuals populating one of the many streets of Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. There is "Bogart," the fellow who pretends to be a tailor but in fact spends his days doing nothing more than playing cards, drinking rum and cultivating a hard-boiled attitude. "He was the most bored man I ever knew," says Naipaul (9). His imitation of the suave US film-noir character is mimicry at its most acute and a helpful aid in masking his idleness. When Bogart leaves for British Guyana, he runs a brothel and upon his return to Trinidad, he is arrested on the charge of bigamy. Popo is another inhabitant of Miguel Street whose profession remains merely titular. Popo calls himself a carpenter and spends his days making what he calls "the thing without a name" (10). When his wife, tired of his idleness, leaves him for another man, he paints the house and fills it with furniture to woo her back. When she does return, Popo is jailed for theft. The paints, brushes, even the furniture were stolen. George beats his children, Elias and Dolly, kills his wife in one of his fits of rage and opens up a brothel on Miguel Street to serve American soldiers. Man-man is the street's insane character. V.S. Naipaul says of him: "Man-man never worked. But he was never idle. He was hypnotized by the word, particularly the written word, and he would spend a whole day writing a single word" (38). In essence, the world of Miguel Street is a hyper-masculinized space comprising ne'er-do-wells whose fruitless inactivity, abuse and immorality articulate the effects of colonization. Their meaningless tasks speak to the depressed economies, high level of unemployment and economic dependence which British colonialism created and fostered in Trinidad.

Further, their idleness can be seen as a re-articulation of stereotypical images of colonial subjects as lazy and, therefore, deserving of their economic poverty. The depiction of the brothels, bigamy, infidelities, and theft serve to

place the location of the colonized outside the realm of “decency” and “morality.” The lawlessness of this behaviour necessitates the subsuming of the Caribbean under colonial rule in order to instill values deemed adequate according to accepted European customs. The fact that idle Bogart mimics a US accent in his speech and that George’s brothel caters mainly to US soldiers serves to make the point that colonization is in fact the culprit of many of the social ills which Caribbean society displays and for which it is many times unjustly made responsible.

Amidst this intensely masculine, adult world, the unnamed protagonist observes, participates and describes these events and characters from a maturing child’s perspective. Naturally, surrounded by these idle and reprobate men, the child protagonist and his coterie of friends begin displaying the same conduct. Despite his educational and professional accomplishments, having passed the Cambridge Senior High School Certificate Examination and securing a job at Customs, the protagonist becomes helplessly immersed in the questionable lifestyle of the men of Miguel Street. “It is not my fault really. Is just Trinidad. What else anybody can do here except drink?” (167), says the protagonist to his mother. His drinking and sexual activity with prostitutes concern his mother to such an extent that she bribes a Government official to secure him a scholarship to study in England. With the departure of the protagonist from the periphery of Empire to its center, the narrative of the microcosmic colonial world of Miguel Street ends.

Like Naipaul’s character, Patrick Chamoiseau’s child-protagonist in *Une Enfance Créole II: Chemin-d’École* is the fictional avatar of the author. His upbringing matches the author’s in terms of locale, time-period and details of personal history. In standard form for the Caribbean coming-of-age genre, the author’s naming of the protagonist reveals him as an autobiographical character: “Son nom était un machin compliqué rempli de noms d’animaux, de chat, de chameau, de volatiles et d’os” (54).² Through this autobiographical character, Patrick Chamoiseau’s *Une Enfance Créole II: Chemin-d’École* narrates the educational history of a young boy through the juxtaposition of the maternal realm of the home with that of the school. As a sequel to *Une Enfance Créole I: Antan d’Enfance*, this novelistic account continues the description of the close bond between the child and his mother, Man Ninotte, who in her maternal care, language and customs embodies idealized aspects of Martinique. Her Créole language and culture contrast sharply with the French environment

of the school which the child begins to attend. This distinction between Martinican and French cultural formations generates the productive f(r)iction which comments on the ways in which colonization shapes colonial subjects through the exportation of metropolitan ideology and the imposition of the colonial school.

Like Naipaul, Chamoiseau utilizes a child's perspective as the critical vantage point from which to present and to judge the European colonization of the Caribbean. For instance, the hegemony present in education is observable in the child's intense desire to go to school. Chamoiseau's child sees his older siblings go off to school and feels left behind. In order to imitate them, he picks up a backpack and pretend he is off to school. He insists on going to school, driving his mother crazy:

Alors, chaque jour, chaque jour, il réclamait l'école. Réclamer est un mot mol. Disons qu'il tourmentait l'existence de Man Ninotte, la suivait pas à pas comme déveine envoyée, contrariait son balai, brisait ses chants de lessive, transformait ses repassages en cauchemar ralenti. (32)³

The child's demanding of the school is emblematic of the ways in which education is presented as desirable to colonial subjects and the way in which this desire is internalized without a conscious awareness of the erasure of native culture which it effects. In fact, the child's longing to go to school portrays the ways in which metropolitan culture is generally not, contrary to common suppositions, so much imposed as requested by the colonized. This eagerness to have access to and be shaped by metropolitan culture is achieved through a propagandistic ideological campaign which presents metropolitan culture as the model towards which colonized peoples need to mature and develop.

In large measure, Naipaul and Chamoiseau present the idea of education as complicit with colonization through the critical presentation of educators who have internalized and who propagate this dangerous developmental narrative of assimilation to European models. In V.S. Naipaul's novel, the character of Titus Hoyt is one such educator. Hoyt is presented as a false, inefficient and vainglorious teacher who has internalized colonial ideology, seeks its approval and helps others in its attainment. Having helped the protagonist find his way home from an errand, Titus Hoyt, under the pretext of sharpening the child's writing skill, has him write a letter to the editor in which the boy recounts his

getting lost and where Hoyt is praised as “an example of human kindness not yet extinct in the world” (76). The verbosity of the letter is uncharacteristic of an eight-year old child and proof of the fact that it was coaxed. Further, its excessively ornate style bears witness to the intellectual pretensions of Hoyt. The entire situation marks Hoyt’s learning as driven by the desire for social recognition and high standing in the community and not necessarily by genuine scholarly interest. The suspicion that Hoyt’s learning is not entirely motivated by intellectual reasons makes his Inter Arts Degree from London University a questionable document, especially when he appears unable to answer simple questions of Latin grammar from his students and as the students he tutors for the Cambridge exams fail. In general, his uncritical stance towards an education imbued in colonial ideology, the questionable idea of teaching Latin in the Caribbean and the implications of needing to send an exam to be graded abroad all point to his inability to discern the mechanisms of colonization in spite of the learning he proclaims to have.

In Chamoiseau’s text as well, the character of Man Salinière and “Le Maître” are similarly utilized to highlight the way in which educators collaborate with the enterprise of colonization. Man Salinière is the protagonist’s teacher at kindergarden, “La maternelle-poulailler” as his siblings call it. She is presented as having the role of introducing students to metropolitan culture. From the earliest educational experience, learning in Martinique becomes immersion in French culture:

Chez Man Salinière, il apprenait de quoi alimenter d’interminables monologues avec Man Ninotte. Il pouvait babiller de la fée Carabosse, des sept nains, des affaires de sirènes, de pommes, de poires, d’un frère Jacques qui somnole, de son ami Pierrot-prête-moi-ta-plume. Il savait les problèmes de la Belle au bois dormant. Il débitait l’enfilade du Printemps, de l’Été, de l’Automne et de l’Hiver. Il pouvait dessiner la tour Eiffel, des trains, des bottes de foin. (44)⁴

Chamoiseau employs Man Salinière’s description as a “mulâtresse” in order to highlight her acquiescence and deference towards French culture and to present her as a cultural traitor. The uneducated father of the child is presented as more enlightened than the teachers when he is puzzled by the houses with chimneys and the apples instead of the local mangoes in his child’s

school-drawings and remarks how at school “on entrain mouton pour en sortir cabrit”(45).⁵

Le Maître is Man Salinière’s successor. He continues the assimilation process of his pupils at the elementary school. The defamiliarizing impact of images of snow and songs about Bretagne and Provence of Man Salinière continues with Le Maître’s colonial ideology propagating unto Martinicans the rhetoric of “Nos ancêtres les Gaulois.”⁶ Unlike Man Salinière, Le Maître is very dark-skinned yet is still physically presented as cultivating a Europeanized aspect: “Quel était ton visage, premier Maître? Tu étais très noir de peau. . . le cheveu bien lissé de vaseline. . .”(56).⁷ In this way, Chamoiseau presents Le Maître as the epitomized version of “le nègre blanchi.”⁸ Le Maître’s belief in developmental narratives is clear:

Le negrillon aimait entendre le Maître leur conter l’Histoire du monde. Tout semblait simple et juste. Tout convergeait vers un progrès ineluctable. (172)⁹

Le Maître’s belief in progress convinces him of the necessity to acculturate Martinicans to French standards. To this end, Le Maître introduces them to the classic literature of France: ‘Georges Sand, d’Alphonse Daudet, de Saint Exupéry, Hugo, Lamartine, La Fontaine, Chateaubriand. In the realm of Children’s literature, Le Maître expands Man Salinière’s long list of figures such as druids, elves and fairies drawn from European folklore at the expense of the rich Antillean oral literature “qui évoquait des zombis, des Chouval-trois-pattes, des Manman Dlo, des Volantes . . .” (179).¹⁰ In short, both V.S. Naipaul’s *Miguel Street* and Patrick Chamoiseau’s *Chemin-d’École* show the ways in which colonial educators denigrate local Caribbean culture by the imposition of a developmental narrative which positions the local as backwards in relationship to the European.

This developmental narrative bears relevance to the representation of the complicated issue of language in the Caribbean. In both novels, an important distinction is made between the informal language of the streets and the formal language of the powerful. In *Miguel Street*, the local Trinidadian Creole English is presented as a stigmatized language in relation to other dialects of English and to other languages. As Fawzia Mustafa points out, in *Miguel Street* Standard English is presented as the domain of the educated and therefore foreign to the underclass world of the novel’s characters:

The standard English of the narrative interludes or transitions is constantly challenged by the dialect and distinct syntax of a more local Trinidadian English so that eventually, as the narrator grows older, and his English becomes more standard, the level of his “education” becomes the measure of both his distance from the world of the street and the means whereby the street community is given its “coherence.” (34)

Even as Creole English is presented as stigmatized and inferior to Standard English, the values attached to the languages are presented as inculcated and non-intrinsic. This can be seen in the inconsistent performance and erroneous assumptions made about language. For instance, the protagonist’s evaluations of Man-man’s English are very telling in this matter. “So you goes to school, eh?” asks Man-man. And after responding “Yes, I goes to school,” the protagonist says: “And I found that without intending it I had imitated Man-man’s correct and very English accent” (39). The protagonist here shows the internalized, subconscious drive to imitate the colonizer’s language as a result of its valorization as a prestige and “correct” linguistic variety associated with the powerful. However, the protagonist fails to observe the inconsistency between the English accent and the Creole syntax and how this inconsistency reveals Man-man’s linguistic performance as emulation, affectation and mimicry. The inexact rendition of British English by Man-man and the protagonist’s misrecognition of it enact a certain parody of metropolitan standards and expose it as a foreign linguistic model imposed on the colonized, laden with the allure of prestige and learning. Similarly, everybody in Miguel Street knows Bogart mimics an American accent, an affectation which reveals a shift from an European to a North American field of foreign influence for the Caribbean.

Related to this, Titus Hoyt’s teaching of Latin to Trinidadian students serves to further demonstrate the valorization of European languages, even if they are dead languages, as more prestigious than the local linguistic varieties spoken in the area. The exaggeratedly ornate language of Titus Hoyt’s vainglorious letters to the editor sharply contrast with his Creole English oral language. In *Miguel Street*, metropolitan linguistic models are presented as standards towards which speakers of the local Creole must move and master, and if they cannot they must mimic them. All of the local attempts to conform

to these models are ridiculed through an exposure of an inconsistent, inaccurate usage revealing the improper approximation of the colonized to the colonizer's hegemonic standards. It deserves to be mentioned that the comic aspect of this mimicry, this failure to conform to metropolitan models contains elements of the subversive in its exposure of colonial models as unattainable and as forms of oppression.

Similarly, Chamoiseau's creation of a hybrid textuality in which French and Creole blend and challenge one another—dubbed “Français-Banane” by some Martinican critics—also contains elements of the subversive (Burton 467). For instance, this can be clearly seen in the author's portrayal of Le Maître's preference for French and his disdain for Creole. In reaction to the softening and elision of French /r/ in Antillean French and Creole, Le Maître's speech mimics a metropolitan accent and displays an exaggerated usage of this sound:

Qu'ai-je crû ouïr? Notre classe se verrait-elle hantée d'une
 présence fantomatique à l'instar de Roncevaux qui, depuis
 le prreux Roland, effraye le voyageurr? Montrez-vous, s'il
 vous plaît. . . (53)¹¹

His exaggerated usage of this velar /r/ is complemented by his denigration of Creole:

Qu'est-ce que j'entends, on parle créole?! Qu'est-ce que je
 vois, des gestes-macaques? Où donc vous croyez-vous ici?
 Parlez correctement et comportez-vous de manière civilisée. .
 (65)¹²

In accordance to his belief in the superiority of metropolitan French and the inferiority of Creole and local French, Le Maître ridicules his students' pronunciation, fomenting from an early age their developmental move towards European standards through education. As he calls their names from the roster, “Deux-ou-trois, au lieu du *Présent exigé*, mâchouillaient un difficile Pouézon. . . Le Maître, impitoyable, les poursuivait: *Plâit-il?*” (52).¹³ Needless to say, Le Maître's pernicious francophilia proves advantageous to the students recently arrived from France and unfairly degrading to those who are native Martinicans.

Like Titus Hoyt's students—who question their professor's knowledge of Latin grammar in Naipaul's novel—Le Maître's students react to the tyranny

to which they are subjected, beginning to exhibit a rebellious conduct and hypercorrecting their speech. The put /r/ in words where there shouldn't be any: "Alors, les petites-personnes se mirent à semer les r là où il n'y en avait pas. *Châtier devient châtier, fumer devient furmer*" (90).¹⁴ Following Le Maître's order to use the French round high front vowel /ü/ and not use its Creole counterpart, which loses its rounding to become /i/, the students put /ü/ where there are none:

—La capitale de la France, c'est. . .

—Paru, mèssié. . . (89)¹⁵

Their rebellion taking the form of an improper performance of standard metropolitan language, the children's reaction to Le Maître's linguistic racism bears a resemblance to the emulation of British English in Naipaul's *Miguel Street*. The comical and parodical nature of the mimicry in both texts stand as examples of similar literary representations of Caribbean defiance to European cultural impositions.

The comical aspect of failing to meet colonial standards is perhaps most saliently observable in the failure of Elias to pass the exam for the Cambridge Senior School Certificate. Elias distinguishes himself from the rest of the Miguel Street boys by his professional aspirations to become a doctor. While the rest of the boys dream of becoming cart-drivers, Elias studies under Titus Hoyt to pass the exam which he fails three times. The expectation of passing and its repeated disappointments are presented in a jocular manner and so are the subjects of literature and poetry, "litricher" and "poultry," which Elias cannot master. This continues the mockery in Chamoiseau's and Naipaul's texts of those colonial subjects who attempt to master colonial standards.

When Elias gives up his idea of becoming a doctor, he decides to become a sanitary inspector, a job bearing certain association with the sweepers and cart-drivers he wished to separate himself from initially. Again, for three years, Elias tries to pass the exam for sanitary inspector, failing every time. Under the misguided and cruel advice of Hat, Elias even flies to British Guyana and Barbados to take exams which he erroneously believes to be easier than those in Trinidad. His repeated failure is a laughable occurrence which is used to condemn the internalization of developmental narratives which drive colonized subjects to approximate the telos of metropolitan standards. The educational guarantee of eventual acceptance and recognition by the

metropolitan culture is revealed as a false promise: “Boyee said, ‘What else you expect? Who correct the papers? English man, not so? You expect them to give Elias a pass?’” (33). In this way, it becomes important to highlight how both Chamoiseau’s and Naipaul’s texts, instead of presenting the colonized as ineffective students, present their failures as proof of the hegemony and tyranny of imposing foreign cultural models onto a colonized population.

Even in the case of those who succeed in the colonial educational process, there exists a critique of education. Unlike his friend Elias, the protagonist of *Miguel Street* does pass his Cambridge exams. He does not seek to become a doctor, as Elias pretended. Rather, he takes a modest job at Customs, where his drinking problems begin as a result of the easy access to confiscated liquor. The protagonist is nonchalant about his educational accomplishments, even when Elias displays jealousy, because he is conscious of the political dimensions of schooling and is therefore irreverent towards the institution. The protagonist’s mother, concerned about her son’s drinking, bribes a government official to secure him a scholarship to study in England. But the protagonist takes education too lightly to make a serious decision concerning a career. He dismisses law and pharmacy simply because he does not like the uniform of those trades. The mockery of education enacted by the protagonist’s indecision and his mother’s bribe further serve to criticize education as a corrupt apparatus of colonial power.

In Chamoiseau’s *Chemin-d’École* and Naipaul’s *Miguel Street*, the deployment of mockery as an act of resistance towards the imposition of these developmental models functions as a way to admonish those who, through the educational process, would sacrifice their native culture for the adoption and mimicry of European models. Through their subordinate location in the hierarchy of social power in the school, the child-protagonists become allegorical figures of their island-communities: These children resist the imposition of developmental narratives of cultural assimilation in a manner similar to the way in which nationalist Caribbean movements resist political rule from abroad. If European colonial discourse presented the populations of their Caribbean possessions as cultural children needing to develop into an adult state of European connotations, Chamoiseau and Naipaul enact a powerful counter-discursive employment of this ideology. While the colonial impetus for portraying the Caribbean as an infant was to inferiorize it in relation to Europe, Chamoiseau and Naipaul utilize the representation of the

Caribbean as child in order to expose the unfair asymmetry of power set up by the colonial system and to show the subversive potential of the colonized through the critical act of mimicry.

Notes

¹For a complete overview of the Jameson-Ahmad debate, the reader is referred to the following articles:

Ahmad, Aijaz. "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory.'" *Social Text* 17 (Fall 1987): 3-25.

Jameson, Fredric. "A Brief Response." *Social Text* 17 (Fall 1987): 26-28.

———. "On Literary and Cultural Import-Substitution in the Third World: The Case of the Testimonio." in *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*. Gugelberger, Georg, ed. Duke U P: Durham, 1996.

———. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke, 1999.

———. "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." *Social Text* 15 (Fall 1986): 65-88.

² His name was a complicated thing filled with names of animals, cat, camel, of fowl and bone. (A word play on the name of "chamoiseau").

³ Everyday, everyday, he demanded the school. To demand is not strong enough a word. Let us say that he tormented the existence of Man Ninotte. He followed her as a curse, disturbed her sweeping, disrupted her songs while she washed clothes and transformed her pressing into a nightmare.

⁴ In Man Salinière's classroom, he learned with what to feed his interminable monologues with Man Ninotte. He could babble about the fairy Carabosse, of the nine nymphs, of mermaids, of apples, pears, of Frère Jacques who slept, of his friend Pierrot-prête-moi-ta-plume. He knew the problems of Sleeping Beauty and the sequence of Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. He could draw the Eiffel Tower, trains, and sheaves of hay.

⁵ One entered school a foolish sheep to exit a mere goat.

⁶ Our ancestors the Gauls.

⁷ What was your face, first teacher? You were very dark skinned. . .hair greased with Vaseline.

⁸ Whitened Negro.

⁹ The little black kid loved to hear the teacher tell stories of the history of the world. Everything seemed simple and just. Everything converged into an inescapable progress.

¹⁰ evoking zombies, three-legged horses, water women, flying sorcerers

- ¹¹ What did I hear? Will our class haunted by the ghostly presence of Roncevaux who, like Roland, frightens the traveller? Show us, please.
- ¹² What is this I hear? You speak Creole? What do I see? Foolish gestures? Where do you think you are? Speak correctly and behave in a civilized manner.
- ¹³ Two or three, instead of saying "Présent," managed to only say "Pouézon" . . . The teacher, mercilessly, hounded them: "I beg your pardon?"
- ¹⁴ The little ones began planting R's where there weren't any: "Châtier" became "Chârtier," "fumer became furmer."
- ¹⁵ —What is the capital of France?/ —Paru.

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