Pre-sent Realities: Counter-Memory in Brand, Clarke, Dorsinville, and Laferrière

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Composition de jury

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Sommaire


Wright soutient que ces auteurs utilisent la mémoire pour montrer comment les groupes dominés sont marginalisés au sein de la mémoire historique occidentale, pour effectuer des révisions historiques et pour reconstruire les bases de l'identité. Ces écrivain(e)s s'entendent pour démontrer que la réalité actuelle s'inscrit dans le prolongement du passé. Leurs romans démontrent que les mythes de la mémoire occidentale diffèrent de ceux des mémoires culturelles collectives des groupes dominés et que cette dichotomie crée des problèmes d'identité.

L'auteure classe les quatre romans de Brand, Clarke, Dorsinville et Laferrière dans le genre biographie ou autobiographie fictive à caractère ethnographique. Selon elle, ces auteur(e)s vont à l'encontre de la mémoire historique occidentale et restaurer les mémoires dites culturelles par l'utilisation stratégique qu'ils font des marqueurs
Wright – Sommaire

Mémoire à contre-courant chez Brand, Clarke, Dorsinville, et Laferrière historiques, des références intertextuelles, des dates, des marqueurs culturels, des personnages historiques, des chansons et des histoires de la tradition orale. Wright avance aussi que la raison pour laquelle l'esclavage et le colonialisme ne sont pas les principaux thèmes abordés dans la littérature haïtienne depuis la révolution haïtienne est dû au fait que ceux-ci sont déjà contenu dans les mémoires historiques occidentale et haïtienne. Sa thèse analyse les formes de la mémoire qui sont transposées dans la réalité actuelle à travers la littérature.

Wright considère que la littérature est un aspect (et un véhicule) de la mémoire historique occidentale qui contribue à perpétuer le paradigme« dominant – dominé » existant à l’intérieur des nations et entre elles. Elle se réfère à la description ironique de la bourgeoisie québécoise faite par Dorsinville dans son dernier roman ainsi qu'à l'accueil marginal réservé à la culture noire à Toronto dans le roman de Brand pour faire ressortir le caractère néo-colonial de la réalité canadienne actuelle.

Wright élabore son analyse en « Pre-sent Realities » d'abord en utilisant les théories de Maurice Halbwachs (la mémoire), d’Albert Memmi (le privilège colonial), de Max Dorsinville (la domination), de Françoise Lionnet (l'auto-ethnologie), de Roxanne Rimstead (mémoire en littérature), et de C.L.R. James (Haïti). Les théories de l'identité culturelle et de la domination d'Aimé Césaire, d'Édouard Glissant, de Derek Walcott, de Chris Bongie, de Dionne Brand, de Max Dorsinville, et de Dany Laferrière sont également évoquées. Cette thèse rappelle et fait revivre à travers la littérature canadienne une tradition littéraire caribéennes enracinée dans la reconstruction de la mémoire.
Abstract

A questioning of history is a prerequisite to eliminating the systemic inequity produced by neo-colonial social and economic structures in the Western world. Such an interrogation figures prominently in representations of slavery and colonialism through memory in the following recent novels under investigation in this study: Dionne Brand’s *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, Austin Clarke’s *The Polished Hoe*, Max Dorsinville’s *James Wait et les lunettes noire*, and Dany Laferrière’s *Pays sans chapeau*. Using memory, these African-Caribbean-Canadian writers illustrate how dominated groups are marginalized within Western historical memory, make historical revisions, and re-construct the foundations of identity. These writers demonstrate that today’s reality is *present* from the past.

Their novels illustrate that the myths of Western historical memory are different from those of collective cultural memory of the once-colonized and that this dichotomy creates identity problems. The study characterizes the novels as fictional autobiographies or biographies of ethnographic proportion. They counter Western historical memory and restore collective cultural memory through strategic uses of historical markers, intertextual references, dates, cultural markers, historic personages, songs and stories from the oral tradition. This thesis examines forms of memory that are transposed into present reality through literature.
Wright points out that literature is an aspect of Western historical memory helping maintain a "dominated--dominating" paradigm within and between nations. She uses Dorsinville's ironic representation of Québécoise bourgeoisie and Brand's depiction of marginal reception of Black culture in Toronto to highlight neo-colonial elements of Canada's pre-sent reality. This thesis is illuminated by the work of Maurice Halbwachs, Albert Memmi, C.L.R. James, and Francoise Lionnet. Evoking the cultural identity theories of Aime Césaire, Édouard Glissant, Derek Walcott, Chris Bongie, Dionne Brand, Max Dorsinville, and Dany Laferrière, this thesis recalls through Canadian literature a Caribbean literary tradition rooted in the reconstruction of memory.
Haitian Folk Song

Trois feuilles
trios raciness oh
jeté, blié
ranmassé, songé
— Creole

(Trois feuilles
trios raciness oh
celui qui jette, oublie
celui qui ramasse, se rappelle.)
— French

(Three leaves
Three roots oh
He who throws them away forgets,
He who gathers them up remembers.)
— English
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Pre-sent Realities: Introduction

The use of cultural memory as a vehicle for exploring past forms of political domination such as slavery and colonialism is a lively and pertinent theme in North American literature and literary theory, especially among author-members of the African diaspora. Perhaps because memory is crucial to collective and individual identity, writers, especially those considered "Other," try to understand it. The intention of this thesis is to explore representations of slavery and colonialism through memory in recent novels by four African-Caribbean-Canadian authors: Dionne Brand’s *At the Full and Change of the Moon* (2000), Austin Clarke’s *The Polished Hoe* (2002), Max Dorsinville’s *James Wait et les lunettes noires* (1995), and Dany Laferrière’s *Pays sans chapeau* (1996). My analysis demonstrates that these novels recall the socio-economic framework of plantation slavery and colonialism, illustrate the startling extent to which today’s reality is *pre-sent* by the past, and orchestrate historical revisions positing slavery and colonialism not as obsolete fascist regimes, but manifestations of a larger, ever-present system of domination.

This group of excellent writers and theorists I am calling African-Caribbean-Canadian for the purposes of my analysis, writes from a unique historical perspective and brings to Canada aspects of a vibrant Caribbean literary tradition. This is perhaps why its members figure so prominently among Canada’s most acclaimed authors and theorists. The fact that there are both English and French African-Caribbean-Canadian writers in Canada makes their work particularly suited for comparative Canadian studies. Although the Quebec literary scene includes writers from other French islands in the Caribbean, I
have chosen to restrict my study to those from Haiti because the Haitian revolution, consisting of the only slave revolt leading to Independence in the New World, seems to have laid the cultural memory of slavery to rest.

In this thesis, I propose that Brand, Clarke, Dorsinville, and Laferrière all use three forms of memory in their respective representations of slavery and colonialism: autobiographical or biographical memory, Western historical memory, and cultural memory. In their novels, autobiographical or biographical memory creates a structural background for a comparison of the Western historical memory of slavery/colonization and that preserved by the cultural memory of the once-colonized. Western historical memory consists of “so-called” official accounts of slavery and colonization and is rendered in these novels through a strategic use of historical markers, intertextual references, and dates. Western historical memory plays a secondary role in these novels to cultural memory and is used to demonstrate that historical “fact” is often different from what is remembered by cultural memory, which is the memory of the colonized preserved through the oral tradition. Cultural memory is rendered through a strategic use of cultural markers, historic personages, and songs and stories from the oral tradition in these novels. Cultural memory is the occluded voice of the past and its articulation seems to be the main goal of these four African-Caribbean-Canadian writers.

This thesis consists of five chapters including this introduction. In Chapter 2, I provide a necessary backdrop for my analysis of the representations of slavery and colonialism through memory in Brand, Clarke, Dorsinville, and Laferrière’s novels by presenting relevant critical theory (Caribbean, Canadian, and other) on memory, history,
and neo-colonial domination. In Chapter 3, I compare and contrast Brand’s and Clarke’s novels and in Chapter 4 those of Laferrière and Dorsinville. In Chapter 5, I discuss Haiti’s unique experience with slavery to explain why the memory of the *lived* experience of slavery and colonialism is eclipsed in Dorsinville and Laferrière by the memory of post-Independence political domination, while on the other hand one finds a *re-living* of plantation slavery and / or colonialism through memory in Brand and Clarke. 

My understanding of the use of fictional autobiography in these four novels takes into account Maximilian Laroche’s “autobiographie,” Max Dorsinville’s “autobiography,” and Francoise Lionnet’s “autoethnography.” Laroche asserts that “autobiographie” is seldom used but does exist as a genre in Haitian literature and “peut même prendre, avec Franketienne, une dimension fictionnelle qui déborde les limites admissibles de cette forme de l’auto-éloge” (*A Haitian’s Coming of Age* viii). Dorsinville has also explored the genre of fictional autobiography. He characterizes it as “a first-person narrative that puts to test the boundaries between fiction and History.” Dorsinville thus reiterates what Edward Said “argues in *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*, [that] a first-person narrative by a displaced person is a blend of autobiography and fictional re-creation through the process of memory” (*A Haitian’s Coming of Age* 6).

Francoise Lionnet also theorizes the genre of fictional autobiography in her discussions of African-American author Zora Neale Hurston. Hurston uses the oral tradition and cultural memory to draw a portrait of the African diaspora in her novel *Dust Tracks on a Road*. Lionnet defines Hurston’s approach as “autoethnography” (Lionnet
99), noting that the portrait is a means of “decoding inscriptions on our bodies… the identifying codes of culture, ethnicity, and historical contractions” (248). Lionnet’s “autoethnography” is “the defining of one’s subjective ethnicity as mediated through language, history, and ethnographical analysis” (99). This approach “opens up a space of resistance between the individual (auto-) and the collective (-ethno-) where the writing (-graphy) of singularity cannot be foreclosed” (109).

My exploration of colonialism and neo-colonial domination in this thesis is marked respectively by Albert Memmi’s notion of colonial privilege\(^1\) and Max Dorsinville’s theory of domination, which “can embrace a much wider hierarchy of oppression” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 31). It achieves this “by dispensing with the special historical relationship produced by colonialism and stressing the importance of the politics of domination” (31). Dorsinville’s model illustrates that the shades of domination change over time, for example, from slavery to colonialism, but harbour a hierarchical ideology reflected in and perpetuated in part by the “dominant” literature.\(^2\) My analysis in this thesis of the four African-Caribbean-Canadian novels demonstrates exactly what Ashcroft, Griffins and Tiffin claim in *The Empire Writes Back* is characteristic of “dominated” literatures, “an inevitable tendency towards subversion… reveal[ing] both the configurations of domination and the imaginative and creative responses to this condition” (32).

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\(^1\) The central notion of Albert Memmi’s *Portrait de colonisé* is that a planned system of privilege, which he terms “colonial privilege,” helps maintain and perpetuate colonialism from within the ranks of the colonized.

\(^2\) Refer to Max Dorsinville’s discussion of dominant – dominated literatures in his theoretical work, *Le Pays natal* (29).
Starting from different places and times, the authors featured in this thesis question the Western historical memory of slavery and colonialism, and the neo-colonial reality of the post-colonial condition. The use of memory in these novels by African-Caribbean-Canadian writers cannot be dismissed as a search for roots or nostalgia for a lost homeland, but is a means of re-presenting and therefore reconstructing the foundations of identity, perhaps as a means of questioning the marginal reception of Black culture in Canada. Brand, Clarke, Dorsinville, and Laferrière each construe memory as important to identity construction, question the historical Western memory of slavery and colonialism, and all demonstrate that the perceived neo-colonial reality of the post-colonial condition is pre-sent or configured by the past.

3 During an interview with Marion Richmond published in Other Solitudes (64) Austin Clarke points out that the marginal reception of Black culture is problematic for immigrants.
Memory's Reach

Memory rolls like a wave through the work of African-Caribbean-Canadian writers, often constituting a major theme. In many novels from this category of Canadian multicultural literature (a title that may include one too many adjectives), cultural memory acts as a mainstay on a ship bent on re-presentation, legitimized through memory because the reader feels that someone is remembering the events. These novels re-present accepted historical accounts of the past, and turn, not without irony, fact into fiction. This fiction becomes a liberating narrative, a literary portal to the collective consciousness.

Memory plays a role in identity development, and has historically been used to define and maintain cultural boundaries, a Canadian example being the Québécois motto Je me souviens. The verbalization of memory can have specific goals:

As a politically charged medium, retelling memories is not a simple chronological recounting of all that transpired, but is the result of a very specific, agenda-based narrative series of choices made by the teller, who manipulates the raw material to create a narrative to serve his or her own purpose. To this end, what is left unsaid is as important as that said. (Eber and Neale 51)

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4 Given that Canada's entire population, with the possible exception of Native Indians, is comprised of immigrants, the use of the adjective 'multicultural' Canadian literature is redundant, but increasingly common. If we're all immigrants anyway, what's wrong with plain old "Canadian Literature?"
My analysis of the novels featured in this thesis demonstrates that they result in a specific, agenda-based narrative, one in which the voices of ancestors are heard and historical revisions made.

Many contemporary literary critics contend that official accounts of the past have been inaccurately remembered, or *constructed*, by history. Canadian literary critic Roxanne Rimstead, for example, notes in her Introduction to a special issue on memory published by *Essays on Canadian Writing* that “much of the recent interest in understanding cultural memory comes to us from conscious recovery projects that seek to construct a usable past or countermemory in response to silencing by official history” (Rimstead 5). Each article in this special issue explores the use of individual and/or cultural memory and “suggests new ways of seeing how memory and cultural amnesia are used to legitimate, negotiate, challenge, or map identities” (Rimstead 2).

In her exploration of the uses of cultural memory in literature, Rimstead posits “our analytical relationship to cultural memory as a ‘double take’ on the act itself” (Rimstead 2-3). This “implies the act of ‘doing a double take,’ in this case revisioning cultural memory itself by recognizing and reassessing the way in which we use traces of the past” (2-3). According to Rimstead, “this entails seeing how a wide range of memory acts make knowledge of the past in the context of the local, the present, and the social” (2-3). She reminds Canadians that, since we “share cultural icons with the United States as a global power... it is tempting [for us] to be seduced into the innocence of presentism and organized forgetting.” Warning Canadians to not forget America’s past and to not become involved in the Iraq intervention (war), she notes that the “antidote to such
‘innocence’ and historical erasure is an analytical approach to history and cultural memory that goes beyond mere historicizing and considers our own accountability regarding remembering and forgetting” (Rimstead 2-3).

Rimstead’s critique of American intervention as neo-colonial migrates Martinician Aimé Césaire’s 1953 exposé on Hitlerism⁵ into the realm of American ideology. This exposé is published in Césaire’s Discourse on Colonialism and posits the dominating force of fascism as residing in “the very traditions of humanism, critics believed fascism threatened” (10). Césaire’s theories on the colonial experience deal with its “ramifications… on the psychology and the social role of the colonized intellectual,” as do the theories of Caribbean-born author Frantz Fanon in Peau noire, masques blancs and Tunisian sociologist Albert Memmi in Portrait de colonisé (Kubayanda 8). Rimstead’s theoretical discussion on the social performances of memory derives in part from “[a] pioneer in cultural memory theory, [French] sociologist Maurice Halbwachs [who] argued in the 1920’s that all memory is fundamentally collective and socially rooted since individuals severed from social contact cannot construct the narratives necessary to make meaning from memories” (4).

Lewis Coser points out in the Introduction to his English translation of Maurice Halbwachs’ On Collective Memory that Halbwachs makes an important distinction between historical memory and autobiographical memory by claiming that “autobiographical memory…is memory of events that we have personally experienced in the past…[and,]…is always rooted in other people. Only group members remember, and

⁵ Aimé Césaire’s text on Hitlerism is reproduced in its entirety in Appendix 1 of this thesis.
this memory nears extinction if they do not get together over long periods of time.”

Historical memory, on the other hand, “first reaches the social actor only through written records…and is such that “the person does not remember events directly…[i]n this case, the past is stored and interpreted by social institutions.” Halbwachs’ theory of collective memory demonstrates how the historical memory of groups or societies “both commemorates the events through calendar celebrations and is strengthened by them.” It demonstrates that “[t]here are no empty spots in the lives of groups and societies; an apparent vacuum between creative periods is filled by collective memory in symbolic display, or simply kept alive through transmission by parents and other elders to children and ordinary men and women” (Halbwachs 25).

Yet Coser, while celebrating Halbwachs’ notion of collective memory, questions Halbwachs’ idea that the past is a “social construction mainly, if not wholly, shaped by the concerns of the present” (25). Coser cites American sociologist Barry Schwartz who finds Halbwachs’ notion of collective memory “presentist” and so Coser explains “the construction of the past” in another way:

To sum up, and again following Schwartz, collective historical memory has both cumulative and presentist aspects. It shows at least partial continuity as well as new readings of the past in terms of the present. A society’s current perceived needs may impel it to refashion the past, but successive epochs are being kept alive through a common code and a common symbolic canon even amidst contemporary revisions. (Halbwachs 26-27)
Schwartz points out that "[i]conography is one of the means by which society commemorates extraordinary people and events" (Schwartz 377) and that society has little control over the proliferation of these icons in literature or the other sites of historical memory. Dominated groups may thus be able to make contemporary revisions within their own group memory, but the overpowering collective memory of the dominating culture will be waiting around every corner, or in Dionne Brand’s words with respect to Black people, behind “the Door of No Return,” which is she implies every door in the Americas.

While Brand identifies the “Door” as the physical doors of slave castles along the West African coasts, the “door[s] out of which Africans were captured, loaded onto ships heading for the New World” (Map to the Door of No Return 19), she primarily probes the “Door” as “consciousness,” making it (the “Door”) part of pre-sent reality by pointing out that “Black experience in any modern city or town in the Americas is a haunting. One enters a room and history follows... Where one stands in society seems always related to this historical experience” (25). Brand is here suggesting that the Black body’s “first appearance through the Door of No Return, dressed in its new habit of captive and therefore slave, is embedded in all its subsequent and contemporary appearances.” Thus, as the Black body has “no ability to articulate itself outside of its given ‘natural’ functions[,] [i]t too is a domesticated space, a space taken over by a process, cultivated into a symbol” (37).

The notion of cultural or collective memory and how its symbols and other constructs maintain the status-quo is extremely relevant to my exploration of African-
Caribbean-Canadian writers, who subvert Western collective memory by evoking personal and cultural memory through cultural markers and communications of the oral tradition in order to re-member the history of slavery and colonialism. Their texts fathom these systems from outside the social memory framework of the imperialist milieus that produced “official” Western accounts of history as past shades of an ever-present political domination. The texts exorcise the cultural memory of social milieus crippled by such accounts. It is important to keep in mind that many contemporary authors and/or theorists throughout North America and Europe are greatly influenced by the work of early postcolonial theorists from the vibrant Caribbean literary tradition.

African-Caribbean-Canadian writing is a fascinating area of study because it emerges in part from the vibrant Caribbean literary tradition. My analysis in this thesis of Brand’s At the Full and Change of the Moon, Clarke’s The Polished Hoe, Dorsinville’s James Wait et les lunettes noires, and Laferrière’s Pays sans chapeau demonstrates that they recall aspects of this tradition, which has long been characterized by a quest for cultural identity. The questioning of race, supremacy and the myth of fixed identity, as well as a celebrating of pluralism, has been the focus of much post-structuralist thought, but “the situation of marginalized societies and cultures enabled them to come to this position much earlier and more directly [from Diane Brydon’s “The Thematic Ancestor”]. These notions are implicit in post-colonial texts from the imperial period to the present day” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 12).

According to Chris Bongie, in his seminal work Exiles and Islands, “[f]rom the moment of its second, post-Columbian beginning at the end of the fifteenth century, the
Caribbean has been the site par excellence of the ‘irruption dans la modernité’ that, according to Glissant, now characterizes the New World of the Americas and its literature as a whole” (22-23). Bongie points out that “this foundational encounter makes it a site that has, from its very beginnings, become witness to a relational way of life that no one, in the late-twentieth-century world... can now avoid confronting” (23). The past few decades have seen a heightened pace of immigration from the Caribbean that is infusing “the ‘first-world’ centres of Europe and North America with a ‘modernity’ [that] is sudden rather than consecutive” (22-23). This is evidence that Glissant’s “Diversity... is surfacing everywhere” and through this “Western literatures will discover the process of belonging and will become again a part of the world” (Glissant, Caribbean Discourse 103).

The widespread influence of the Caribbean literary tradition is exemplified by the Introduction to Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture, an anthology of women writers in which French literary critic Francoise Lionnet theorizes history and memory with respect to the work of Edouard Glissant, the Martinican author and literary theorist just mentioned above. Lionnet points out that Glissant’s “métissage[,] or braiding, of cultural forms through the simultaneous revalorization of oral traditions and reevaluation of Western concepts has led to the recovery of occulted histories” (Lionnet 4). Lionnet is a native “of the so-called Third World, [and feels that] it has become imperative to understand and to participate fully in the process of re-vision begun by our contemporary writers and theorists.” Theorists such as Glissant who, Lionnet asserts, are “engaged in an enterprise which converges toward other efforts at economic and political survival but which is unique in its focus on memory – the oral trace of the past – as the
instrument for giving us access to our histories” (5). Such “recovered histories” are a creative source for authors, male and female, declares Lionnet, “who are being nurtured and inspired by the phenomenon applauded by Glissant, the egalitarian interrelations in which binary impasses are deconstructed” (Lionnet 5).

Lionnet claims that Glissant’s métissage is “a concept and a practice” that will enable us to “be united against hegemonic power by refusing to engage that power on its own terms, since to do so would mean becoming ourselves a term within that system of power.” She says we have to “articulate new visions, new concepts that allow us to think otherwise, to bypass the ancient symmetries and dichotomies that have governed the ground and the very condition of possibility of thought, of ‘clarity,’ in all of Western philosophy. Métissage is such a concept” (Lionnet 5-6). Yet, Chris Bongie critiques Lionnet’s take on Glissant’s métissage by claiming that it “holds forth for a critic like Lionnet the promise of a radical transformation of society, an absolute refusal of the “hegemonic” colonial legacy[.]

While there can be no doubt that [Glissant’s] work often promotes a vision of this radically different future, it seems equally clear to me that Lionnet’s insistence upon this vision, despite (or precisely because of) its chiliastic fervor, serves only to reinscribe her within a rigidly symmetrical way of thinking…that has been at the revolutionary heart of the West’s modernity for centuries, if not millennia. (Bongie 63)
Bongie points out that Lionnet’s eroded view of métissage stems from none other than Glissant’s “self-styled disciples, Jean Bernabe, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphael Confiant, the authors of the highly influential Éloge de la Créolité (1989)” (Bongie 63). Bongie asserts that these authors and Lionnet are praising a fixed Creole identity that “remains trapped within and committed to the very thing they are supposedly contesting: a foundationalist politics of identity grounded in claims of authenticity” (64). To demonstrate this, Bongie points out that Glissant first introduces his concept of métissage in Le discourse antillais (1981) but redefines it in the Poétique de la Relation (1990) where he increasingly refers to it as créolization, characterizing this latter as a “métissage without limits, the components of which have been increased and the consequences of which are unforeseeable” (46). Bongie’s criticism of Lionnet and the authors of Éloge de la Créolité “serves as a cautionary reminder of how difficult it is to avoid the sort of hierarchical thinking that Lionnet wants us to bypass” (66).

Glissant’s créolization is a migration of the earlier work of Martinican poet and playwright Aimé Césaire, who “coined” the term “Negritude” in the title to his 1932 poem “Cahier d’un retour au pays natal” (Césaire 12). This poem is “one of the founding documents of postcolonial literature” (Bongie 42). Derek Walcott demonstrated the necessity of Negritude in 1964 by noticing that “neither Aimé Césaire nor Leopold Senghor, two major poets of our time, [were at that time] included in […] The Concise Encyclopaedia of Modern World Literature” (Walcott 20). The Negritude movement was not theorized at a level of Glissant’s rhizomes root metaphor, but was an attempt to establish a definitive model of Black (African) cultural identity through literature.
Although "Négritude was never so prominent a feature of the thought of the Anglophone African colonies" in literature and was "dependen[t] on the categories and features of the colonizing culture" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 123), the notion of a black literature continues to influence black writers around the globe. Dionne Brand for example "writes out of a literature, a genre, a tradition, and that tradition is the tradition of black writing" (Hutcheon and Richmond 274). Négritude may have come to be criticized as an "assertion of universal identification", yet few would argue that it was a needed phase in the reconstruction of a Black consciousness decimated by hundreds of years of oppression. As Glissant notes in Caribbean Discourse, "[t]he historical need for the creolized peoples of the small islands of the French Caribbean to lay claim to the 'African element' of their past which was for so long scorned, repressed, denied by the prevalent ideology, is sufficient in itself to justify the négritude movement in the Caribbean" (4).

While Aimé Césaire originally coined the term "Négritude," the phenomena was actually originated much earlier (1913) by "Haitians [who] did not know it as Négritude" (C.L.R. James 392–394). This was a time when Black Haitian elites wanted to be as French as possible and needed a "national rallying-point... [and] discovered what is known today as Négritude. It is the prevailing social ideology among politicians and intellectuals in every part of Africa[,] but its origin and development ...is West Indian" (392 – 394). History is the motivating force behind Césaire's poetry "because it is vital to the definition of the black subject... Césaire seem[s] to be interested in particular

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6 Refer to Edouard Glissant's Caribbean Discourse (24). For other criticisms of Négritude, refer also to Max Dorsoinville's Le Pays natal (49) and France Lionnet's Autobiographical Voices (15).
mechanisms and records of the past and present that have conditioned blackness in Africa and the Americas. Those realities include slavery and colonization..." (Kubayanda 33).

Glissant also views history as problematic for the African diaspora because "the historical side" of things does not accurately reflect lived reality. For him, history is "a universal, systematic, and imposed whole" (Glissant, Caribbean Discourse 9) that "[w]e can be the victims of... when we submit passively to it – never managing to escape its harrowing power" (70). According to Glissant, history has worked hand in hand with "Literature... to put together a total system," manifesting initially with Shakespeare, who established a hierarchy in which Caliban is below Prospero. Into this "proposed Totality was inserted the unprecedented ambition of creating man in the image of the Western ideal" (75). Glissant and Césaire\(^7\) demonstrate that literature and other aspects of Western historical memory are partly responsible for the cultural identity problems of the African diaspora. Historical memory, say Glissant and Césaire, helps perpetuate the neo-colonial reality\(^8\) by ensuring the marginal reception of certain groups within and between nations.

These theories on the relationship of history and literature to the cultural identity of the African diaspora define a deep-rooted Caribbean literary tradition. They are now becoming entrenched in the Canadian literary tradition through the work of African-Caribbean-Canadian authors and critics such as Dionne Brand and Max Dorsinville. Dorsinville is best known for his theory of domination, which incorporates many aspects

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\(^7\) In the Black Jacobins, C.L.R. James notes that Césaire's Paris education created a "gulf" that separated him from "the people where he was born and that he was not aware of until he returned to Martinique" (James 398).

\(^8\) Refer to Edouard Glissant's discussion in Caribbean Discourse (70-71), of how Western history and literature perpetuate domination.
of Césaire and Glissant’s theories. Dorsinville’s model illustrates that the shades of domination change over time from slavery to colonialism, for example, but the underlying hierarchical ideology does not. It is reflected in and perpetuated in part by the “dominant” literature. Dorsinville embarks on his theory in *Le Pays natal : Essais sur les littératures du Tiers-Monde et du Québec* by discussing “littérature dominée et littérature dominante” (29). He critiques renowned critics René Wellek and Northrop Frye because they “s’entendent... sur l’existence d’une mythologie homogène et singulière au regard de la tradition occidentale” (14).

According to Dorsinville, “[l]es symboles, images et métaphores sont les outils de l’écrivain quelle que soit la langue d’usage: et ils constituent un héritage culturel dont la source sont les mythes et les archétypes du monde occidental” (14). Dorsinville questions Wellek’s “théorie universelle de la littérature” because “elle ne repose dans les faits que sur les acquis d’une seule civilisation” (15). Dorsinville exposes the dichotomy of Wellek’s “universal” and points out that literature is fundamentally...“un acte politique puisqu’il ressortit à des jugements et évaluations relevant de convictions idéologiques d’hommes qui sont consciemment ou inconsciemment conditionnés par des contingences historiques et socio-économiques” (15). In *Le Pays natal*, Dorsinville demonstrates that Third-World writers, an elite group educated in the colonizer’s image and institutions, face a double exile. They find themselves exiled from a history that constructs the non-white as “l’indigène,” and exiled from a present in which assimilation

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9 Refer to Max Dorsinville’s, *Le Pays natal* (29).
is impossible. This trauma is multiplied, however, when they return to their native lands to find that they no longer fit in there either.

Dorsinville points out “[d]ans la mesure où l’écrivain surmonte le traumatisme que son double exil renvoie à l’exil politique et historique, plus douloureux, de son peuple il en arrive à comprendre sa situation dans le monde. Il comprend que sa situation individuelle est indissociable de celle du pays natal : de part et l’autre ils sont victimes de l’écheveau colonial” (18). The perspective gained from this experience allows Third-World authors such as himself to come to terms much earlier with “l’étendue d’un machiavélisme institutionnel servant à le déshumaniser et en faire une victime tragique” and to become, in Césaire’s words “la voix de ceux qui n’ont point de voix” (18-19). Dorsinville further elaborates his theory of domination in his more recent Solidarités, which unlocks the secret legacy of colonial privilege through a compelling theoretical exploration of the Haitian situation that includes an interview with Karl Lévêque, “[…] prêtre jésuite, docteur en philosophie, retrouvé au Canada militant au sein des communautés ouvrières haïtienne, québécoise et tiers-mondiste” (Solidarités xi). Solidarités identifies two waves of immigrants from Haiti to Canada, the first of which comprises part of the Haitian elite, and the second the labour class. The interview provides legitimacy to both Dorsinville’s rejection of “silence” and his critical model of domination.

Faced with his own memories and the knowledge they afford him, Dorsinville is unable, in Solidarités, to remain silent. He questions the circumstances that privileged his and other Haitians’ educations and immigration to North America:
Et ce n'est pas seulement la répression passée ou lointaine qui les cloue au silence, mais la situation de privilège qui est maintenant la leur. Car, le Canada avait eu besoin de leur compétence de médecin, de professeur, de comptable. Et la différence de traitement qui leur a été faite, en raison des quelques onces de matière grise dont ils sont si fiers mais qui ont coûté des milliers de dollars au peuple haïtien, aux paysans payeurs de taxes (dans ce pays où l'Université est gratuite mais réservée aux fils de privilégiés) les rend douteusement silencieux, peu solidaire en tout cas de la récente émigration haïtienne, « simple et vile main-d'œuvre » drainée vers les grands centres métropolitains par les mécanismes d'une économie désormais mondiale. (Solidarités 4)

It is paradoxical that Dorsinville here seems to imply that these educated Haitians are physically more intelligent than the rest of the population, a notion that the book taken as a whole would not support.

Within the framework of Lévêque's opinion, and in a discourse that could be analyzed in terms of Albert Memmi's *Portrait du colonisé*, Dorsinville posits the first wave of immigrants from Haiti as neo-colonials (my term) and makes it clear that the Haitian presence in Quebec is wrongly characterized by the successful integration of this elite group. He points out that second-wave voices are not being heard and that first-wave

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10 In his world renowned book, *Portrait du colonisé*, Albert Memmi describes colonialism as a variety of fascism based on economic privilege; however, he qualifies this by saying that colonial privilege is not solely economic, even the poorest colonizer thought himself to be—and actually was—superior to the colonized.
immigrants must break the silence of the privileged in order to prevent the exploitation of
this “deuxième vague d'Haitiens, d'hommes et de femmes issus du lumpen prolétariat
ignoré par l’élite d’hier et d’aujourd’hui, ici comme là-bas, et qui maintenant fait éclater sa
condition ici même au Québec” (Solidarités 12).

Dorsinville’s most recent elaboration of his theory of domination is presented in
his 2005 memoir, A Haitian’s Coming of Age in 1959: In the Postcolonial Light and
Shadow of Duvalier and Castro, which offers theoretical Préface, Foreword,
Introduction, and three Appendices in addition to Dorsinville’s autobiography. This
“experimental book” may be considered a memoir because it integrates so many personal,
cultural and intellectual aspects of Dorsinville, his native land, and his adoptive country.
Dorsinville claims in the introduction that the book is an “intense act of restoration and
redress that engages writing in the shadow of History” in the sense intended by Derek
Walcott (3). Walcott appears briefly in the autobiography as a stranger on a bus who
hands the character “Jacques” (Dorsinville as a teenager in Quebec) a scrap of paper with
the inscription Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than
that love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole.11

The autobiographical component of Dorsinville’s memoir is a “creative construct”
taking the form of a diary written over the course of the year 1959 and relating the
coming of age of a young Haitian attending a prestigious high school in Quebec (A
Haitian’s Coming of Age 1-3). The autobiography has an “unseen narrator,” and the

11 This is an excerpt from Derek Walcott’s The Antilles. Fragments of Epic Memory: the 1992 Nobel
Lecture (8-9)
“missing link in the diarist’s journey through fragmented spaces and relationships is the ‘glue’ supplied by [this] ‘unseen narrator’ in gathering the fragments of the past located in 1959” (1-2). This book holds great hope for the future of the Caribbean in its expression of Walcott’s “restoration.” It “locates continuity and genealogy as both literary strategy and commitment to cultural identity that bind not only [his] own work, but also that of…many other writers’ works with a shared Caribbean and/or Postcolonial background, namely Derek Walcott” (*A Haitian’s Coming of Age* viii).

African-Caribbean-Canadian author / critic Dionne Brand also theorizes memory, noting in her autobiographical work, *The Map to the Door of No Return*, that “[v]ery few family stories, few personal stories have survived among the millions of descendants of the trade” (25). She discusses the psychological effects on the African diaspora left by this void in verbal cultural memory (11). Brand’s many configurations of the Door of No Return situate the complexity of the past and present situations of the African diaspora within a memory context. The original configuration of this door represents “that place where our ancestors departed one world for another; the Old World for the New. The place where all names were forgotten and all beginnings recast. In some desolate sense it was the creation place of Blacks in the New World Diaspora at the same time that it signified the end of traceable beginnings” (5). Because “[t]he African self... was informed by colonial images of the African as savages and not by anything we could call on our memories to conjure” (17), Brand explores this creation place as “a place emptied of beginnings – as a site of belonging or unbelonging” (5).
Brand also views the "Door to No Return" as consciousness because it "casts a haunting spell on personal and collective consciousness in the Diaspora" (25), later writing that her own thoughts "proceed from the experience" of the Black diaspora (92). Brand’s door configuration figuratively represents any door in the Americas, because as soon as a member of the African diaspora opens one it turns into the "Door to No Return;" “One enters a room and history precedes. History is already seated in the chair in the empty room when one arrives. Where one stands in a society seems always related to this historical experience” (25). Those who stepped through the original configuration of the door, Brand says, were traveling "without a map...without a way... That misdirection became the way. After the Door of No Return, a map was only a set of impossibilities, a set of changing locations” (223). She thus demonstrates how organized remembering and forgetting of history continues to deceive the African diaspora in the Americas.

Brand questions the national narratives of Canada, the U.S.A. and many other countries in the Americas, noting that the “narrative of race is embedded in all narratives” (128). To be a member of the African diaspora Brand says, is to “inhabit a trope; to be a kind of function... to live as fiction” (18). Brand discusses the relative power of the national narrative with respect to the work of African-American novelist Toni Morrison. Morrison believes a “novel written a certain way can do precisely... what blues or jazz or gossip or stories or myths or folklore did” (Vinson and Jones 145-6), suggesting that peoples’ lives can be changed by changing the myths by which they are constituted. To Brand, however, Morrison’s goal of creating empowering myth for the African diaspora through literature is unrealistic because “the dominant myth,” e.g. the national narrative,
"overwhelms [her] mythmaking, leaving her characters stranded in a kind of inevitable failure" (The Map to the Door of No Return 129).

Along these same lines, Brand discusses "origins" within a Canadian context, calling them "arbitrary" constructs that "[t]oo much has been made of" and "exclusionary power structures" to which country or nation "are deeply indebted" (64). She points out that Canada, "in the main a country of immigrants, is always redefining origins, jockeying and smarming for degrees of belonging" (64). Brand's take on origins recalls the rhizomes root of Glissant's creolization, which denies the possibility of fixed identity. Brand also recalls Glissant\(^{12}\) questioning the role of literature in the marginalization of certain cultures when she writes: "You have read of islands, such as in the Tempest described as uninhabited except for monsters and spirits, as in Treasure Island described as uninhabited except for monsters and spirits. You have seen on the borders of maps of islands, natives, nubile and fierce" (13).

In conclusion, Edouard Glissant points out in Poetics of Relation how early post-slavery English, Spanish, or French Caribbean literatures "tended to introduce obscurities... into the material they dealt with; putting into practice, like the Plantation tales, processes of intensification, breathlessness, digression, and immersion of individual psychology within the drama of a common destiny" (71). He says that this literature "went against the convention of a falsely legitimizing landscape scenery" to turn the plantation itself into a vivid character. The Plantation experience "buffeted" the African diaspora from "memory and time" and imposed Western constructions of linear realism.

\(^{12}\) Refer to Caribbean Discourse (75) for Glissant's discussion of history and literature.
When the Plantation system collapsed, “when the unstoppable evolution had emptied the enclosure of people to reassemble them in the margins of cities, what remained, what still remains, is the dark side of this impossible memory, which has a louder voice and one that carries farther than any chronicle or census” (72).

Glissant refers to the post-colonial dispersion of the African diaspora into the world beyond the Plantation, to cities in Canada and other places holding little promise of success as the “second Plantation matrix” (73). This is perhaps why a questioning of historical memory and a re-establishment of cultural memory in the reconstruction of a usable past through autobiography emerges from the Caribbean literary tradition and has influenced writers around the globe. African-Americans such as Toni Morrison and Zora Neale Hurston reconstruct the past through memory to explore cultural identity, as do the authors of the conscious recovery projects discussed by Canadian literary critic Roxanne Rimstead. Francois Lionnet uses Glissant’s approach to theorize Hurston’s autoethnographical Dust Tracks on a Road and as a framework for understanding the persistent subjugation of women in modern societies. The important role of cultural memory in the reconstruction of a “usable” past for today through literature, originating in Caribbean literary tradition now informs and enriches the Canadian literary tradition from within through the work of novelists / critics such as Max Dorsinville and Dionne Brand.

The “hidden design” of writer-members of the African diaspora seems to be “the derangement of the memory, which determines, along with imagination, our only way to tame time” and “of course, is equally true of a writer of Creole such as the Haitian
Franketienne as of a novelist from the United States such as Toni Morrison" (*Poetics of Relation* 71). The novels by Brand, Clarke, Dorsinville, and Laferrière discussed in this thesis bring this creative approach to memory into the Canadian literary tradition by turning memory into a creative site for the rebuilding through Canadian literature of an international imaginary that rejects the hegemonic, fascist constructs of slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonial domination.
Dorsinville and Laferrière: Memory/Is

Dany Laferrière’s *Pays sans chapeau* and Max Dorsinville’s *James Wait et les lunettes noires* operate on many levels, touching on many past and present shades of colonial-style domination in the New World. Both novels present structurally fragmented narratives generated through autobiographical memory and incorporate Western historical memory (historical markers, dates, intertextual references) and cultural memory (historical/cultural markers, and songs and stories of the oral tradition). They question the divergence between Western historical memory of colonialism and cultural memory of colonialism and show how this divergence affects individual identities. The interweaving of fact and fiction in these novels seems to recall a rare and complex form of Haitian autobiography that often has a fictional dimension. As such, “il faut donc essayer de saisir la part autobiographique de ce genre de récit dans sa dimension essayistique, c’est-à-dire quand la narration de fiction se donne.”

My interpretation of the theoretical aspects of the representation of colonialism through memory in *Pays sans chapeau* and *James Wait* is marked by the theories of Albert Memmi, Aimé Césaire, Édouard Glissant, and Max Dorsinville. In both *James Wait et les lunettes noires* and *Pays sans chapeau* the representation of colonialism is characterized as a very distant part of cultural memory but is also shown as an ever-present model of the economic and political structures in place in Haiti. These novels do not explore the lived experience of slavery and colonization; they question the neo-

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13 Refer to the Préface to *A Haitian’s Coming of Age* in 1959 (iii).
colonial flavour of the postcolonial condition. Colonial domination becomes analogous with the dominating forces of Americanism, which perpetuates cultural subjugation through racial subordination, class division, and inequity. The fragmented structures of both *Pays sans chapeau* and *James Wait* allow colonial enterprise along with the Haitian psyche, and history itself, to be fathomed independently from "so-called" official accounts of the past stored in Western historical memory.

Although *Pays sans chapeau* and *James Wait* are both complex novels using multiple forms of memory to demonstrate the *pre-sent*, neo-colonial nature of today's reality, they achieve this in different ways. *Pays sans chapeau* is a first-person narrative and the action unfolds during Lafrière's return to Haiti after twenty years of exile, while *James Wait et les lunettes noires* is a third-person narrative that takes place in French Africa and Quebec, rendering Haiti through a Haitian student (a writer) and his creation of the fictional character, Bonbon. In spite of these and a few other stylistic differences, such as Lafrière’s use of the vernacular, for example, each novel produces cultural memories that expose and question the ways in which Black cultural identity is marginalized and how the status quo of colonialism is maintained and perpetuated through Western historical memory. I will begin my analysis in this chapter by introducing the authors along with their novels and discussing their respective uses of autobiography.

Dany Lafrière emigrated from Haiti to Canada in 1976 and could be counted among Dorsinville’s first-wave immigrants. As a youth in Haiti, he "studied at Canado-
Haitien, a prestigious school” in Haiti. His early years in Canada were less prestigious; he was supporting himself by working in a factory until he could earn a living writing. Laferrière was born in Port-au-Prince in 1953, but grew up in the town of Petit Goave. A young journalist in “Baby Doc” Duvalier’s Haiti in the early 1970s, Laferrière “fled the country for Canada after his friend and colleague, Gasner Raymond, was found decapitated on the beach... killed in retaliation for his political journalism” (Braziel 31). Laferrière’s first and second novels were published in Quebec, *Comment faire l’amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer* and *Le Charme des après-midi sans fin*. In 1991, *L’Odeur du café* won the “Carbet de la Caraïbe” prize, and in 1993 *Le Goût des jeunes filles* won the Edgar-l’Espérance prize.15 *Pays sans chapeau* is one of “10 autobiographical novels in the fittingly-entitled series, Une Autobiographie américaine: *Comment faire l’amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer* (1985); *Éroshima* (1987); *L’Odeur du café* (1991); *Le Goût des jeunes filles* (1992); *Cette grenade dans la main du jeune Nègre est-elle une arme ou un fruit?* (1993); *Chronique de la dérive douce* (1994); *Pays sans chapeau* (1996); *Le Chair du maître* (1997); *Le Charme des après-midi sans fin* (1997); and *Le Cri des oiseaux fous* (2000)” (Braziel 31).

*Pays sans chapeau* is thus one of ten books that could all be read collectively as an American autobiography. Three of the ten are novels set in Haiti: *Odeur de café, Pays sans chapeau*, and *Le cri des oiseaux fous*. Each of these three reveals specific details about Laferrière’s life and they share a fragmented structure that seems to reflect and

14 As indicated on its website, Canado-Haitian college (http://ch-fscaa.org/html/history/history-canado.htm) is a Canadian-Haitian cooperative run by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. This definitely posits Laferrière as a first-wave immigrant. In *Solidarités*, Karl Lévêque condemns systems that educate Haitians in their own country yet culminate in a brain drain to Canada.
15 Details from an interview between Dany Laferrière and Discoverhaiti, a section of an online culture site DiscoverCulture at: (http://www.discoverhaiti.com/culture_danylaferriere.htm)
explain the tumultuous flow of the Haitian past and present reality. *Pays sans chapeau* consists of a series of story fragments organized into numberless chapters named either “Pays rêve” or “Pays réel.” The narratives in the “Real” chapters deal with everyday life in Haiti as seen and/or remembered by characters, including Laferrière. “Dream” chapters are mainly reserved for discussions involving voodoo, zombies, and the like. Each chapter is further identified by an inscription of a unique proverb in original Creole as well as in translation. The complexity of this representation of colonialism is not surprising from Laferrière, who believes “ce qui se passé en Haiti aujourd’hui même, a un lien direct avec le passé colonial” (*J’écris comme je vis* 154).

*Pays sans chapeau* is a multi-level novel presenting a collection of autobiographic and ethnographic story fragments. Laferrière’s personal memories and observations in this novel both combine with the collective memory of “ancestors” to provide an intimate vision of the overpopulated, bone-dry texture of the Haitian landscape. The autobiographical aspects of *Pays sans chapeau* unfold through discussions between Laferrière, his family, and friends. Laferrière’s memories of his childhood recall his grandmother “Da” (22-24, 29, 34), who is also the subject of *Odeur de café* and has died since Laferrière fled Haiti and wrote *Pays sans chapeau*. His Aunt Renée (18-20, 22, 23, 24-30, 40, etc.), who is portrayed as a teacher in *Odeur de café*, is also conjured up by Laferrière’s return trip home in *Pays sans chapeau*. The relative affluence of Laferrière’s family and the fact that he became a journalist before leaving Haiti categorize him as a privileged member of Haitian society and first-wave immigrant upon arriving in Canada. In *Pays sans chapeau*, Laferrière narrates a reunion with childhood friends Philippe,
Manu, and Antoinette, who do not appear with those portrayed in *Odeur de café*, and attributes to them a degree of Albert Memmi’s colonial privilege.

In *Pays sans chapeau*, Laferrière’s old friend Philippe personifies “Memmian” colonial privilege, e.g. the central notion elaborated in Albert Memmi’s *Portait de colonisé* is that a planned system of privilege helps maintain and perpetuate colonialism from within the ranks of the colonized. When Laferrière remarks on Philippe’s new red jeep (145), for example, his friend replies: “Le mépris des riches n’est plus a la mode. Les gens veulent tout simplement avoir une bonne jeep eux aussi” (145). Philippe tries to justify his new jeep by adding that “il y a tellement de crevasses dans cette ville que... ça prend une jeep” to which Laferrière replies sardonically, “[ç]a prend plutôt de bonnes routes” (145). Through Laferrière’s eyes, the reader sees Philippe as a complacent member of Haitian society whose personal (desire for) privilege reflects a “Memmian” legacy of imperialism in post-colonial Haiti, reinforced by the dominating tendencies of American-brand capitalism. For Haitian society, Philippe’s “puissante jeep” (145) is a symbol commemorating the hierarchical structures of colonialism through Americanism and the resulting socio-economic inequity.

When Laferrière retrieves from the oral tradition an old song condemning the bourgeoisie, Philippe wonders if “il y en a, aujourd’hui, qui connaissent cette chanson” which goes like this: “‘Les bourgeois, c’est comme les cochons... Plus ça devient vieux plus ça devient bêtes.’” (145). By including this song in his narrative, Laferrière recalls the Haitian cultural memory of economic oppression that has long characterized Haiti’s own (under) development. Philippe asks Laferrière if he has returned to Haiti “pour
changer les choses,” pointing out that those who do attempt change in Haiti “sont actuellement en train de se faire manger par les vers.” Philippe is relieved to learn that Laferrière is there to “faire un livre” (145). By including this exchange in his narrative, Laferrière implies that American consumerism now (forcefully) reinforces the structural inequity once maintained by the colonial enterprise, that violence is not a solution for Haiti, that true change must occur at an ideological level, and that literature is a vehicle for such change.

Laferrière’s autobiographical narrative in Pays sans chapeau recalls an old friend named Manu. He is portrayed as a revolutionary with-the-people nationalist, yet enjoying a relative state of (economic) privilege. Colonial guilt may explain the fact that Manu is sick yet seemingly unable to stop drinking (193-194) and jokingly referred to as “petit dictateur” (187-188). In Pays sans chapeau, this notion of colonial guilt is also evoked when Philippe cynically sums Haiti up for Laferrière: “‘Les choses, c’est nous. Ceux qui sont restés. Ceux qui n’ont pas quitté ce pays quand ça allait mal…”’ (146). While Laferrière here does not seem to show any guilt he later asks a young nurse, “[l’]ange de la miséricorde[,]” if she thinks he “aurais dû rester ici, à aider, au lieu de passer vingt ans ailleurs” (79). She reassures him of the contrary but still he seems unsure. The privileged Philippe, the weak Manu, and the self-exiled Laferrière thus ironically characterize Albert Memmi’s notion of a colonial mentality, engendered by profit and privilege as seen through Laferrière’s eyes in Pays sans chapeau.

Laferrière’s use of memory autobiographically while incorporating aspects of group memory recalls the work of sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, who tells us that “one
cannot in fact think about the events of one’s past without discoursing on them [, and that] to discourse upon something means to connect within a single system of ideas our opinions as well as those of our circle” (Halbwachs 53). By discoursing upon the colonial past of Haiti, Laferrière evokes his own ideas and opinions on colonialism, constructing a counter-memory of colonialism using Haitian oral cultural memory. In this way, the autobiographical layer of the narrative becomes a vehicle for the delivery of a critical exploration of the effects of colonialism on the Haitian past and present rendered through Western historical memory and Haitian cultural memory. Before discussing these elements of Pays sans chapeau, however, I will introduce Max Dorsinville and discuss the autobiographical aspects of his novel James Wait et les lunettes noires.

Max Dorsinville, son of an ex-diplomat from Haiti, came to Canada in 1954 to pursue his education. Like Laferrière, Dorsinville fits his own first-wave category of Haitian immigration. After earning his B.A. and M.A. at the Université de Sherbrooke, he went on to complete a doctorate in Comparative Literature at the City University of New York. Max Dorsinville is a professor at McGill University. Dorsinville is no stranger to the Quebec literary scene, having published several essays and books on the evolution of Quebec, and Black American culture and literature. His book Solidarités, and the multi-layered novel James Wait et les lunettes noires are motivated by the problematic of the first and second waves of immigrants from Haiti to Canada. This problematic is characterized by the dominated–dominating paradigm central to Dorsinville’s theory of domination.
James Wait et les lunettes noires presents many stories in one, has many characters presenting autobiographical shades of Dorsinville and is intertextually connected to and shares the fragmented form of Dorsinville’s memoir, A Haitian’s Coming of Age in 1959. As in Pays sans chapeau, the representation of colonialism is thematic in James Wait et les lunettes noires, but demonstrates a perceived pre-sent, neo-colonial reality in not only Haiti, but also in French Africa and Quebec. The text seems to demonstrate how privilege “is at the heart of the colonial relationship,” can make members of the colonized end up “adopting” the colonial ideology (Memmi 16), and is perpetuated in the post-colonial period. The novel James Wait also demonstrates the ways in which (dominating) Western society marginalizes (dominated) groups such as those of Black culture through the instruments of Western historical memory, e.g. classic education, newspaper reports, and literature thus perpetuating a neo-colonial reality. This notion is implicit in Dorsinville’s theory of domination, exposing an ever-present domination in today’s societies and their literatures. James Wait et les lunettes noires elaborates in fictional terms Dorsinville’s theory that “la condition du colonisé est liée au complexe de dépendance mis en place par le colonialisme” (Le Pays natal 21).

In James Wait et les lunettes noires, James Wait is a black American baseball player who has come to Coolbrook, Quebec to play professional ball and falls in love with a Québécoise woman. The character James Wait presents a shade of Dorsinville, who himself played baseball in Senegal and later fell in love with a white, Québécoise woman whom he met in Sherbrooke, Quebec. The name “James Wait” has a place in literary history. It is the name of the “nigger” working on the “ship” in Joseph Conrad’s 1920 publication, The Nigger of the Narcissus (Conrad 20). When Wait boards the ship,
“a faint hum that sounded like the suppressed mutter of the word ‘Nigger’ -- ran along the
deck and escaped out into the night” (19). By using “James Wait,” Dorsinville draws a
parallel between his character and Conrad’s James Wait and thereby questions the
marginal reception of Black culture in two separate continents and centuries.

The Haitian student is another character containing shades of Dorsinville. Both are
writers and were students when they arrived in Quebec from Haiti as first-wave
immigrants. They are “[p]roduits d’un histoire où la race expliquait l’esclavage de leurs
ancêtres” and I suspect that Dorsinville, like “[l]’étudiant[,] n’ignorait pas que l’imbroglio
de la condition haïtienne expliquait sa présence à Coolbrook” (James Wait 114-115).
Sherbrooke girls are surprised that the Haitian student speaks French with an accent
(116). Their surprise is pre-sent from classical French education (a component of Western
historical memory) in which the successful black is seen as an imitator and the less
successful as “un individu aliéné sans valeur réelle pour l’Europe” (Le Pays natal 18). In
cultures européenne et tiers-mondiste qui scinde l’individu, sa culture et son peuple” (21).
For the Haitian student in James Wait, the Gay Paree bar is a symbol of Haiti and the
university a symbol of Western society. He “réalisait que s’il avait été faux de se croire
Canadien français, il n’était pas non plus l’Haïtien de service. Il enviait a l’un et a l’autre
de pouvoir ainsi se définir” (James Wait et les lunettes noires 121).

The representation of the neo-colonial reality through autobiographical memory in
this novel emerges through the professor, Jacques, who often discusses “Coolbrook
University” with his wife, Denise. Dorsinville received his B.A. at Université de
Sherbrooke and is now a teacher, which seems to confirm an autobiographical link between him and this character Jacques. Jacques may also represent shades of the autobiographical character Jacques Narcisse Jr. in Dorsinville’s *A Haitian’s Coming of Age* in 1959, or this latter’s unseen narrator, “Jacques double” (1).

*James Wait* begins with Jacques in Senegal, Africa, where he teaches at l’Institut des études africaines. He is musing over the neo-colonial reality of French Africa and its bourgeoisie, “minuscule bourgeoisie d’État [qui] se faisait fort de répandre cette erreur par ses politiques d’emprunt, ses goûts somptuaires” (16). Jacques remembers his students back in Quebec, “[I]les filles de familles de la société d’abondance” (20), thinking that his lectures must have made them aware that their own lifestyles exploit the “Tiers monde” (20). This reference to the Third World evokes Western historical memory’s marginal classification of the dominated Black culture. Jacques’ discourse on third-world exploitation illustrates “the relationship between dominated and dominating societies,” a distinction that Dorsinville explores “in his studies of the social and literary relations of oppressor and oppressed communities in French Africa, Quebec, Black America, and the Caribbean” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 30).

It is thus surprising when the narrator, in the next chapter, describes Jacques’ privileged life in Quebec. In summer, he and Denise visited friends who had lakeside houses, presumably at Magog and North Hatley.¹⁶ In winter they slept in, went skiing, etc (17). Jacques is unable to see that his own family’s privilege is due to the colonization and subsequent exploitation of the Québécois in Canada, thus demonstrating the

¹⁶ These towns are referred to in *James Wait et les lunettes noires* (144).
complexities of the neo-colonial situation. This portrayal of Jacques as a complacent supporter of the status quo in Quebec is also evoked through the eyes of one of his Quebec students, Barbara. In *James Wait et les lunettes noires*, the far-reaching effects of colonialism on individual identity manifest through “Memmian” colonial privilege and guilt, rendered obscurely through the characters of Barbara and her professor.

Barbara was raised until the age of 12 in Africa by Canadian missionary parents. Her memory of privilege seems to be a source of colonial guilt for her, possibly providing a subconscious motivation for her present-life involvement with the Third World Committee. This memory of privilege and difference affects the very core of her individual identity. The professor is successful but complacent and quite reluctant to rock the “status quo.” There is an unmistakable sense of irony in Barbara’s comments on her teacher’s silence after a demonstration, “tu ne parles pas” (50). In class one day, Barbara tells Jacques with a critical air that his lectures consist of “des trucs que vous avez lus” (21). In many ways, Jacques’s privileged upbringing in Quebec mirrors Dorsinville’s privileged childhood in Haiti. Of course, Dorsinville has made this distinction in his own life, as evidenced by his “breaking of the silence” in the theoretical *Solidarités* and now through his own ironic autobiographical portrayal in *James Wait et les lunettes noires*.

In the above discussion of Dorsinville and Laferrière’s respective uses of fictional autobiography, I have demonstrated that a neo-colonial reality is perpetuated after decolonization in part through the impact of “Memmian” colonial privilege on the individual. I have also demonstrated that autobiographical memory is an aspect of group memory in these novels and that group or cultural realities also affect individual identity.
As first-wave immigrants, or members of a group of privileged Haitians, both Laferrière and Dorsinville perhaps use autobiography to satisfy their respective needs for self-reflection and as the perfect tool to break the silence of history. I will now discuss the different ways that Laferrière and Dorsinville evoke group or collective cultural memory alongside Western historical memory to question further the ideological roots of the perceived neo-colonial texture of the post-colonial period.

In *Pays sans chapeau*, the notion that the Haitian cultural memory was stolen by Western historical memory emerges through Laferrière’s discussions of voodoo with fictionalized character “le professeur J.-B. Romain, de la faculté d’ethnologie de l’université d’État d’Haïti” (134). Professor Romain clearly characterizes Haitian writer / ethnologist Jacques Roumain, whose reputed work *Gouverneur de la rosée* extolls the benefits of transcultural crossings. Laferrière and Romain’s personal discussions of voodoo evoke both individual and cultural memories and reveal a long history of domination in Haiti. Laferrière pays a surprise visit to Romain’s office at the university. Romain has been asked for his opinion as an ethnologist and complains emphatically to Laferrière about how “[t]out va plus vite” in Haiti (124) and that:

maintenant, on me demande mon avis sur des histoires qui se déroulent sous nos yeux. Il me faut du temps. Dans mon analyse d’Haïti, je suis encore en Afrique, vous comprenez. Il faut aller à la racine des choses. Les peuples ont une histoire, il faut commencer par le début, mais ces gens veulent que je réagisse comme un journaliste, à chaud sur l’événement. C’est impossible ! Ils refusent de comprendre. (134)
Romain's concerns mirror those of Édouard Glissant, who points out that one must look at the failure of "history" and return “to the point of entanglement” (Glissant, Caribbean Discourse 26).

Professor Romain also questions Western historical memory when he tells Laferrière that no one talks about Haiti's progress and that voodoo is considered "superstition" (137), and when Romain asks if Laferrière has "oublié la campagne dite antisuperstitieuse de 1944, au cours de laquelle l'Église a tenté de toutes ses forces de détruire le vaudou? Ils ont détruit les temples, fait mettre en prison tous les hougons, déraciné les grands mapous, ces grands arbres qui nous servaient de lieux de mémoire" (219). This bizarre discussion of voodoo typifies colonial us-and-themism and questions the involvement of the Church. This discussion also demonstrates the significance of memory in cultural identity and the effects of neo-colonial domination by showing that the West tried to extinguish Voodoo by removing its symbols, such as the African mapoo trees.

Professor Romain fills in Laferrière with details from his cultural memory of the past, and tells him that people survived the domination “[p]ar la ruse” (219) by (figuratively) making...

...des églises chrétiennes des temples du vaudou... Ha ! ha ! hahahaha !...
On a fait des saints chrétiens des dieux du vaudou... Ha ! hah ! hahahaha...
C'est ainsi que saint Jacques est devenu Ogou Ferraille. Les prêtres

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17 Refer to Caribbean Discourse (70-71) for Édouard Glissant's discussion of history and literature.
catholiques nous voyant dans leurs églises croyaient que nous avions
abdiqué notre foi, alors que nous étions justement en train de rendre gloire,
a notre façon, à Erzulie Dantor, à Erzulie Fréda Dahomey, à Papa Zaka, à
Papa Legba, à Damballah Ouèdo... Tous ces dieux avaient insidieusement
pris la forme et le visage des saints catholiques. Nous étions chez nous
chez eux... Ha ! ha ! hahahahahahahahahahahahah !... (219)

This perhaps explains why in *Pays sans chapeau* Laferrière’s mother is a self-proclaimed
Christian who believes emphatically in the existence of the spirit world of voodoo and in
zombies and why Laferrière’s Aunt Renée is a fervent Catholic who believes in Christ,
yet also in the other world (voodoo), “au royaume des morts” (119). The oral memory of
voodoo in *Pays sans chapeau* thus represents voodoo as a traditional mode and tool of
resistance used to combat the historically dominating forces of slavery, colonialism, and
American intervention and thus voodoo as part of Haiti’s *pre-sent* reality.

Interestingly, Dorsinville’s *James Wait et les lunettes noires* also portrays voodoo
through cultural memory and posits voodoo as a traditional Haitian mode of resistance
against domination, although it is shown here so much more obscurely. For example, a
masterful love narrative in two separate parts is presented, half before the first chapter of
the novel and half after the last chapter. This love scene also appears at the beginning of
Dorsinville’s *Solidarités* and is reproduced in an English “adaptation” of *James Wait et
les lunettes noires, Erzulie Loves Shango*. Only by reading the English title, however, can
the reader make the connection that the lovers, who remain nameless in the original
novel but are presumed to be Wait and Denise, are symbols for Erzulie and Shango, who have exorcised "leurs masques et partageaient la vérité" (*James Wait* 9). Recalling Haitian voodoo as a mode of resistance helps inform this novel’s exploration of domination as a dark legacy of colonialism.

The naming of the deities thus gives the translation significance that the original novel does not have, which may explain why the back cover of Dorsinville’s memoir *A Haitian’s Coming of Age* lists the two books as separate novels. The title of the translation consolidates the love story in *James Wait et les lunettes noires* as a metaphysical reincarnation in which deities Erzulie (voodoo goddess of love) and Shango (god of war and fire) resurface in Quebec to evoke the Haitian memory of slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonial reality. These passages portray Erzulie and Shango once again united in resistance, now in Coolbrook, Quebec where the wealthy “gens du nord” are portrayed as racist against blacks (157). The naming of the deities in the translation also evokes a Haitian cultural memory of resistance to colonialism and, at the same time, exposes this memory’s absence from Western historical memory. To varying degrees, discussions of voodoo inform the representations of colonialism in *Pays sans chapeau* and *James Wait et les lunettes noires*. Discussions of voodoo evoke Haitian cultural memory of resistance to colonialism, waking us at the same time to see the dominating capabilities of Western historical memory.

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18 The names Erzulie and Shango do not appear at all in the original version, *James Wait et les lunettes noires*.

19 According to the publishing house, *Les Éditions CIDIHCA*, Dorsinville’s *Erzulie Loves Shango* (1998) is not a translation of *James Wait et les lunettes noires* (1995), but an adaptation. A comparative reading of the two novels shows that the only real difference is the title; the title, however, lends such significance to the novel, that it could certainly provide enough reason to categorize the work as an adaptation rather than as a translation. Refer to Appendix 2 of this thesis to view an e-mail correspondence from Les Éditions CIDIHCA.
The representations of colonialism through memory in *James Wait et les lunettes noires* and *Pays sans chapeau* are also informed by images of America as a globalizing colonial power. Laferrière uses an autobiographical narrative laced with historical markers and dates in *Pays sans chapeau* to remember the historical role of American intervention:


The juxtaposition of such dates as “1915” with markers like “Coles Market” (U.S. multinational) from Western historical memory situates the domination of Haiti within a neo-colonial framework of Americanism. As a dominant ideology, Americanism is transmitted throughout dominated cultures by virtue of physical strength or by a more insidious route of exported lifestyles, “the American way,” whereby cultural values are exported along with products, economic structures, and political systems.

Due to the generally negative representations of American neo-colonialism in *Pays sans chapeau*, the reader is surprised when confronted with a story fragment entitled “AMERICANS” in which Laferrière and his friend Philippe come face to face with the U.S. soldiers entering a Coles supermarket:
— Fais pas cette tête, me dit Philippe, t’en as sûrement vu à l’aéroport.
— Je n’ai aucun problème à voir les soldats américains dans un édifice public, mais là, me semble que ça fait intime…
— Remets-toi, Vieux…
— Le voir là, comme ça, en train de vaquer à ses occupations, disons que je n’étais pas préparé…
— Qu’est-ce que tu veux ? Les Américains sont en Haïti. C’est tout.
— Je ne parle pas politique. Je suis plutôt d’accord, de ce point de vue, avec leur présence… Je dis simplement que ça me fait un choc. C’est physique, si tu veux… (158)

Laferrière’s support of the American presence in Haiti seems misplaced in this passage. If one looks to the chapter’s proverb, however, one realizes that sometimes it is wise to simply tell a story: “Lang ac dent cé bon zanmi, yo rété nan minm caille, gnouve pas rinmin lote. (La langue et la dent sont deux bonnes amies qui habitent dans la même maison, tout en se détestant.)” (129). This obscurity in Laferrière’s narrative typifies the complexity of the Haitian autobiography as discussed both by Laval University’s Maximilien Laroche in the Préface (iv) to Dorsinville’s memoir A Haitian’s Coming of Age and recalled in the introduction to this thesis.

In James Wait, the character “Bill,” a “typical” American, evokes America as an ongoing colonial force. He is a symbol of “l’éternelle, frauduleuse, innocence américaine qui feint d’ignorer le massacre des Indiens, l’esclavage des noires, la ségrégation, la discrimination, le racisme qui s’étend aussi amplement que leur fameux ‘rêve’: ce goût de la puissance pour la puissance sont des dehors de All-American-Boy et de girl-next-door”
(35). The dominating tendencies of American ideology, perhaps motivated by “la puissance pour la puissance” here recall the dominated–dominating paradigm of colonialism. Dorsinville’s representation of colonization seems to evoke a parallel between the perceived dominated–dominating ideologies of the colonized Québécois elite and the once-colonized Americans: “Lorsque le Québec sera indépendant, on va en nationaliser des choses. L’Institut des études africaines par exemple, à quoi ça sert ? On en fera l’Institut des études québécoises… Plus d’Anglais pour nous emmerder ! Nous aurons notre indépendance, comme les Américains” (43-44). *James Wait et les lunettes noires* thus shows the process by which Albert Memmi’s post-colonial reality takes hold within a society, e.g. a rise of the oppressive bourgeoisie from among the once-colonized.

The perceived neo-colonial reality of Black-Americans emerges more specifically in *James Wait et les lunettes noires* through the cultural memory of the African-American character of James Wait. Wait recalls his father working himself to death for little money in New York and his mother making daily visits to the “Baptist Church,” a modern-day sign that the Church continues to accept the social and financial inequity of Black America. Mrs. Wait’s only reminder of her previous life in Georgia were her daily visits to the Baptist Church, which “l’épaulait dans la survivance” (183). The notion that the Church “l’épaulait dans la survivance” seems to imply that the Church is somehow condoning or maintaining a state of “survivorship” among Blacks rather than questioning or helping combat the fact that the Black of the day was by necessity constantly in survival mode. Mrs. Waits’ hope in the Church may be due to the fact that Georgia had been one of the first states to have a Black Baptist Church.
To Mrs. Wait’s son James, “des Madame Dupuis, il en avait connues toutes sa vie ; elles étaient les *housewives* de Long Island dont sa mère et ses aèules étaient les *mammies*. La *missy* des vieilles plantations de sud immuable dans le temps comme dans l’espace” (237). In *James Wait*, Denise’s mother, Gilberthe, evokes the Western historical memory of Black culture during a conversation between herself and Jacques’s mother Madeleine in downtown Coolbrook. The pair has stopped for a coffee “*au comptoir du United*” (157), a Coolbrook department store. The historical marker “*United*” may be a reference to 14 Canadian multinational department stores owned by American retailer Schulte-United, thus recalling the dominating forces of American consumerism. When the women notice Wait, Gilberthe recalls having seen Black people “à Montréal, à New York, en Floride, au cours de ses voyages,” but never in Coolbrook. The only Black people Gilberthe ever saw here were in “*La Tribune,*” the city’s newspaper (157).

This reference to a newspaper recalls how Western historical memory is a collective source of the marginalization of Black culture. As Albert Memmi notes, “[t]he mythical portrait of the colonized… includes an unbelievable laziness, and that of the colonizer, a virtuous taste for action” (Memmi 80). In *James Wait*, the marginal reception of Black culture by Québécois(e), who have only seen blacks in newspaper articles and pictures (157), shows their marginalization in Western historical memory keeping the mythical portrait alive in the post-colonial period. Gilberthe believes that Black people are necessary “*pour décor des clubs, lieux qu’elle ne fréquentait jamais (oh, non !)*” (157). The representations of colonialism in *James Wait et les lunettes noires* and *Pays sans chapeau* both use cultural memory to demonstrate that a neo-colonial reality is maintained and perpetuated through Western historical memory.
The representation of colonialism in both *James Wait et les lunettes noires* and *Pays sans chapeau* is evoked by the cultural marker “Mulatto.” These references to Mulattoes are not surprising given their central role in Haiti’s development. By 1792 San Domingo (now Haiti) had become the richest colony in the Western Hemisphere: 20 Aside from the slaves, the population at that time was comprised of white colonists and free blacks, usually mulattoes. “[I]n 1789, of 7000 Mulatto women in San Domingo, 5000 were either prostitutes or the kept mistresses of white men” (James 32). Although Mulattoes and free blacks were “another class of free men in San Domingo,” the “distinction between a white man and a man of colour was [in San Domingo] fundamental” (34-36). In San Domingo, white skin was the mark of a man of quality (33), but “the first great division [was between] great whites and small whites” and the “moment the revolution begins in France these two [would] spring at each other and fight to a finish” (36).

In *Pays sans chapeau*, Laferrière’s “Tante Renée est aussi blanche qu’une Noire peut l’être sans être une vraie Blanche. Elle n’est pourtant pas une mulâtresse” (40). The denial of her Mulatto status is telling of the silence of history. In a conversation with Philippe, Laferrière recalls “une jolie mulâtresse” he saw when he was fifteen or sixteen years old. He later wonders whether “cette jeune fille” seemed beautiful to him only because “elle avait la peau claire” (156-157). According to James, during slavery,

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20 "In 1789 the French West Indian colony of San Domingo supplied [2/3’s] of the overseas trade of France and was the greatest individual market for the European slave-trade. It was an integral part of the economic life of the age, the greatest colony in the world, the pride of France, and the envy of every other imperialist nation. The whole structure rested on the labour of half-a-million slaves" (James x).
“because white men were so few in comparison with the slaves...masters sought to bind these intermediates to themselves rather than let them swell the ranks of their enemies” (James 37). As the Mulattoes in pre-revolution Haiti grew wealthy and their numbers multiplied, “the white man began to restrict and harass them with malicious legislation” (36-37). Laferrière in this novel, however, portrays the Mulattoes in Haiti in the 1990’s as issues of “rareté,” thereby situating capitalism within a colonial framework: “Port-au-Prince, la très grand majorité est noire, et tu sais que plus un produit est rare, plus sa valeur augmente... Ici, en matière de mulâtres, la demande est très supérieure à l’offre” (157).

In *James Wait et les lunettes noires*, a Mulatto musician named Bonbon appears as a character in a story entitled “Dans un monde blanc et noir” written by the Haitian student (60). Bonbon is an entertainer at “Gay Patee” (182) in Coolbrook. *Gay Patee* and *mulâtre* are historical markers recalling the French slave trade in colonial Haiti, while the behaviour of racist whites in the Coolbrook club show Western historical memory’s ability to stereotype the cultural identities of dominated cultures. The marginal reception of Black culture in this Quebec bar characterizes the historic marginalization of Blacks in Western historical memory. Bonbon’s Haitian cultural (mulatto) memory makes him feel superior to African-Americans: “Il fallait comprendre que les vrais Haïtiens c’était lui, mulâtre, et non les negres.” Bonbon tells the Québécoise women “de pas sortir avec les nègres américains” (180). This questioning of “who is the better black” reflects the hierarchical ideology of colonialism, which posits people as commodities. “Mulatto” evokes the historical memory of colonization. In the Haitian student’s manuscript “Dans un monde blanc et noir,” Bonbon is a womanizer who “calculait, évaluait, planifiait.
Deux par soir le satisfaisaient” (174). It goes without saying that this “constance de batardise” (174) is also a legacy from the colonial past.

*James Wait et les lunettes noires* and *Pays sans chapeau* have other similarities, including their treatment of day and night. Dorsinville’s Bonbon separates reality into day and night because he “avait compris le fossé qui séparait le comportement de jour et celui de nuit de cette ville, la façade de jour du conformisme ambiant et la réalité qui se dévoilait la nuit” (175). Laferrière evokes Haitian cultural memory with his mother’s story about a similar dividing of night and day in Haiti during American occupations: “L’armée américaine occupera le pays durant le jour. L’armée des zombis l’aura la nuit à sa disposition. …ils ont finalement opté pour une division du temps” (*Pays sans chapeau* 58). Laferrière evokes the memory of slavery when he says, “[l]e jour à l’Occident. La nuit à l’Afrique” (59). The deeper implication of this posits the U.S.A. as an imperial force capable of dividing the human realm into opportune categories of race, wealth, and even time.

In *Pays sans chapeau*, descriptions of colonial-style production and resource distribution reveal the persistence of old class structures and the perpetuation of a neo-colonial reality in Haiti. Professor Romain describes “une petite révolte contre le grand don de la region” who “possède la moitie des terres… [et] surtout l’eau” (67). A similar notion of neo-colonial socio-economic structures, the dark legacy of colonialism in Quebec, is reflected in *James Wait et les lunettes noires* through the wealth and attitude of Denise’s and Jacques’ families.
For example, a Québécoise waitress is serving two "femmes du nord" (156), Gilberte (Jacques' mother) and Madeleine (Denise's mother). The waitress arrives at their table "[s]ans l'ombre d'un sourire dans sa figure luisante, les yeux entourés de cernes, elle leur dit, "Oui" (155). Her "Oui" evokes the Québécois cultural memory of the post-Quiet-Revolution period and the fatigue defining her character evidences a neo-colonial class structure and economic system that breeds a have–have not society. The inclusion of the Quebec colonization issue in Dorsinville's representation of neo-colonial domination constitutes the main difference between James Wait and Laferrière's Pays sans chapeau based only in Haiti. The subject-other paradigm, once constituted by English-French in Quebec is now in this novel James Wait constituted by white-French / black-French and rich-French / poor-French.

In conclusion, the representations of colonialism in James Wait et les lunettes noires and Pays sans chapeau are narrated through constructed personal, cultural, and collective cultural memories and both evoke Western historical memory. Both novels are fictional, conscious-recovery constructs of the type discussed by various theorists in Chapter two of this thesis and referred to as "autobiographie" by M. Laroche in the Préface to A Haitian's Coming of Age. In Pays sans chapeau, personal memory is generated through Laferrière's own narrative of his return to Haiti and the storytelling of his mother and other characters, while collective cultural memory is rendered through songs and proverbs of the oral tradition. Cultural markers recalling such historic personages as Jacques Roumain, and the memory of voodoo are also used. Western historical memory is evoked in Pays sans chapeau through references of interventions in Haiti by the Church and American forces.
In *James Wait et les lunettes noires* the cultural memory of Haitians is evoked through the Haitian student’s story and to varying degrees by the other characters containing autobiographical shades of Dorsinville. In this novel, the “retour au pays natal s’effectuait à l’intérieur de l’exil” (112). The use of Quebec society in the representation of colonization along with memories of Haiti in Dorsinville’s *James Wait* constitutes a major difference between this novel and Laferrière’s *Pays sans chapeau*. *James Wait* is grounded in Quebec by the narrator’s ironic representation of the *Québécois* elite as bourgeoisie in a province engaged in a decolonization movement manifesting resistance against exactly the same shades of domination (racism and inequity) that the Haitians of Laferrière’s *Pays sans chapeau* have endured since decolonization. Another major difference between the two novels is Laferrière’s occasional use of Haitian Creole and its absence in Dorsinville’s novel. Both Dorsinville and Laferrière make revisions to Western historical memory through Canadian literature by identifying and questioning neo-colonial domination within and between nations.
Brand and Clarke: The Cry of Memory

Austin Clarke’s *The Polished Hoe* and Dionne Brand’s *At the Full and Change of the Moon* are both novels using multi-generational representations that *re-member* the lived experience of the enslaved and colonized. Both novels use personal memory (of characters) to render the representations of slavery and colonialism. The representations of Plantation slavery (Brand) and Plantation colonialism (Clarke) made through uses of memory in these novels question a dark legacy of subjugation for the African diaspora. The authors throw abolition, independence, history, and organized religion into question, illustrating that today’s reality is *pre-sent*, or configured by the past, filling the perceived void in collective contemporary thought with empowering myth. In this way, *At the Full and Change of the Moon* and *The Polished Hoe* both seem to be part of a “move toward conscious recovery projects that seek to construct a usable past or counter memory in response to silencing by official history” (Rimstead 5).

The theoretical explorations of the colonial system in these novels recall Albert Memmi’s notions of colonial privilege and guilt, Max Dorsinville’s theory of domination, and Édouard Glissant’s theories on history and literature,21 all of which use cultural memory to demonstrate that reality is *pre-sent* by the past. Brand and Clarke use three types of memory to *re-member* that a hierarchical structure is at the foundation of plantation slavery and colonialism: autobiographical or biographical memory, Western

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21 Refer to the chapter in Glissant’s Caribbean Discourse entitled “HISTORY – HISTORIES – STORIES” (69-73 in particular).
historical memory, and collective cultural memory. In *The Polished Hoe*, Mary-Matilda’s autobiographical memory creates a narrative background for a critical exploration of Western historical memory through the articulation of the cultural memory of the colonized. In *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, biographical memory is used for Brand’s exploration of Western historical memory and the lived memory of slavery, abolition, and emigration, creating a background similar to that of Clarke’s novel. Cultural memory is the occluded voice of the past in these novels and its articulation seems to be both Brand and Clarke’s main goal.

In *The Polished Hoe*, Clarke’s use of first-person narrative (Mary-Matilda) seems to produce autoethnography as defined by Francois Lionnet in her analysis of Zora Neale Hurston’s *Dust Tracks on a Road*. Lionnet notes that “[a]s private experiences echo collective ones and punctuate the deployment of the self-portrait, a picture of the fieldworker as keeper of important knowledge, as go-between whose role is to facilitate articulation of collective memory” (112). Lionnet recalls Albert Memmi and Franz Fanon, “who both point out that our problem as colonized people (or gender) is that we all suffer from collective amnesia” (Lionnet 118). Since cultural memory has traditionally been orally based in the Caribbean and absent from Western historical memory, the autobiographical use of fiction in these novels provides a natural framework for *re-covering* the past.²² Lionnet posits Hurston’s goal in *Dust Tracks* as a “painstaking effort to be the voice of that occluded past, to fill the void of collective memory” (Lionnet 118). I propose that Brand and Clarke have the same goal. I will now begin my analysis of *The

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²² It is interesting to note that this is exactly what oral story telling does by personalizing the delivery (of history) to the generation at hand to ensure that the meaning be relevant, yet without ever compromising meaning.
Polished Hoe and At the Full and Change of the Moon by introducing the authors and discussing their respective uses of genre.

As a young child, Austin Ardenel Chesterfield Clarke was a member of “the lowest ranks of a social hierarchy in which the gradations of colour that led the way to the top essentially denied status and opportunity to people of his race” (Algoo-Baksh 15). He was born in 1934 to “poor blacks” on the island of Barbados. At the age of ten, however, Clarke’s mother, who worked in a hotel, married a man who became a member of the Barbadian police force. Perhaps this alliance and the fact that both parents worked afforded the young Clarke a state of relative privilege and an education. His “experiences in both the school and society would... [stir] within him an emergent consciousness of his identity as a black along with a growing concern for his black countrymen” (Algoo-Baksh 19). Clarke has lived in Toronto for more than 45 years and became a Canadian citizen in 2003. The Polished Hoe is his 18th book. It won most of the major literary awards in Canada, the Governor General Award for English fiction and the 2003 Commonwealth Writers Prize. Clarke came to Canada on a three-year study leave, already a college professor and thus, despite his poor beginnings, fitting Dorsinville’s “first-wave” immigration category.

The voice of autobiography authenticates Clarke’s The Polished Hoe, making it ring true and thus providing a legitimizing backdrop for a narrative on colonialism emerging through the oral tradition, historical markers, and intertextual references. Austin

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23 Selection from an interview between Jeffrey Brown of “Online NewsHour” and Austin Clarke on September 5, 2003: (http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/july-dec03/clarke_9-05.html)
Clarke characterizes *The Polished Hoe* as "autobiography[, noting that it] is as if Mary-Matilda has looked at the body of the plantation, which is a human body, has cut it in the section where a surgeon would cut searching for the heart, and has gone in with her bare hands and ripped the heart out."\(^{24}\) The representation of colonialism in *The Polished Hoe* bears witness to Max Dorsinville's theoretical analysis of silence and privilege in *Solidarités* and to Albert Memmi's representation of "a category of the colonized which attempts to escape from its political and social condition" (Memmi 16). *The Polished Hoe* thus demonstrates the impact of Plantation colonialism on identity formation and exposes the *pre-sent* nature of reality. The often-ironic tone of this novel is produced by Clarke's juxtaposition of the African diaspora cultural memory of Plantation colonialism rendered through stories, songs, and historical markers against the Western collective memory (rendered through intertextual references, historical markers, songs, and stories).

*The Polished Hoe* opens with the fictional Mary-Matilda placing a call to the police, insisting that the Sergeant come take her statement for the murder of the Plantation manager, Mr. Belfeels. Narrating her murder statement over a 24-hour period, Mary-Matilda takes an ethnographical look at the African diaspora by depicting five generations of her family through slavery and colonialism. Mary-Matilda begins her Statement by returning through memory to when "it began, this whole thing, many-many years ago, on a Sunday" (9). She remembers her mother introducing her to the Plantation manager, Mr. Belfeels, in the churchyard. She is seven or eight years old in her memory of that day, the age of Belfeels' youngest daughter at the time. Belfeels inspects Mary-

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\(^{24}\) Selection from an interview between Jeffrey Brown of Online NewsHour and Austin Clarke on September 5, 2003.
Matilda by slowly and approvingly moving his riding crop over her young body as she stands next to her mother.

This memory remains clear as a bell throughout Mary-Matilda’s life as does the memory of her mother’s behaviour during the ordeal, which makes Mary-Matilda aware of the debilitating force of poverty:

That Sunday morning, in the bright shining sun, with Ma stanning-up there, voiceless, as if the riding-crop was Mr. Belfeels finger clasped to her lips, clamped to her mouth to strike her dumb to keep her silence, to keep her peace. From that Sunday morning, the meaning of poverty was driven into my head. The sickening power of poverty. *(The Polished Hoe* 11)

Aside from demonstrating the impact of memory on identity, Mary-Matilda’s personal rendering of her and her mother’s lived experiences under colonization also calls attention to the impact of “Memmian” colonial privilege on one’s identity. This privilege makes the colonized act like the colonizer and helps perpetuate the colonial system. According to Memmi, this once-oppressed, now-privileged group inducts once-hated colonial ideology into the post-colonial period.

Many characters in Mary-Matilda’s autobiographical rendering are living testaments to the hybridizing effects of privilege under colonialism and personify “Memmian” colonial privilege and guilt, such as Mary-Matilda herself, her son Wilberforce, her mother, the Constable, and Mr. Belfeels. Mary-Matilda’s mother was
privileged by her association with Belfeels which afforded her a "...house by the road...on Plantation land" (10). Colonial privilege keeps her "voiceless" while Belfeels abuses Mary-Matilda with his riding crop (11). Wilberforce's privilege affords him a classic education (5). Belfeels is the supreme example of Memmi's colonial privilege because his privilege is closest to that of a true colonizer. Belfeels "is not white, but mixed" (112). His personal demise correlates with the fate of the "Memmian" colonized subject whose exalted, privileged position carries an "exorbitant price which he must pay and which he never finishes owing" (Memmi 123). Belfeels' incestuous ways ruin his daughters' lives. His profit and privilege are unable to deliver him from a fate pre-sent by his own past, the Plantation, and the colonial system as a whole. Mary-Matilda delivers him to his only possible fate, death, and her otherwise violent act stands (perhaps unintentionally) as a cathartic, Fanonian-style revolution.

Albert Memmi's work demonstrates that members of the colonized are recruited to serve the exclusive interests of the colonizers and those recruited end up by adopting the colonial ideology. In The Polished Hoe, the Sergeant enjoys this type of colonial privilege and, in keeping with Memmi's prophecy, "becomes aware of the inhumanity of his privileged situation and comes to see himself as a lowly usurper" (Memmi 52). This realization is perhaps why the Sergeant vomits after seeing Clotelle dead under the tree (The Polished Hoe 44), why he seeks the comfort of "Mount Gay Rum" whose taste is so exciting (4), and why he "talks to himself" (47) wherever he goes. Mary-Matilda is well aware of her own privilege and guilt. She remembers how the "big powerful house," which has never lost its effect, "turned her," for a moment into a "pillar of salt" as it had once done to her mother. Mary-Matilda "fells so shamed...still" of her exhilaration over
the Plantation Main House (70). Mary-Matilda, Mary’s mother, Wilberforce, and the Sergeant are living testaments to the hybridizing effects of power and privilege under colonialism.

Mary-Matilda’s insistent need to make her statement recalls Dorsinville’s elaboration of “silence” and “privilege” in *Solidarités*. Mary-Matilda says, “Percy Stuart, I have served and I have listened, and pretended I didn’t hear nothing that pass their lips in their condemnation of the black people of this island... We, to them are all labourers” (116-117). Mary-Matilda thus breaks the silence dictated by her relative state of privilege, which she had chosen by accepting Belfeels, who was “able to put [her] in a category which not one of the boys [she] grew up with, and who, later on as men, could” (67). It is as though Mary-Matilda believes that by making her statement and *telling* the history that has led her to murder Belfeels, that by breaking the silence she might somehow break the legacy of colonialism. The fact that she breaks the silence in an official murder statement seems to indicate a desire to insert her story into historical memory. What remains unclear in this novel is whether Mary-Matilda will push the authorities to register her statement and thus create a legal record in Western historical memory of the *lived* experience of colonization told through personal and cultural memory.

The autobiographical narrative in *The Polished Hoe* re-presents colonialism as a mere extension of the slavery paradigm that spawned it, evoking a Sisyphusian reality for the African diaspora. From Mary-Matilda’s memories of her great-grand-mother’s treatment under slavery and the memories of Mary-Matilda’s own grand-mother and mother’s treatment under colonization (38), the reader gets the impression that not much
changed after abolition. The reader learns that Mary’s great-grandmother was a slave from Africa (38) and that Belfeels is actually Mary’s (37) and Wilberforce’s father. In *The Polished Hoe*, Clarke uses fictional autobiography to draw an autoethnographical portrait of the colonized. This point is typified by the following passage from Mary-Matilda’s murder statement:

“This is my history in confession, better late than never, which in your police work is a Statement. And I wonder, as I sit here this Sunday evening, why I am giving you this history of my personal life, and the history of this island of Bimshire, altogether, wrap-up in one?” (20)

While Austin Clarke uses fictional autobiography in *The Polished Hoe* to draw an autoethnographical portrait of the African-Caribbean under colonization, Dionne Brand employs fictional biography to draw a bio-ethnographical portrait in which the Black diaspora in *At the Full and Change of the Moon* progresses through slavery to pre-sent day. I will now introduce Dionne Brand and discuss the biographical aspects of *At the Full and Change of the Moon*.

Dionne Brand was born in Trinidad in 1953 where she graduated from Naparima Girls' High School. She moved to Toronto in 1970 with her parents. In 1975, she graduated from the University of Toronto with a degree in English and philosophy, then completed her M.A. in philosophy of education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Brand has taught at the Guelph, York and Toronto Universities. She has worked as a community worker, has directed
documentaries for the National Film Board of Canada, and has given readings internationally. She has read at a large number of conferences and has published much theory on racism, also many poems, stories and novels. In Canada, Brand has been involved in projects with Black communities. Her work is well known and she has done readings throughout Canada. (Dance 46). Like Austin Clarke, Brand is a prolific writer of international standing and arrived in Canada as a first-wave immigrant.

In her memoir *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Brand recalls that historical documents in a museum inspired the theme of *At the Full and Change of the Moon (A Map* 202). One historical document dates back “230” years and was written by “Thomas Jefferys, geographer to the king, George III” (200). The purpose of the “gorgeous” prose of this cartography is to point the way to “where you land the ships bringing in slaves to this island” (202). Brand (figuratively) gives the contents of this historical document to Kamena, Bola’s father, who escapes the slave plantation in her novel and whose “directions lead him nowhere” (203). His “unending and, as history will confirm, inevitably futile search for a homeland is the mirror of the book’s later generations – their dispersal, their scatterings to the extreme and remote corners of the world: Amersterdam, New York, Toronto” (203).

Brand’s third-person representation of Plantation slavery in *At the Full and Change of the Moon* reconstructs cultural memory by depicting the life and death of a slave named Marie Ursule. This character is modeled after one of V.S. Naipaul’s characters named “Thisbe, who was a slave and the main suspect in a mass death by poisoning on a plantation” (*A Map* 205). Marie Ursule embodies Plantation slavery laid
bare in much the same way as Clarke’s Mary-Matilda embodies Plantation colonialism in *The Polished Hoe*. The exploration of plantation slavery and abolition in *At the Full and Change of the Moon* extends to the marginal reception of Marie-Ursule’s descendents in neo-colonial Europe, America, and Canada (Toronto). According to Brand, Marie Ursule is “single-minded” and has enough “conviction” and “love” to inhabit a novel that occurs over several centuries (*A Map* 25). Since Brand points out that “[v]ery few family stories” of slavery have survived (25), it is reasonable to assume that Brand herself is the narrator of *At the Full and Change of the Moon*.

The sum of the parts adds up to more than a generational biography of a dispersed family in this novel, which simultaneously renders Plantation slavery (and its psychological, social, and financial impact) as a legacy that seems to ensure a Sisyphusian, *pre-sent* reality for the African diaspora. Brand’s representation of slavery in *At the Full and Change of the Moon* thus draws an ethnographic portrait of Plantation slavery that compares well to Clarke’s representation of colonialism in *The Polished Hoe*. Within a framework of the representation of slavery, *At the Full and Change of the Moon* explores memory and identity formation, the role of organized religion, the silence of history, and the neo-slavery reality of abolition, and their respective links to the *pre-sent* realities encountered by Marie-Ursule’s descendents in Europe, America, and Canada (Toronto).

*At the Full and Change of the Moon* opens with Marie Ursule gathering poisons from plants and roots for a mass resistance to slavery through suicide that she will implement on Christmas Eve with the *Sans Peur Regiment*, a resistance group. Marie
Ursule learned poison making from the “Caribs,” who “had told [her] of a most secret way to ruin.” Marie Ursule spends months gathering the hard-to-find “woorara,” which she wants because it is said to kill without pain (4). She obtains the job of cooking the plantation cornmeal to be next to the fire where she could “warm the tar of woorara she had collected” (4). She remembers “two years with her leg in an iron and thirty-nine lashes” and how “the memory of that ring of iron hung on, even after it was removed” (4). She is “Marie Ursule, queen of the Convoie Sans Peur; queen of rebels, queen of evenings, queen of malingerings and sabotages; queen of ruin, who had lost an ear and been shackled to a ten-pound iron for two years after the rebellion of 1819 had been betrayed” (5).

Biographical details of Marie Ursule’s life reveal her personal history of multiple displacement, from owner-to-owner (the Ursuline nuns and Mr. de Lambert) and country-to-country (Guadélpoupe, Martinique, Venezuela, and Trinidad). On the morn of the suicide, Marie Ursule questions memory because “she felt it loop and repeat, when what she was about to do she had imagined done already, like a memory” (9). After the mass suicide, beaten and awaiting death by burning, Marie-Ursule conjures her last words, “this is but a drink of water to what I have endured” (23). Marie Ursule accurately predicts that she will not be part of the family and cultural memory of her descendents, which only ever extends in the novel back to “great great grandmother” Bola (73), “Great Mama Bola” (247). Marie Ursule somehow knows that her descendents will see their life situations as “the plain arrangement of the world” (18). Marie Ursule’s prophetic vision
of the *future* is a twist on Glissant’s “prophetic vision of the past.” Given the nature of the *present* reality, the reception of Black culture in the First World is quite predictable. This, of course, is one of the main messages of Brand’s “Door to No Return.” In *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, just as Terre Boulliant is out of reach for Kamena, who loses his mind trying to find it, the freedom of belonging is not part of Marie Ursule’s cultural identity or that of her descendents because, in this novel, the “journey is the destination” (*A Map* 203).

The representation of slavery and colonialism in *At the Full and Change of the Moon* emerges through the biographical memory of six generations of Marie Ursule’s family from slavery to *present* day. Like Dorsinville’s *James Wait et les lunettes noires* and Laferrière’s *Pays sans chapeau, At the Full and Change of the Moon* portrays Plantation slavery and colonialism as residing within the same Western socio-economic structures that govern the neo-colonial reality and perpetuate a systemic, Sisyphean legacy for the African diaspora. For first-wave immigrants, such as Austin Clarke, this legacy manifests itself through marginal reception in Canada. For the second- and third-wave, uneducated (often-illegal) immigrant depicted in *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, however, this legacy has an even greater impact. For this group, it manifests itself not only through marginalization, but also through the (acquired) low levels of education and relevant social skills that make integration and advancement nearly impossible in the First World. Low levels of literacy and minimal levels of social organization characterize

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25 In a 1990 interview, Clarke recalls his own marginal reception and that of other Black immigrants in Canada: “We all went through, more or less, the indignities of going to rent a flat and finding that it was taken and, then, of course, using a more circuitous route, like an investigative reporter, to find out that it was not taken” (Richmond and Hutcheon 64).
Marie Ursule's descendents, who are glaring reminders of the neo-colonial texture of modern life in the Americas and Europe.

By depicting the individual experiences of the many characters in *At the Full and Change of the Moon* using an omniscient narrator, Brand creates fictional biography to draw an "ethnographic" portrait of the African diaspora. The reader learns that Bola's daughter "Eugenia," the one she had "thrown into a basket of red fish" carried by a passing woman "leads an almost dull existence" (71). She passes her ordinariness down to her grandson Emmanuel, who "had understood that a man like him must apprehend pleasure through other means, other ways; from distances, smells and gratitude, but not from accomplishing anything...He was well equipped in being forgotten" (114-115). "Maya," ends up a prostitute "framed in a window" in "Amsterdam" (208-218). Bola's daughter "Augusta, was as blind as her father with the leaning head (though not from her eyes but from her ambition), and she learned her father's way with sounds and surfaces...She...had a boy [Sones] who went with his eyes half closed to a great war" (72).

Marie Ursule's descendant Carlyle leads a troubled existence (235) and his core identity seems deeply affected by a memory of his mother, Eula, "beating him...in Terre Boullianste" (138). Generations after Marie Ursule's death, her great-great grand daughter Eula leaves her childhood Terre Boullianste in search of something better (257) and ends up in Toronto where she encounters only racism, misery, doom, and abuse from her half-brother, her mother's "oldest son, Carlyle," who had somehow tracked her down (235). Eula muses about history in a letter to her mother that she writes in Toronto, "a city at the
end of the world..., [where] all of us are debris” (238): “History opens and closes, Mama. I was reading a book the other day about the 19th century and it seemed like reading about now. I think we forget who we were. Nothing is changing” (234). Following Glissant, Brand here posits literature as one of the vessels used by Western historical memory to marginalize Black culture and perpetuate neo-colonial reality.

At the Full and Change of the Moon thus explores the impact of memory on identity. Through the cultural memory of Marie Ursule and her descendents, Brand demonstrates that the myths of Western historical memory marginalize Black cultural identity. She also shows that poverty and resulting low levels of education and social skills make second- and third-wave immigrants fit the present stereotypical labels constructed and perpetuated by these myths. At the Full and Change of the Moon demonstrates that Western historical memory excludes the cultural memories of dominated groups thus creating identity problems for the African diaspora. Before discussing these aspects of At the Full and Change of the Moon, however, I will discuss why and how Austin Clarke uses cultural memory in The Polished Hoe to question the Western historical memory of the colonial past.

Austin Clarke’s The Polished Hoe examines the ways in which the Western historical memory of colonialism posits the European slave trade as a “humanizing” effort, a perspective that also flourished in island literature from the 17th through the 19th centuries (Poetics of Relations 70). Mary-Matilda marvels over the fact that her son Wilberforce “went-school at Harrison College in Barbadoes” for years and was never taught “a word about this History of the Laws of Slavery! He left without knowing the
history of...what-you-call-it?...the history of himself" (191). According to Mary-Matilda, the education Wilberforce received at school made him “…start behaving more like a European than somebody born [in Bimshire]” (5). The representation of colonialism through first-person memory in *The Polished Hoe* thus demonstrates that the cultural memory of slavery and colonialism is not contained in and is different to that of Western historical memory and that this latter has traditionally perpetuated the perceived neo-colonial reality through literature and classic education.

Édouard Glissant writes *History* with a capital *H* because he views it as “a totality that excludes other histories that do not fit into that of the West” (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 75). *The Polished Hoe* provides resistance to the totality of this History, which is also perpetuated by modern literature. Glissant’s point is that Shakespeare “establishes a hierarchy, from Caliban to Prospero; and it is not difficult to see that Caliban-nature is contracted from below with Prospero-culture. In *The Tempest* the legitimacy of Prospero is thus linked to his superiority, and epitomizes the legitimacy of the West” (75). Glissant also asserts that “Literature and History were at the same time proposed in the West as instruments of this Totality..., but that in this proposed Totality was inserted the unprecedented ambition of creating man in the image of the Western ideal, with degrees in the elevation from Caliban to Prospero” (75). In *The Polished Hoe*, Mary-Matilda is “talking about history” (102), “not talking fiction” (104). She carried out her act (the murder) with her “body and limbs,” but that her “mind didn’t play a role.” She says that history caused her act and that her act brought an end to that history. “To [her] history” (103).
Mary-Matilda seems to be telling her story precisely so it will become part of knowledge and history. In this way, Clarke’s *The Polished Hoe* engages in what Édouard Glissant would term “a prophetic vision of the past” (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 64). *The Polished Hoe* demonstrates how literature, which is part of historical memory, can help subvert the pre-sent, neo-colonial reality. By comparing cultural memory, e.g. the lived experience of the colonized, with Western historical memory this novel demonstrates that the only true source of colonial history for the African diaspora resides in its own collective cultural memory. This is why Mary-Matilda tells the Constable, who she “went-school” with, that he “shouldn’t be a stranger to this history” as he was born and bred right there (13). He says that he is learning a lot about history from her and that his mother and “gran-mother” tell him “some of the history of here” (13).

*The Polished Hoe* uses cultural memory to expose and question the way that the selectiveness of Western historical memory of colonialism marginalizes Black culture. Mary-Matilda’s memories of her mother bring the reader back to the war days when her mother was “promoted from being a field hand, to combination nursemaid…” (18). The period Clarke is dealing with is just over 50 years ago. His character Mary Matilda questions the fact that Western historical memory commemorates the horror of the holocaust, but excludes the horrors of slavery and colonialism (49):

But, according to the ironies of life, as Wilberforce would say, it was the same suffering, historically speaking, between living on this Plantation and living-through the War in Europe. Much of a muchness. When you think of it. The same War. The same taking of prisoners. The same bloodshed.
And the same not taking of no prisoners. So, in the eyes of Europe, we couldda been the same as Jews. It was war, and the ironies of war. It was war, Constable. (18-19)

The name and description of a “BBC Sunday night documentary programme World War Two Round-Up,” and its “news of men drowned at sea” (49) is mentioned in the novel, making the reader stop to consider the far greater losses of the Middle Passage and again question the selectiveness of Western historical memory. These references to World War II recall Aimé Césaire’s exposé on Hitlerism, a theory with which Clarke is surely intimately familiar, and demonstrate a link to the Caribbean literary tradition.

The representation of slavery and colonialism in The Polished Hoe demonstrates that the myths and knowledge of Western history are different from those in cultural memory and that this is problematic for dominated groups such as those of Black culture. Mary-Matilda points out that knowledge creates a division: “I feel that it is education, and knowing things, like... the real meaning of ‘The Ride of the Valkyries’,... being able to play ‘The Ride of the Valkyries’ on a violin, or the piano; and be able to explain the history behind ‘The Ride of the Valkyries.’ Knowing these things is what separates the wife of the Solicitor-General... from me” (214). The Valkyries is an intertextual reference to Richard Wagner’s 19th century opera The Ride of the Valkyries, a myth that commemorates the Western collective memory of war. It tells Mary-Matilda “what a cruel race o’ people [the Europeans] were” (214).

27 Aimé Césaire’s text on Hitlerism is reproduced in its entirety in Appendix 1 of this thesis.
In *The Polished Hoe*, Clarke juxtaposes the Valkyries with “[t]he calypso they “used to sing ’bout-here…the one they made on Clotelle” (214) typifying the myth-building tendencies of *The Polished Hoe*:

...we knew all the words, by-heart...It was a memorial....And it was our way of telling the ...world, people living and people not born yet... That Calypso was therefore something like a history...We were building a myth over Clotelle... ‘The Ride of the Valkyries’... is the same thing... a myth.

(214)

*The Polished Hoe* constructs Mary-Matilda and inserts her as a myth into Western historical memory through literature in much the same way that Wagner’s opera uses the Western historical myth of the Valkyries. Mary-Matilda’s cultural memory is thus shown to contain knowledge that is absent from Western collective memory, myth, and history. The insertion of the Clotelle calypso into *The Polished Hoe* seems to be Clarke’s way of relating “a history” that should not be forgotten: “That calypso was therefore something like a history, or like a myth. I got that word, *myth*, from Wilberforce. We were building-up a myth over Clotelle. It is something like a shrine, then. Yes?” (214)

Brand’s *At the Full and Change of the Moon* also shows memory as problematic for members of the African diaspora. The novel traces the descendents of a slave from the early 1800’s to present day, and demonstrates that the lack of cultural memories and the imposition of a tainted Western historical memory make it hard for members of the

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28 Please refer to the family tree appearing on the first few pages of *At the Full and Change of the Moon*. 
African diaspora to construct an acceptable cultural identity. This is why Eula tells her mother not to “saddle [Bola] with a memory that isn’t hers” (250). Historical memory thus causes problems for the African diaspora by perpetuating the social inequity of colonization in the present day. Brand’s representation of Plantation slavery also demonstrates that the lived experience of the enslaved and heroes such as Marie Ursule are not accurately reflected in Western historical memory.

When the character de Lambert arrives on the scene following the mass suicide, his face is “mashed and broken in incredulity and terror and loss and sadness.” He quickly recovers, however, because “[h]e had to go about his business proving that the rebellion was instigated from another estate, proving liability and weaning sympathy from the Governor and calling for harsher penalties and punishments of slaves. He had to get compensation for the dead slaves and his temporary ruin” (23). This reaction by de Lambert is typically Memmian:

[A]ccepting the reality of being a colonizer means agreeing to be a nonlegitimate privileged person, that is, a usurper. To be sure, a usurper claims his place and, if need be, will defend it by every means at his disposal...He endeavors to falsify history, he rewrites laws, he would extinguish memories...anything to succeed in transforming his usurpation into legitimacy. (Memmi 52)

The character of de Lambert makes the reader understand that (Plantation) colonialism in Western historical memory is a construct that facilitates the domination and
marginalization of Black culture. The representation of slavery and colonialism in *At the Full and Change of the Moon* constructs a memory of resistance that counters the totality of Western historical memory.

The representation of slavery in *At the Full and Change of the Moon* questions also the Western historical memory of abolition. The historical marker “abolition” is framed in irony by this narrative’s vivid description of the lived experience of abolition in Trinidad. Word of abolition takes the form of a proclamation, which the narrator views as “a slap in the face and more dreadful waiting” (51) for the Negroes, who it ultimately locked into years of indentureship:

To the slave population of the Island knowing how much you all wish for receipt of those orders, which you have for a long time expected, to release you from slavery and make you free...To prevent you however from forming hasty and wrong opinions upon the subject, and then meeting with disappointment, I think it right to inform you, that no change whatever will take place in your condition, until after next Crop time, and that when your slavery itself shall cease, you will still be required to work for a certain time, for your former Masters, but under regulations different from what you have hither to been accustomed. (50)

The phraseology of this proclamation seems typical of Western historical memory, in which slaves did not free themselves but were freed by Europe. Édouard Glissant points out that the absence of slave heroes and their resistance in so-called official accounts
demonstrates a silence in history and signals a need for the reconstruction of a true
written history.29

The representation of colonialism in *At the Full and Change of the Moon* uses
cultural memory to question the aims of the Church’s historical involvement in
Plantation slavery and colonization. The reader learns that Marie Ursule belonged to
two Ursuline nuns before being sold to de Lambert. We learn that the Ursuline order
first came to the West Indies from France in the late 17th century, “called by God…to
live and to minister to the vast amounts of heathens—the endless work of God” (37).
The Ursuline nuns were plantation owners, replete with whips and the colonial dream of
profit: “The Caribbean taught the nuns how to multiply, as it taught all who came here
mathematics. How to multiply ground and tonloads of sugar and cocoa and whale oil
and anything they turned their hand and some Édouard one else’s labour to” (37-38).
The narrator casts the Ursulines as Memmian colonials.

The role of the Jesuits in slavery and colonialism is also evoked through cultural
memory in this novel. The reader learns that the Jesuits became “wonderful
mathematicians themselves, [and] claimed that the Ursulines were under their rule
according to the orders of the king, and therefore owed them the profits of their slave
holding” (37). The depictions of the involvement of organized religion in slavery and
colonialism in *At the Full and Change of the Moon* are informed by Albert Memmi’s
explorations, in which he contends that “the colonialist never seriously promoted the

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29 Édouard Glissant discusses the importance of mythifying even defeated attempts at liberation from
slavery, noting that “[a] self-confident people has the ability to transform into a mythical victory what may
have been a real defeat” (*Caribbean Discourse* 68).
religious conversion of the colonized… [T]he church has greatly assisted the
colonialist; backing his ventures, helping his conscience, contributing to the acceptance
of colonization – even by the colonized” (72).

In conclusion, the representation of slavery and colonialism in Austin Clarke’s
*The Polished Hoe* and Dionne Brand’s *At the Full and Change of the Moon* is articulated
by three types of memory. These novels use autobiographical (Clarke) and biographical
(Brand) narratives to narrate the *lived* experience of plantation slavery and colonialism.
These novels demonstrate that colonial privilege, silence, and low levels of education and
social development instituted by colonialism all help perpetuate the inequity of the
colonial enterprise in the *pre-sent* day. The effects of Plantation colonialism on the
colonized and colonizer in both novels align well with portraits drawn by Albert Memmi
in *Portait de colonisé* (1957). Using cultural memory, both novels demonstrate that
Western historical memory does not contain the *lived* experience of the colonized and in
fact marginalizes Black culture by imposing the cultural hierarchy of the colonial
ideology.

By breaking the silence of history with the stories and songs of the oral tradition,
these novels emit what Édouard Glissant has termed “the cry of the Plantation,
transfigured into the speech of the world” (Relation 73). According to Glissant, this cry is
the traditional voice of “musical expressions born of silence: Negro spirituals and blues,
persisting in towns and growing cities; jazz, *biguines*, and calypsos, bursting into barrios
and shantytowns; salsas and reggaes, assembled everything blunt and direct, painfully
stifled, and patiently differed into this varied speech. This was the cry of the Plantation,
transfigured into the speech of the world" (73). Brand and Clarke transfigure the cry of the Plantation into the speech of Canada’s contemporary literary world, seemingly to expose the amnesia of Western historical memory by making historical revisions.

By demonstrating a divergence between Western historical memory and cultural memory, Clarke and Brand achieve in their novels what Édouard Glissant has characterized “the duty” of writer-members of the African diaspora:

Because the Caribbean notion of time was fixed in the void of an imposed nonhistory, the writer must contribute to reconstituting its tormented chronology: that is, to reveal the creative energy of a dialectic reestablished between nature and culture in the Caribbean… [H]istory as a consciousness at work and history as lived experience are therefore not the business of historians exclusively. (Glissant, Caribbean Discourse 65)

The ways in which The Polished Hoe and At the Full and Change of the Moon reconstitute the Western historical memory of colonialism and slavery make these novels examples of the living reconstruction expressed by the glue lines on Derek Walcott’s “fragmented vase”, which retain the memories of undoing and redoing (destruction and rebirth). Clarke and Brand achieve this reconstruction in two ways: first, by demonstrating that Western historical memory is selective and does not contain the cultural memory of slavery and colonialism, and secondly by allowing mythical heroes

30 Refer to Derek Walcott’s The Antilles, Fragments of Epic Memory: the 1992 Nobel Lecture (8-9).
such as Marie Ursule, Kamena, Mary-Matilda, and Clotelle to tell the "real story" from within Canadian literature.
Conclusion

I have demonstrated in this thesis that the representations of slavery and colonialism in Clarke, Brand, Laferrière, and Dorsinville’s novels are articulated through autobiographical or biographical memory, Western historical memory, and collective cultural memory. Using personal memories, cultural markers, and songs and stories of the oral tradition, these authors create a cultural framework of memory with which to remember the dominating forces of slavery, colonialism, and the Western socio-economic system. Their narratives demonstrate that dominated groups, such as those of Black culture or, more specifically, second- and third-wave immigrants from the Caribbean, are all marginalized by their representations in Western historical memory. Brand, Clarke, Dorsinville, and Laferrière construct cultural memory and show the ways in which it diverges from Western historical memory. Using strategically placed historical markers, dates and intertextual references, these authors explore the ways in which Western historical memory is perpetuated in the present day. Examples of this are found in Laferrière (dates of American interventions in Haiti, the Church, Anti-Superstition Campaign of 1944), in Dorsinville (United department store, Gay Paree, Mulatto, the Church), in Brand (Proclamation of Abolition, Ursuline Nuns), and in Clarke (World War II, The Ride of the Valkyries, the Church).

As such, these novels all demonstrate that Western historical memory imposes itself on individual members of dominated cultures. Yet, in a paradoxical way, these novels also substantiate Halbwachs’ assertion that the past “does not impose itself on us and we are free to evoke it whenever we wish” (Halbwachs 50). They do so by
demonstrating that, while it seems as though the past mysteriously imposes itself on dominated groups such as those of Black culture, the past is actually a construct being recalled, perpetuated, and imposed through the historical memory of a dominant society, such as Western society. Neo-colonial structures and racism are being kept alive in the present reality by the continued marginalization of and stereotyping of Black culture (Jamaican gangs in Toronto, prisons full of Blacks, etc) and other dominated groups, breeding social intolerance and the resulting inequity.

In this light, Halbwachs' hypothesis, that "the beliefs, interests, and aspirations of the present shape the various views of the past as they are manifested respectively in every historical epoch" (Halbwachs 25), is "proven" twofold by these novels. First, Brand, Clarke, Dorsinville, and Laferrière prove that the present society is quite capable of reconstructing the past in any way they please, as this is what their respective novels all do. Although Schwartz would perhaps consider these novels as "contemporary revisions," their authors obviously believe along with Glissant that literature is a vehicle for changing the myths that reside in Western historical memory. Secondly, these novels demonstrate that Western historical memory is a construct maintained and perpetuated through Western history, literature, and classic education. Since any construct can be broken, in this case if the present (Western) society would change history book, school curriculum and, through this, social consciousness, I feel that Brand, Clarke, Dorsinville, and Laferrière's narratives all prove the viability of Halbwachs' "presentist" approach. As the novels of these four African-Caribbean-Canadian writers demonstrate, the past certainly does impose itself on the present society, but only because dominant members of the present society are content to let it do so.
The representations of slavery and colonialism through memory in Brand, Clarke, Dorsinville, and Laferrière share many techniques and goals. In any comparative analysis, however, it is important to look at what is forgotten as well as what is remembered. In Dorsinville and Laferrière, not one character is portrayed as a slave or colonized worker, nor is one recalling the *lived* experience of slavery or colonialism. A look at a recent Haitian anthology, *Libète*, demonstrates that slavery and colonialism are not major thematic concerns in Haitian literature since the revolution because “[p]rior to the 1980’s, literary nationalism in Haiti has had its roots in the revolutionary fervour of 1804” (Arthur and Dash 293). This is not true of all French islands in the Caribbean. Martinician Édouard Glissant’s *Quatrième siècle*, for example, does recall the *lived* experience of slavery.

In the work of Brand and Clarke and many African-American authors, slavery and colonialism are also *re-lived* by certain characters and rendered through stories and songs of the oral tradition. From a pro-revolution stance of Franz Fanon,31 one could argue that the memory of slavery or colonial rule in Haiti is not *re-membered* by Dorsinville and Laferrière because the memory of slavery and colonial rule was laid to rest by the bloody Haitian revolution. Within a framework of Brand, Clarke, Dorsinville, and Laferrière’s narratives, however, I propose that the Haitian revolution is part of both Haitian cultural memory and Western historical memory, therefore making the memory of slavery less problematic for Haitians. The inclusion of this revolution in Western historical memory is empowering for Black culture, most particularly for Haitians.

31 In the Preface to the translation of Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism*, Robert J. C. Young notes that “*The Wretched of the Earth* provides the basis for the renewal of selfhood through the reversal of anti-colonial violence which, according to Fanon, enables accession to human status” (xxi).
Édouard Glissant theorizes the deep reach of Haiti’s different mindset, culture, and literatures in this regard, pointing out that “[u]ntil the war of liberation waged by Toussaint Louverture [sic], the peoples of Martinique, Gaudeloupe, and Saint-Domingue (which then became Haiti) struggled together in solidarity” (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 6). Glissant indicates that the “legitimacy of adopting Caribbean heroes everywhere in the Caribbean, including Martinique, has yet to be shown” (69), but that [i]t could not be more obvious” given the concrete example of Toussaint. Failed revolts in these other islands, one of which ended in a mass suicide of the slaves, have led to other heroes, but “the Martinician people have not mythified the defeats of the runaway slaves…” (68). Remembering these men and women as heroes is important because “[w]hether they won or not, [they], who had made the true history of the Caribbean, were born once and for all in the collective consciousness” (69). The fact that “Martinician intellectuals are still debating such issues reveals, in a disturbing way, the intensity of the disorientation inflicted on them” by the amnesia of historical memory (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 69). Aside from asserting the importance and uniqueness of the Haitian experience with slavery, Glissant here typifies the importance of memory to identity.

Dany Laferrière also discusses Haiti’s unique memory of slavery, noting that the “[l]a grande souffrances des Nègres dans la colonie saint-dominguoise a été en grande partie vengée durant le massacre général des Blancs ordonné par Jean-Jacques Dessalines, général en chef des armes indigènes, des le lendemain de l’indépendance nationale” (*J’écris comme je vis* 32). Laferrière emphasizes that Haiti is still very proud to have been the first Negro republic in the world and that all young Haitians are aware of this
distinction and raised with this sense of patriotism. If revolution and its commemoration of self-liberation in the Haitian cultural and historical memory explain this pride, then what explains the political instability and rampant authoritarianism that has characterized post-colonial Haiti?

Sibylle Fischer, in her riveting theoretical work on Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, helps answer the question of instability by locating Haiti’s contemporary and historic problems within the past systems of both slavery and colonialism. Her discussion of Haiti points to a relevant study on the Duvalier dictatorship by Michel-Rolph Trouillot entitled *States against Nations*, which explains why a neo-colonial reality has historically plagued Haiti:

[Trouillot] argues that the political instability and rampant authoritarianism in Haitian history are due to the fact that ‘the Haitian state and the Haitian nation were launched in different directions.’ 13 Whereas the nation congealed around notions of liberty from slavery, the state in fact inherited the social and economic institutions from colonial times, which required a regimented labour force. (Fischer 269)

The middle passage and slavery are no longer problematic for Haitians, but the social and economic institutions, the ideology stemming from colonial times, and the hierarchical value system they impose certainly are. Édouard Glissant says it is important to “return to the point from which we started... to look at the failure of “history” and return “to the
point of entanglement” (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 26). Slavery once defined Haiti’s “point of entanglement,” but after the revolution the social and economic institutions continued from colonial times defined Haiti’s problems. Laferrière and Dorsinville both take the reader back to a point of entanglement that is both neo-colonial and post-colonial.

On the English side of African-Caribbean-Canadian literature, the representation of the lived memory of slavery and colonialism through memory is thematic in Dionne Brand’s *At the Full and Change of the Moon* and Austin Clarke’s *The Polished Hoe*. In these novels the written word becomes a modern agent of oral story telling, a traditional method for relating cultural memories by which the “(m)emory of one's culture, of important cultural actors, and of actions and interactions of and between the actors can be used to create identity: personal, familial, community-based, ethnic, and national. In particular, oral histories [...] can perpetuate culture and thus identity” (Eber and Neale 23). Although the murder in *The Polished Hoe* is certainly Fanonesque, the fact that Mary-Matilda “regretted” her act and concludes afterward that she had already satisfied this intention in a dream seems to imply that bloody revolution is not a necessary course of action (460). She is breaking her silence to construct cultural memory, but she also wishes to register her murder statement and thereby create a legal record of the *lived* experience of slavery and colonization in Western historical memory.

Brand’s *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, Clarke’s *The Polished Hoe*, Dorsinville’s *James Wait et les lunettes noires*, and Laferrière’s *Pays sans chapeau* transcend the ordinary, seeking new answers to age-old problems. These novels re-
member the past by constructing cultural memories and showing how these differ from
the “so-called” official accounts produced by Western historical memory. Glissant points
out that the “move from oral to written” by dominated societies whose cultural memories
are not recorded in historical memory now provides a means of breaking the silence of
history (Glissant, Caribbean Discourse 123). This rewriting of history is key to the
breakdown of established hierarchy and to a full understanding of the pre-sent reality.
The critical theories of Aimé Césaire and Édouard Glissant flow through the work of
Brand, Clarke, Dorsinville, and Laferrière and form the basis of Dorsinville’s theory of
domination and Brand’s “Door of No Return.” Brand, Clarke, Dorsinville, and Laferrière
all seem to be attempting to do what Glissant terms “the writer’s duty… to restore this
forgotten memory” (Glissant, Caribbean Discourse xi). The authors do so by returning to
various points of entanglement. In Brand and Clarke the point of entanglement is slavery
and colonialism, while in Dorsinville and Laferrière it is post-colonial nationalism.

African-Caribbean-Canadian writing is a fascinating area of study because it
emerges in part from the vibrant Caribbean literary tradition. According to Chris Bongie,
“[f]rom the moment of its second, post-Columbian beginning at the end of the fifteenth
century, the Caribbean has been the site par excellence of the ‘irruption dans la
modernité’ that, according to Glissant, now characterizes the New World of the Americas
and its literature as a whole” (Bongie 22-23). The past few decades have been witness to
a heightened pace of immigration from the Caribbean that is infusing the first-world
centres of Europe and North America with a modernity that is “sudden rather than
consecutive” (22-23) as it has traditionally been. This “Diversity… is surfacing
everywhere” and conjures hope that “Western literatures will discover the process of
belonging and will become again a part of the world" (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 103). Brand, Clarke, Dorsinville and Laferrière’s novels are “Canadian” examples of this Diversity.
APPENDIX 1

Excerpt from Aime Cesaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism* (35-36), originally published as *Discours sur le colonialisme* by “Présence Africaine” in 1955.

“First we must study how colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism; and we must show that each time a head is cut off or an eye put out in Vietnam and in France they accept the fact, each time a little girl is raped and in France they accept the fact, each time a Madagascan is tortured and in France they accept the fact, civilization acquires another dead weight, a universal regression takes place, a gangrene sets in, a centre of infection begins to spread; and that at the end of all these treaties that have been violated, all these lies that have been propagated, all these punitive expeditions that have been tolerated, all these prisoners who have been tied up and “interrogated,” all these prisoners who have been tortured, at the end of all the racial pride that has been encouraged, all the boastfulness that has been displayed, a poison has been distilled into the veins of Europe and, slowly but surely, the continent proceeds towards savagery.

And then one fine day the bourgeoisie is awakened by a terrific boomerang effect; the gestapos are busy, the prisons fill up, the torturers standing around the racks invent, refine, discuss.
People are surprised, they become indignant. They say: "How strange! But never mind – it’s Nazism, it will pass!" And they wait, and they hope; and they hide the truth from themselves, that it is barbarism, the supreme barbarism, the crowning barbarism that sums up all the daily barbarisms; that it is Nazism, yes but that before they were its victims, they were its accomplices; that they tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole edifice of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack.

Yes, it would be worthwhile to study clinically, in detail, the steps taken by Hitler and Hitlerism and to reveal to the very distinguished, very humanistic, very Christian bourgeois of the twentieth century that without his being aware of it, he has a Hitler inside him, that Hitler inhabits him, that Hitler is his demon, that if he rails against him, he is being inconsistent and that, at bottom, what he cannot forgive Hitler for is not the crime in itself, the crime against man, it is not the humiliation of man as such, it is the crime against the white man, the humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the "coolies" of India, and the "niggers" of Africa.
APPENDIX 2

According to Les Éditions du CIDHCA, Max Dorisville’s *Erzulie Loves Shango* is an “adaptation” of Dorsinville’s *James Wait et les lunettes noires*.

--- Original Message ---
From: Nancy Wright
To: galilee@cidhca.com
Sent: Tuesday, November 14, 2006 2:21 PM
Subject: Max Dorisville

Bonjour!

Pourriez-vous me dire SVP si le roman "Erzulie Loves Shango" est une traduction du "James Wait et les lunettes noires" (Max Dorisville).

Merci!

Nancy Wright (mahèse Université de Sherbrooke)
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