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# Mirroring the Madness: Caribbean Female Development in the Works of Elizabeth Nunez

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Mirroring the Madness: Caribbean Female Development in the Works of Elizabeth  
Nunez

by

Lauren Lynn Delli Santi

A Thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Gardner-Webb University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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## Introduction to Identity Development

“But what I see is the millions of people, of whom I am just one, made orphans: no motherland, no fatherland, no gods, no mounds of earth for holy ground, no excess of love which might lead to the things that an excess of love sometimes brings, and worst and most painful of all, no tongue” – Jamaica Kincaid

Psychoanalytic literary criticism came into vogue during the early twentieth century under the influential nineteenth century theories of Sigmund Freud. The foundation for this area of study is the development and exposure of the unconscious and how it is affected by different stimuli; ultimately, exploring the self that is recognized by a given individual. Freud developed the unconscious through childhood events and categorization of developmental stages of the child, with high focus on the male, and further develops that the unconscious rules conscious decisioning. The advancement of this school of criticism exposed that Freud, indeed, was gender-biased in his studies, focusing mainly on the dominance of the male development and leaving the female development to be reflective of what she will not be able to achieve, the phallus. As Freud’s version of Psychoanalytic Criticism was recalibrated “in the 1960’s, the French neo-Freudian psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan revised and expanded Freud’s theories in light of new linguistic and literary principles, thereby revitalizing psychoanalytic criticism and ensuring its continued influence on literary criticism” (Bressler 143-44). Lacan agrees with Freud’s notion that the unconscious affects the conscious identity of an individual, but further breaks down the individual by exerting that all individuals are fragmented. This notion of fragmented identity is what allows Lacan to expand on psyche development, and apply these findings to both the male and female gender.

Lacan’s model for human psyche development is broken into three orders, which are dictated through the progression of language as a vehicle of self-identification. The

first order of development is the imaginary order, taking place between birth and six months. During this stage of development, a “preverbal state, we rely on images as a means of perceiving and interpreting the world” (Bressler 153), the child is unable to differentiate itself from the mother because of the inability to recognize a constant image of the self. The child is also completely dependent upon the mother in order to provide joy and comfort. Between the ages of six and eighteen months, the child moves into the mirror stage of development. The child begins to recognize the difference between itself and objects around him or her, which allows for the child to realize that he or she is a separate entity from the mother. The child becomes narcissistic because he or she has a new-found separation from the mother, realizing that he or she is an individual entity. This is where anxiety is introduced to the child because there is a loss that occurs in the child—the recognition that the child is not one with the mother. After the recognition of self, the child moves into the symbolic order where he or she is introduced to the “Law of the Father.” The father dominates the symbolic order as “we learn that our father comes to represent cultural norms and laws. He stands between us and our mother, and he enforces cultural rules by threatening to castrate us if we do not obey” (Bressler 154). We also learn language during the symbolic order, which continues to evolve our identity because it is the vehicle that allows for the understanding of differences in gender roles. Lacan’s third order is the real, which is considered to be unattainable for humans because it is where our learned language fails us. It is a natural state, free from materialistic needs, fears, and anxieties, which we are prohibited from entering due to our linguistic structure and need for definition. In Lacan’s original development of these orders, he assigned these age ranges for the infantile development. In later years, Lacan

acknowledged that the stages may not be fully completed in order due to specific familial situations (Britton 51).

The imaginary order is highly focused on in literary analysis as a phase that an individual may become trapped in, literally or symbolically. This is because the mirror stage is where the infant develops what Lacan calls, the *I*, and where there is a relationship established “between the organism and its reality” (Lacan, *Écrits* 4). The literal translation of the mirror stage is that the infant will recognize its reflection in a mirror; therefore, disengaging with its mother through recognition that he or she is a separate entity from the mother. Prior to this recognition, the infant believes that he or she is one with the mother. By recognizing that he or she is not one with the mother, the infant is able to begin establishing an individual identity because he or she is now in touch with “reality.” The infant now recognizes the *I*, the individual that they are that is not combined with the identity of another organism. So, what happens when the infant does not recognize the *I*? There can be many settings in which the infant is not able to completely self identify. The mother could have died during childbirth, so the infant cannot adequately complete the mirror stage, as there was no mother to detach from and he or she was forced to skipping this order. There could be a complicated relationship with the mother where she is not an active figure in the child’s life. Or the child could simply not accept the anxiety that is associated with separating his/herself from the mother. The inability to successfully detach from the mother and recognize a true sense of self will hinder the future development of the individual. It is this recognition that allows the individual to begin developing an identity, which will encompass gender roles, and will allow for relationships to develop based on these identities.

The recognition of the *I* is applicable to both the male and female gender; however, it is within Lacan's text, *Feminine Sexuality*, that he moves away from the traditional Freudian analysis in which the female is compared to the male in terms of lacking the phallus. Although Lacan recognizes Freud's belief that the female is lacking the phallus when stating, "beings are to be divided up, not into men and women or males and females, but only into those who have the phallus and those who do not," he exposes that it is not necessarily gender that is to blame for the differences in development, but the "phallic division" (*Feminine Sexuality* 124). In order to explain this phallic division and its impact on psyche development, Lacan turns to the development of the female psyche and its advancements towards sexual development in order to break down the barrier between gender identities and phallicism.

Lacan begins the breakdown for female identity development with the argument that gender roles are socially constructed, he states: "A certain society might decide to make a certain activity, quality or distinguishing mark of characteristic of man or of woman, that is, a difference according to which men and women should be recognised. There will always be one woman, not incidentally lacking in supporters, to show that this difference is no difference" (*Feminine Sexuality* 125). This indicates that the female's identity has been established for her by the society that she lives in. In order to have an identity within this society, without the fear of ostracization, the female will take on the given characteristics that are presented for her without question. Essentially, this indicates that the female has no choice but to take on the socially constructed roles of her gender in order to have an identity within her society. Lacan further explains that these

roles are induced into her psyche development by the hurdles that the female child must clear in order to form an identity.

The detachment to the mother is much simpler for male children than female, according to Lacan, due to the steps in order to complete this detachment and find identity. Since the detachment from the mother occurs in the mirror stage, which creates anxiety in the child, there is a creation of the need for affection during this development. The mother acts as the initial form of attention and attachment for the child, but once the child has separated from the mother he or she must seek comfort from another person. Social diction favors heterosexuality, thus encouraging seeking comfort from someone of the opposite sex. The male child will be able to seek this attention through other females. He can replace his mother with another female counterpart; however, “the girl must manage the same renunciation for the sake of an object of the opposite sex” (Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality* 125). Essentially, the female child must take an additional step in development in order to meet the social expectations of heterosexuality, which creates an additional form of anxiety within the female child that the male child will never experience. The female must renounce her own gender for social acceptance, and seek attention from the gender that she cannot be. This transference of affectionate attention is “easier” for the male child to achieve, as he is simply shifting attention from one female to another. He does not have to overcome the disposition of transferring this relationship to the opposite gender. In order for the female child to adhere to socially favored heterosexual relationships, she must first understand the demand for heterosexuality and then transfer her need for affection to a male. It is this recognition that brings forth the sexuality of the female psyche development because she must actively recognize the

difference from where comfort was provided from the mother and where she must now find it in a male.

In order to create this relationship with males, the female will turn back to her mother for guidance. The mother will serve as the key component for female children to observe learned behaviors of how to be female. The child will demand that her mother teach her how to be female and everything that being female entails. Through the demands of the child, there will be an unspoken relationship forged with the mother. The mother must recognize that the child is searching for her identity and help establish the identity for her. This is done through the unspoken teaching of how to be female and the gender and social roles that are assigned to this. Regardless of the relationship that the female child has with her father, according to Lacan, it is the mother that will hold the most value in identity development for the female child. With the father being the head of the household and society, he ultimately decisions on how the girl should behave, yet it is the mother that reinforces and demonstrates the ideal identity characteristics of her mother. Lacan relates this dominance of the male to the holding of the phallus, indicating that the male is narcissistic and taught through his learned social roles that the phallus is associated with power. This message of power is relayed to the female child that she is inadequate due to her body, and she must accept her body for being inferior. So the female child must overcome two obstacles in the quest for identity development “which the boy is spared, one of which concerns her relation to the object [the mother], and the other her relation to her own body” (Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality* 125). This development pattern only furthers the fragmentation of the female psyche and the questioning of her own development.

Luce Irigaray fleshes out the fragmentation of the female psyche in her text, *This Sex Which is Not One*. Irigaray, a French feminist and psychoanalytic critic, utilizes Lacanian theory throughout her text in order to develop the female identity. There is an overarching theme within Psychoanalytic criticism that the female identity is based off of the male's and how she can adapt to not being a male. Irigaray agrees that the female and male begin development in the same manner. It is when gender roles are exposed to the development of the child that the female will begin to struggle in ways that the male child will not have to. Since that male child is seen as dominant, the female child will submit to "the role—which is among other things a sexual role—that Western civilization assigns her" (Irigaray 52). Irigaray recognizes that the female child will assume Freud's theory of "penis envy," but only as "a secondary reaction formation compensating for the difficulty that the girl, the woman, experiences in sustaining her own desire"(52). This notion exposes that the female child has a want for identity and to be separate from the male identity, but she will ultimately resort to a jealousy of the penis because it is what she does not have and what society desires. The desires of the female will never be met, and it is this fate that the female must accept in order to begin piecing together her identity.

The desire to learn how to be female as a reaction of not being male is transposed into the language that is taken on about the subject, according to Irigaray. In order to understand how to be a woman, it must be articulated into our language. There are certain words and phrases that are associated with it, and to describe being female is generally looked at as how she is different than the male. In effect, "to speak *of* or *about* woman may always boil down to, or be understood as, a recuperation of the feminine

within a logic that maintains it in repression, censorship, nonrecognition” (Irigaray 78). The traditional psychoanalytic approach in developing a woman is to understand what she lacks. Her lacks are what make up her identity. The female is expected to adhere to the social code that is enforced in her given society, and understand that it is her differences that make her who she is. The female will learn these practices through the mimicking of social roles that are introduced to her by her mother and father. “The feminine finds itself defined as lack, deficiency, or as imitation and negative image,” which enforces the inferiority of the female in society (Irigaray 78). Irigaray asserts that both the spoken and unspoken education that the female receives will develop her identity. The female is taught that by not having the dominant, male identity, she has an identity. She evolves from a complete lack into a fragmented individual. It is the void in the verbal development of the female that aids in the anxiety, confusion, and ultimate submission of the female in society, as she does not have an identity of her own. The terms of femaleness are developed in language by a comparison to the male. In order to verbalize femaleness, one must first describe maleness and then associate the difference by what the female is not. Language has evolved from a patriarchal standpoint that can only describe the female by stating how she is not male.

The alienation from the male and expectation that she should create an identity from a void inadvertently makes the female the Other of society. There is no way to eliminate the female, so she must be accepted into society. This acceptance will not be a full admittance to the equality of males, but more of a tolerance that will allow for the female to function in society. Irigaray recognizes this role assignment of the female as the Other, and asserts that there will be a place created for this Other “at the point nearest

to the coalescence of discourse and fantasy, in the truth of an ortho-graphy of space, the possibility of the sexual relation” (98). The female is assigned to the intangible roles of fantasy and sexuality in order to maintain the power roles that have been established. The male is taught that he is dominant, he has the phallus, and that he must maintain his power over his society. The male does not question his dominance because “so much power causes him to forget sometimes that this power comes to him only at the price of renouncing a certain model of mastery and servitude” (Irigaray 104). By marginalizing the female due to his desire for power, the male essentially creates voids in the female identity. These voids lead to the fragmentation of the female psyche. She is not able to establish who she is, it is dictated to her from society. Roles are learned, and there is not always a clear understanding of why the female role is what it is, but the female must accept this role that was given to her. Ultimately, Irigaray argues that the female identity is created through the void that is forced on her through the language of society in which she is considered inferior because she is lacking the phallus. The female must endure that she is a lesser entity and attempt to create an identity of her own through these losses, which is a hurdle that is hard to cross and overcome. Most females will adhere to these learned behaviors, essentially making it almost impossible to come across a so-called normal woman. Normality within females is judged on how she can establish her assigned role in adherence to social code. She is the Other and must embrace her created identity.

In terms of social identity construction, women are not the only victims to the detriments of Otherness. Any minority group, whether it be through their race, gender, religion, sexuality, etc., are subject to the void which is created by comparison to the

dominant entity of society. African-American criticism is based on Otherness and adaptation of individuals that are considered to be inferior in society. W.E.B. Du Bois develops the black psyche development and identity formation by creating the link between psychoanalysis and black consciousness with the notion of double-consciousness in his work, *The Souls of Black Folks*. He argues that the black individual lives in “a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revaluation of the other world” (568). The social construct of the black identity is only formed by individuals paralleling the differences between themselves and their white counterparts. The only way they will be able to recognize their identity is through the recognition of who they are not. This notion correlates with Lacan’s mirror stage in the fact that the black identity will develop with the recognition and detachment from the white identity. Although Du Bois does not make the link between male and female, the female in society is also afflicted by this recognition through misrecognition that they are not male. This idea of double-consciousness makes the Others aware of their differences and constantly at battle with the self, a war that will never be won. Black people will never be able to change the genetic make-up of their existence; therefore, they will never be able to be considered an acceptable person in society. Identity is therefore constructed out of difference, misrecognition, and ideologies that are at large within the given community.

In accordance with Lacan’s mirror stage to truly accept who we are and move along with psyche advancements, one must break free from the mother figure and recognize that each individual has a self. In the Afro-Caribbean community, there is the recognition that there is a difference between the white motherland (and therefore mother

figures) and the individual, but there is a lack of self recognition. Afro-Caribbeans have dual motherlands: the European country that colonized the islands and Africa. The original foundation for Caribbean culture was a clash between two different worlds being forced together: European and African descendents. The African identity was repressed by European culture, as Europeans overtook the region through domination and control. This power was achieved through isolation of African culture, closeting the African culture to home life, while making it only acceptable to exude Eurocentric behavior in public. Europeans took control over Caribbean culture, making it nearly impossible for Afro-Caribbeans to form a solid identity. The dominant European culture, which dictates the ideologies, discredits the culture from which the society has descended from. The dismissal of cultural, traditional, and religious practices creates an anxiety within Afro-Caribbeans because their racial heritage creates a difference between their race and the European race that dominates them. Inherently, there is a notion of Otherness created amongst the Afro-Caribbean community.

Adopting ideas from Psychoanalytic and Feminist criticism, Frantz Fanon establishes the Afro-Caribbean psyche development in his seminal text, *Black Skins, White Masks*. Fanon, native to Martinique, writes about the Caribbean mindset from an insider perspective. Fanon explores the actualization of the Caribbean unconscious in terms of gender and race, exposing the importance that Otherness plays in terms of identity development. Fanon relies heavily on race and marginalization created within Caribbean society in order to support psyche development of Afro-Caribbeans. By creating a sense of inferiority within black and biracial inhabitants of the Caribbean, the white race has been able to maintain superiority over the region. The inferior nature that

Afro-Caribbeans have embraced, due to colonization, leads to alienation within their own race and overall community. Fixation over acceptance from the white race leaves the Afro-Caribbean as:

an obsessive neurotic type, or, if one prefers, he puts himself into a complete situational neurosis. In the man of color there is a constant effort to run away from his own individuality, to annihilate his own presence. Whenever a man of color rebukes, there is alienation [...] the Negro, having been made inferior, proceeds from humiliating insecurity through strongly voiced self-accusation to despair. The attitude of the black man toward the white, or toward his own race, often duplicates almost completely a constellation of delirium, frequently bordering on the region of pathological (Fanon 60).

To Fanon, negative implications of race are a main focal point in the development of Caribbean identity. There is a constant need for achieving whiteness, whether it is through adaptation of “proper” European language, education that is afforded to white people, or the attempt to change the appearance of one’s skin. Afro-Caribbeans are seeking acceptance into society through embracing and adopting European culture since their culture has been rejected by the domination of the white race. The racial hierarchy that was created in colonization still holds true in the postcolonial setting. Whiteness is viewed as being prosperous and powerful, while blackness is shunned by society due to implications of ignorance and inferiority.

Fanon’s attempt for decolonization of the Caribbean, specifically Martinique in his studies, is approached through the psychological breakdown of the Caribbean mindset

and psyche development. Marginalization of Afro-Caribbeans through colonization has impacted the way that they are viewed by others, but also how the Afro-Caribbean community views and places worth on itself. Fanon first describes colonized people as, “every people in whose soul and inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local culture originality” (18). In order to be colonized, one must be overtaken and made inferior to the colonizing country. Without this tactic there would not be the ability to overtake a people and implement a new identity for them. It is the Afro-Caribbean culture that is colonized in the Caribbean, made to be inferior to the white-European culture. Fanon exhibits the importance that language plays in colonization, as it is language that creates the ability to overtake the colonized. The French-colonized island of Martinique favors the white-European ideal; this includes the knowledge of the French language. For a black man to master the French language, he becomes whiter in the eyes of society. This creates a sense of acceptance from the white culture that is dictating ideologies to the black culture by renunciation of Afro-Caribbean culture; the black man “becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness” (Fanon 18). It is engrained that the Afro-Caribbean race is a lesser entity than the white-European race; therefore, creating an unattainable ideal that is sought after. Afro-Caribbeans must abandon their heritage in order to escape the “abandonment neurosis” that was placed on them when taken from their motherland and then marginalized by their colonizing country.

Fanon incites that colonization creates a “devaluation of self” within the Afro-Caribbean community (75). The Afro-Caribbean is abandoned on several different levels, which in turn creates what Fanon calls “abandonment neurosis,” a term adopted

from Germaine Geux. First, the Afro-Caribbean is abandoned by Africa, his or her original motherland. The slave trade initially brought Africans to the Caribbean. Once these slaves were docked in the harbors of the Caribbean and sold as property, the connection to Africa was lost. The initial migration to a new world incited the notion of abandonment from the African motherland; the slave would never see his or her home again and was forced to embrace a new culture. After the initial abandonment from Africa, the descendants of the African Diaspora were abandoned yet again, but this time by their European counterparts who favored Eurocentrism. The European countries that colonized the Caribbean did so in order to achieve riches through land and commodities. The products of the Caribbean were mainly crops that were tended to by the slaves that were brought from Africa. Afro-Caribbeans were there to work, not to live. Descendants of the African Diaspora were abandoned by their new culture because they were not accepted into it.

The creation of neurosis through abandonment aides in the creation of the Afro-Caribbean identity. Fanon argues that, “The neurotic structure of an individual is simply the elaboration, the formation, the eruption within the ego, of conflictual clusters arising in part out of the environment and in part out of the purely personal way in which that individual reacts to these influences” (81). The reaction Fanon speaks of is the need for acceptance by the white community of the Caribbean; “It is in fact customary in Martinique to dream of a form of salvation that consists of magically turning white” (44). Caribbean culture is overshadowed by a racial hierarchy: white at the top and black at the bottom. To achieve whiteness is the ability to achieve social ranking. For the man of color, Fanon suggests that this is done by seeking the love of a white woman. The

acceptance of a white woman justifies the existence of a black man in the Caribbean: “By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man” (63). The love of a white woman will satisfy the black man’s need for acceptance by the white community. This simple act will make up for the fact that he was abandoned by the white community because now he has love from the white community which will, in turn, permit his acceptance into the community. He is now permissibly white. In a reading of Fanon’s work, Rey Chow relays “that for the black man, selfhood and communal relations are entirely intertwined with skin color and race. If the forced coexistence with the white man is impossible as a basis for community, it is because the white man, with his attitudes of racist superiority does not *admit* the black man as an equal” (58). According to Fanon, this equality is sought through the relationship with white women, but this is ultimately a battle that will never be won. A black or biracial man can never literally make himself white. Regardless of the advantages that he may create for himself, there will never be a full admittance into the white community due to his race.

The woman of color, according to Fanon, must seek love from a white man in order to compensate from her inherent abandonment neurosis. The love affair with a white man will prove advantageous to the woman of color for several reasons. The first is purely narcissistic where the woman of color is seeking social acceptance through the wealth of her white mate. As the white men in the Caribbean are the ones that hold money and power, a relationship with a white man would transcend the white male’s social status to the woman of color. The second reason is to “purify” the race. Since women are child-bearing, procreation affords the woman of color the opportunity to change her social status by “whitening” the race of her children. Fanon relays that in

Martinique every woman knows and repeats the saying, “Whiten the race, save the race”

(47). If a woman of color from Martinique is not able to find a white man to have a relationship with, she “is determined to select the least black of the men” (Fanon 47).

The woman of color has the option of who she will have children with: a white man, black man, biracial man, each with their own skin color that would be able to either help or hinder the social ranking of the black female in society. If the woman is able to bear children with lighter skin, it is possible for her to move up in the social rankings based off of how well her children can “pass” as white. Fanon negates the fact that race should be seen as a flaw (81); however, it is engrained in the Afro-Caribbean, due to the social hierarchy in place. The flaw of the Afro-Caribbean *is* his or her race. In order to overcome this unchangeable flaw, the Afro-Caribbean must become obsessed with the “whitening” of the race in order to create acceptance.

Fanon’s main view of Caribbean race is black versus white, with little mention of biracial descendents living in the Caribbean. He takes on a somewhat white-European mindset when creating his binary by encouraging the separation of the races through his defining of the Afro-Caribbean mindset. Trying to be white may very well be an ideal in the Caribbean, but is not the only mindset as it is an unattainable ideal. The binary created by colonization, and reinforced by Fanon by not offering a justified solution, does not afford the option to fall into a gray area between the black and white racial lines that have been drawn. Francoise Lionnet transforms this function of the gray area, and argues that we are all part of it: there is no black or white, in her work, *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, and Self-Portaiture*. Lionnet focuses on the functioning of *métissage*, the “braiding, of cultural forms through the simultaneous revalorization of oral traditions and

reevaluation of Western concepts” (4), and acknowledges that there is not a pure race, which in turn establishes that even the European ideal is a false one. Race is not real, but socially constructed, as well as gender, in order to “perpetuate exploitation and subjugation on behalf of those fictive differences created by discourses of power” (5). Race and gender serve one purpose, which is to solidify the ideological power structures of the white male. The white male has strategically created roles for women and people of color in order to distort reality, and create a world where they can dominate. The gray area, according to the white male ideology, is the area where psychosis forms because one does not truly fit into black or white. By forming a double-consciousness, Afro-Caribbeans are able to recognize that they are not white, yet they are not able to form an individual identity because society requires them to be white. These societal demands cause Afro-Caribbeans to strive for whiteness, a delusional state which hinders their ability to recognize they are different from the dominant white culture, and embrace the métissage of their identity which embraces both the European and African cultures that affect their identity. Lionnet’s argument breaks down the dominating Western ideologies and exposes that the psychosis associated with being of race or of gender, meaning not white or not male, is actually a craftily created consequence in order to uphold colonial power structures.

Fanon continues to uphold colonial power structures by adhering to a patriarchal mindset. Just as Freud favors the development of the male psyche in Psychoanalytic criticism, Fanon promotes the Afro-Caribbean psyche development in terms of the male with little regard for the female. Within his text Fanon mainly focuses on the black male in Caribbean society, dedicating only one chapter to the woman of color, which solely

speaks to the woman's relationship with the white male. Rey Chow points out the flaw in Fanon's sole representation of the Caribbean woman by arguing that he self-admits that he knows nothing about the black female, and that he uses this almost as a precautionary tool for his development of the black female. This obvious lack of attention directed towards the Caribbean female shows Fanon's oversight in the development of identity within the Caribbean. This weakness in Fanon's argument opens the door for interpretation of the Caribbean female identity. Although there is one chapter dedicated to the woman of color, all other chapters in the book are directed towards the man of color—implying that the woman of color would take on the same characteristics as the man of color. Aside from implicitly giving female Afro-Caribbeans the same identity as the Afro-Caribbean male, Fanon also groups all women into one entity. Through the generalization of women, "The predominant impression given by [Fanon] is that women of color are *all alike*: in spite of the differences in pigmentation between the Negress and the mulatto, for instance, they share a common, 'nauseating' trait—the desire to become white—that can be generalized in the form of 'every woman'" (Chow 60). Fanon is disgusted by the need to become white, as he states several times throughout *Black Skins, White Masks*, but suggests that all women of color in the Caribbean possess this trait. As we saw in the Psychoanalytic identity development, the female, regardless of cultural setting, will develop differently than the male due to the fragmented and lacking lifestyle in which she is raised simply because she is female. Fanon is inadvertently creating a second degree of Otherness for the Afro-Caribbean woman through his description and depiction of how she behaves. Not only is the Afro-Caribbean woman an Other because of her race, but she is also an Other because of her gender.

Since Fanon's text is looked at as a canonical representation of Caribbean identity development, the representation of the Afro-Caribbean woman has been shaped for her through his depiction. The female, according to Irigaray, learns her identity through behaviors presented to her by her family and society. The generalization that Fanon has created is that the Afro-Caribbean woman is a woman that preys on white men in order to increase her own social status through her sexuality. Chow fleshes out this negative generalization by unpacking Fanon's perspective of the Afro-Caribbean female:

By refusing the woman of color any of the kind of emotional ambivalence that is copiously endowed upon the psyche of the black man, what Fanon accomplishes is a representation—representation both in the sense of portraying and in the sense of speaking for—of the woman of color as potentially if not always a whore, a sell-out, and hence a traitor to her own ethnic community. Women of color are, in other words, shameless people who forsake their own origins [...] for something more 'universally' desirable and profitable—association with the white world (64).

This assumption alienates the black woman from her own culture. She is viewed as a woman that will not satisfy herself with the accompaniment of other people of her same race, but a person that is constantly looking for an opportunity for social advancement. Since the female of society is seeking for her desires to be met, she will be seeking the desires that are implied that she must want; "Fanon describes the woman of color in terms of her conscious wishes and her unconscious desires" (Chow 65). Yet, Fanon is somewhat creating desires for the woman of color as there is a negative portrayal of her in Fanon's quest for Caribbean identity development. He presents an identity for the

Afro-Caribbean female, but only further marginalizes the female in Caribbean society.

There is no acknowledgment of other roles that a woman may take on: mother, daughter, friend, scholar, entrepreneur, teacher—or even lesbian. Inadvertently or not, Fanon has created a tainted identity for the Afro-Caribbean woman, which essentially dismisses his desire for decolonization when it comes to the Caribbean female. He calls for the acknowledgement and advancement of the Caribbean male, but allows for the female to be left to old stereotypes that adhere to the patriarchal colonial mindset.

It is now left to the Caribbean authoress to write back against the patriarchal standpoint that has created the identity of the Caribbean woman, and create an identity for the females of the Caribbean. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido address this need for a feminist dialogue in Caribbean societies in the introduction to, *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature*. Boyce Davies recognizes that “Women seem to have great freedom in Caribbean societies, yet we know that women suffer great inequalities within them” (x). Caribbean women may not be as oppressed as women living in other postcolonial societies, but they suffer a power struggle with the men in Caribbean society. Equality amongst men and women has not moved into the Caribbean just yet, but the need and desire for equality has risen within women. Fido argues that in order for Caribbean women to find a voice and place in society that they are comfortable with, they must enter the literary arena and demand a voice because “male writers in the Caribbean have a tradition of debate; women need to develop one consciously now” (xi). Although Boyce Davies and Fido recommend this taking of power for Caribbean women be conducted through a theoretical standpoint, women’s Caribbean literature also provides a platform for the authoress to speak to her community and the rest of the world.

Writing back against the literature that binds the stereotypes is a common theme amongst Caribbean authoresses, as it presents a voice and a dismissal of outdated points of view of Caribbean women. Through her writings the Caribbean authoress is able to rewrite and reinvent the identity that has been created for the Caribbean female.

Elizabeth Nunez is a Trinidadian author, critic, and professor who explores the development of female identity within Trinidadian society through her fictional and critical writings. Nunez's article, "The Paradoxes of Belonging," questions the identity of the white creole woman in the Caribbean as she lives in exile due to rejection from her European heritage as well as Afro-Caribbean society. Nunez questions this shaping and questioning of identity through her own fictional works with the formation of her female characters. She uses her native country of Trinidad as the main setting to develop black and biracial female characters and utilizes the impact of familial and societal ideologies in order to show how the Trinidadian female identity adapts and rejects the gender roles that are placed on them. Nunez's novels, *When Rocks Dance*, *Bruised Hibiscus*, and *Prospero's Daughter* present readers with three different family units in which female children are being raised. *When Rocks Dance* follows the black girl that is raised by her single mother in Trinidad. *Bruised Hibiscus* introduces readers to a family in which a biracial girl is raised by a mother who alienates her from society and her own family due to her skin color. While *Prospero's Daughter* presents the situation of a white girl that is being raised in Trinidad by her widowed father. Each novel presents readers with a different scenario in which a female child is raised and how her identity is then constructed: the present mother, the absent mother, and the widowed father. Nunez uses these family units in order to show how the Trinidadian female identity is affected by

different settings, but that ultimately there is a common ground of exile for the Caribbean woman due to marginalization and isolation due to the child's race and gender.

Afro-Caribbean women have a history of domination through isolation. Each of Nunez's novels that I will explore present the coming of age of a female child in the Caribbean. In accordance with historical traditions, the ideologies at large in the community shape the outlook of how the female's identity will develop. I propose that in addition to domination by patriarchal, Eurocentric ideals, the immediate family in which a female child is raised will develop how strong of a sense of self identity she will develop. I believe Nunez uses her novels to present the problems of race and gender, and also the importance of strong female role models to induce change in the Caribbean female. There is not a sense of strong femaleness in the Caribbean, as the female identity is dictated to her by the Caribbean male. Nunez utilizes her fiction to write back against the patriarchal society, expose the importance of strong females in society, and the negative impact that domination and control has to Caribbean females. Developing the female identity must be done so by females, and through language that represents the female perspective.

### Developing the Female with a Mother Present

Nunez's first novel, *When Rocks Dance*, presents readers with a family unit containing a solid mother-daughter relationship. This foundational relationship between mother and daughter develops how identity formation of an Afro-Caribbean woman blooms when a child is raised with a strong mother figure that is present to groom her and establish ideals. Marina is the biracial daughter of Emilia, and even though there are racial differences between the women, Marina's relationship with her mother enables her to develop a true identity of her own. Emilia teaches her daughter through example, and establishes the ability to adapt personality traits that will enable her to be a strong, independent woman. The mother-daughter relationship in this novel exposes how tight-knit relationships afford the ability for mothers to teach their daughters how to overcome subjectivity that is placed on females in society and take ownership of their individual identity and destiny.

The novel is set at the turn of the twentieth century when Trinidad is still under colonial rule. A time where Afro-Caribbean culture became resistant to British rule, and the quest for power amongst people of the African descent emerged. There was a fractured identity for Afro-Caribbeans, as they were known only as slaves, workers of the land, ignorant people that would never, or could never for that fact, be considered equal to the white race that was dominant. Acknowledgment from the Afro-Caribbean race that power came through land ownership erected the mentality that there could be a radical change in the way Trinidad was governed. Slavery was officially abolished in Trinidad on August 1, 1838 following a peaceful protest by Afro-Caribbeans to the Governor because emancipation that was granted in 1834 was not being upheld on the island. After

this new-found freedom, recognition of the possibility of equality fragmented the Afro-Caribbean identity, as there was now a change in the way in which the community viewed itself. Through this recognition, the beginning of the evolution of Afro-Caribbean identity began as the possibility for power was presented to the community.

*When Rocks Dance* embraces this change in Afro-Caribbean identity through the exploration of Emilia's quest for power through land ownership, which is a foundation that is instilled in Marina's upbringing because Emilia wants her daughter to have a better life than the life that she led. Emilia's troubled past, having buried four sets of twin sons before the conception of Marina and being only the lover of a powerful white man (Hrothgar), engrains the ideology that women of color are dependent upon men for survival. Emilia is the embodiment of Fanon's depiction of the woman of color; she is a woman that is alienated from the white world of power due to colonization and utilizes her charms of sexuality to enchant a white man into establishing stability in her life. Emilia is forced into a world of inferiority due to the colonial ideologies that rule Trinidad during this time, and "it is because [she] feels inferior that she aspires to win admittance into the white world" (Fanon 60). The relationship between Hrothgar and Emilia is codependent, as Hrothgar understands Emilia's need for stability and he wants an heir to his estate. The relationship proved to be disappointing to both parties. The sole surviving child was a female, Marina, not the male heir in which Hrothgar had hoped for. Hrothgar dies when Marina is only eight years old, leaving Emilia to regress to the inferior life she knew before their relationship. Once again, Emilia is forced to use her sexuality to provide for her daughter as she finds stability and shelter by becoming the mistress of John Tesler. Emilia is determined to mold her daughter into a powerful

woman that is not reliant on a man's generosity so that Marina will be capable of creating her own life and identity that is not dictated by a man.

Lacan presents the notion that all female children have specific demands in the relationship with their mother. In society, females are treated as inferior to males, which is acknowledged by the female child at an early age. Lacan asserts, "that women, whether this be their doing or that of the men, have not had the same opportunity to elaborate the common places of their desire" (*Feminine Sexuality* 136). The female child will, therefore, seek out her mother in order to learn behaviors of femininity that are socially acceptable because it will enable her to express her own needs and desires. The female child demands that she have a relationship with her mother so she may learn how to be female in a world that is dominated by males. The bond with the mother proves essential because it enables the female child to find an identity, since femininity can only be taught by the mother. This need for female guidance is shown through the relationship between Emilia and Marina in *When Rocks Dance*. Emilia, being the adult, understands the inferiority of women, and Marina seeks out her guidance from a young age in order to teach her how to embrace her femininity. Emilia pursues to teach her daughter that she must embrace her sexuality as a source of power in order to obtain security in a male dominated world.

The sexuality of a woman during colonial rule is the only way she would be able to conquer her inability to obtain power. Bahadur Tejani reflects on the patriarchal control that was engrained in the colonial mindset in his analysis, "When Rocks Dance: Historical Vision in Elizabeth Nunez-Harrell's First Novel." Tejani notes that, "From [Hrothgar's] viewpoint, all Emilia has to do is bear offspring, since he feels that she is

meant to be promiscuous and fecund [...] Hrothgar's view is depicted as a European value, for him and his kind, based on sex, procreation, and economic security" (55).

Hrothgar only views Emilia as a sexual commodity; her sole purpose in their relationship is to bear children. This vision of a woman is deeply rooted in the colonial mindset that women are second rate citizens to men; the only value women add to a relationship is her sexuality and ability to please her mate. The two do not marry, but settle upon an agreement that as long as Emilia tries to produce an heir then she will be allowed to stay in the household. Emilia is ill-fated with child birth, bearing three sets of twins that were stillborn and another set of twins that she implicitly murders in the fields behind their home. Hrothgar never questions Emilia on if she killed the last set of twin boys, but retreats from social interaction and allows Emilia to stay in the household if she promises to continue to meet his sexual demands and have more children. Emilia stays with Hrothgar because she has no other place to go, and agrees to Hrothgar's stipulations. There is only one other child that is produced from the relationship, Marina, who proves to be a disappointment to her father because she is not the male that he wanted. Marina's bond with her mother is forged from birth because of Hrothgar's disappointment; she must build a relationship with her mother because it is her only sense of affection. Hrothgar does not disown Marina, but distances himself from her due to the despondency of the death of his son's before the birth of his daughter. The strained relationship between Emilia and Hrothgar influences the personality traits Emilia chooses to develop in Marina. Emilia is completely dependent upon Hrothgar for survival, and she does not want the same for her daughter. The dependency on a man for stability creates the need

for Emilia to teach her daughter the importance of understanding self-worth, and the need to take control of her own destiny by gaining power through land ownership.

Hrothgar's death proves problematic to the mother and daughter because they no longer have a home. The land is deeded to Emilia, but through an unlawful sale, all of the land is lost. The disruption of Emilia's comfort and security makes her vow to teach Marina that "A man [...] owned land only if he owned the deed to it. But if a man had land, it did not mean his woman had that land. For if she, Emilia, owned the deed to Hrothgar's land, no law in the world, no person on earth could move them from where they lived" (Nunez 31)<sup>1</sup>. The need for power is a learned behavior for Emilia. Through her life experience, Emilia found that a woman of African descent living in colonial Trinidad had no worth, and that no Afro-Caribbean during this time had any worth unless they had land because land denotes power. Emilia, therefore, takes on the role of teaching her daughter the learned behaviors that she has come to find through her own identity development in an evolving world. Both Lacan and Irigaray agree that the mother will teach children learned behaviors, and will help in a more fulfilling development of a female child where there is an initial lack. The lack that is exposed in this novel is that women do not harness power. Hrothgar died before the dramatic change in living situation took place with Emilia and Marina; therefore, he did not have the ability to teach his daughter the meaning of power. It can be assumed that he would not have taught her the need for power, as Hrothgar's actions were based on the colonial European mindset that women were commodities to produce heirs. Emilia takes on the duty of molding Marina's identity to more than a commodity for a man. She is set on

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<sup>1</sup> Nunez, Elizabeth. *When Rocks Dance*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1986. Print. All subsequent references to Nunez in this section will refer to this citation.

instilling in her daughter the need for a woman to gain power, control her own destiny, and step outside of the path to dependency that Caribbean society has created for a girl at the turn of the twentieth century.

Caribbean mothers, historically, are the backbone of the family unit, and provide essential guidance in the development of children's identity. In Merle Hodge's article, "'We Kind of Family'," she presents the breakdowns of traditional family structures in Trinidad and Tobago, noting that at least one third of these family structures consist of single mother's raising their children. Hodge recognizes that the traditional Caribbean family structure (as she notes that the family structure within Trinidad and Tobago can be applied to the rest of the Caribbean) differs from the traditional American family structure. Generally, the Caribbean family structure consists of one of two types of households: the nuclear family consisting of parent(s) and offspring and the three generational families which houses grandparent(s), parent(s), and children. In addition to the family structure, there can be varying sexual unions that take place within these family structures: married, common-law, or 'visiting relationships' where a man and a woman are sexual partners but do not actually live together in a union (476). Regardless of the union that may be in place in the household, it is left to the mother to raise the children and instill acceptable social behaviors. Hodge defines the Caribbean family as, "an organization of people that provides for its members' material need (food, clothing, and shelter), and their emotional needs (approval, acceptance, solidarity and warmth), and socializes the young" (476). The family that Hodge seeks to define is based on Postcolonial family settings, but the foundation for the way Caribbean families function emerged from the colonial past. Since colonial Afro-Caribbean females did not have any

notable power, it was a mother's duty to instill the need for her female children to seek power in their future. The bond with the mother is essential in developing the daughter's identity, not only for her advancement, but also to establish new norms within society that would afford women of color the opportunity to succeed.

Marina comes of age in a so-called multi-generational household after the death of Hrothgar. Since Emilia loses the land that is deeded to her, she must seek shelter with another family. Emilia and Marina move in with family friends, the Tesler's. Moving in with this new family provides a new approach to the female identity for Marina, as there is now another maternal figure in her life to exhibit behaviors that are to be learned by Marina. Her relationship with her mother is close, but she also has a relationship with Anne Tesler. As Emilia takes on the role of mistress with John Tesler, Anne (his wife) willingly accepts taking on the role of educating Marina. Anne teaches Marina typical school lessons and social expectations of class, but also inadvertently shows Marina that a relationship with a man does not have to be completely one-sided. John had sexual needs that he wanted met, but when his Anne no longer willing to perform these duties, he took on a mistress and did not discard his wife. This lesson is one that could only be displayed through example. The relationship between John and Anne forged forward, even at the culmination of their sexual relationship. Prior to this experience, Marina was not exposed to that type of a relationship between a man and a woman. Her mother had always been the mistress, using her sexuality to attain the little bit of comfort that she had. However, through this multi-faceted familial living situation, Marina was able to learn a different way of life for women. From her mother, she learned the importance of having power for one's self. Even though Emilia did not possess this power, she taught

her daughter that it was the most important thing she could achieve in her life. From Anne, Marina learned that it is possible to have a relationship with a man that wielded power, but that a woman does not have to be dominated in order to hold this power. By having the freedom to observe relationships between men and women from different aspects, Marina is able to choose the identity that she wants to have. She is not subjected to being forced into taking on an identity for security, but adapts an identity to progress her social position.

According to Merle Hodge, the Caribbean female is the head of the household and family unit. This status has been achieved by creating a sense of nobility and power within women. In Caribbean society this is done through the exposure of hardship that the mother has taken on to get to where she is in society, and want for a better life for her children. A strong mother-daughter relationship does not necessarily mean that the relationship is free from flaws of humanity and circumstance, but that the mother will teach her daughter to avoid obstacles that are not absolutely necessary to tackle. Since the mother is considered the head of the household, it is her responsibility to expose how the fate of her children can change and push for this to be engrained in their identity. Emilia's identity was to use the tools that she had, her sexuality, to obtain a sense of security and a home to live in. Yet, she goes to teach her daughter that it is not sexuality that is the defining characteristic of a woman, but her ability to obtain power and be independent.

Even though Emilia wanted her daughter to be strong and independent, she was still subject to the ideologies that were present in colonial Trinidad. In an attempt to make Marina understand that her adulterous ways were only to create a better life for her,

Emilia admits her affair with John Tesler to Marina, “Yes, I continue to sleep with Tesler, but for you, only for you” (Nunez 40). Emilia’s relationships with men “construct[s] black female subjectivity in colonial society and intertwines the quest of African women for power and freedom from domination” (Frye 200). Emilia represents the past; whereas, Marina represents the future where women of African descent can create their own destiny and obtain power over their male suppressors. Emilia continued to use her sexuality because it was the only way she knew how to provide for her daughter, and her sexuality proved to help Marina gain a more powerful stance. The affair with John enabled Marina to gain an education. Emilia knew that an educated woman was powerful, and wanted to provide Marina with as much ammunition as possible in order to take control of her identity. The education that Marina receives allows her to build a foundational identity; she is taught to think for herself, while also being taught how to be perceived as a lady by society. The impact of learned behaviors and taught education of Marina enable her to be aware of social demands of women, but also prepare her to form opinions on the roles that women take on as an identity. This recognition empowers Marina to take charge in adapting an identity that she is comfortable with.

Although Marina watches her mother expose herself to domination by men, she recognizes that this is not a road that she wants to travel down. The solid relationship between mother and daughter in this novel exposes that with the guidance of a mother, the teachings of female sexuality, and the dependency that is sprung forth from it, reconcile how change can occur amongst generations. The close relationship shows how a child can learn from her mother in order to create a new identity for herself: “Marina is embarrassed by her mother’s status as a former maid and ‘kept’ woman, as well as her

manner of dress and lack of education and refinement” (Frye 204). Although Marina is judgmental towards her mother’s ways, she also understands that this was the only way in which her mother knew how to live. Women of color in colonial Caribbean were not given opportunities, but treated as commodities for men. The recognition that Marina does not want to be like Emilia is what facilitates her quest for a different identity, and that she has the choice to take on a different identity than the one that her mother took on for survival. Marina promises that she will not succumb to the demands of men, that she will overcome the fate that was set for her mother, and that “no one, not even God, could stop her from one day owning the deed to land” (Nunez 31). She learns from her mother that there is a worth in women, and that women can be just as powerful as men. However, women must take their power; it will not be given to them. The education afforded to Marina makes her aware of the obstacles she will have to overcome to achieve the power she desires: her race and gender.

Since Marina is biracial, she is not considered to be part of the white class, yet she is looked at by other Afro-Caribbeans as not quite black. The hardship that Afro-Caribbeans faced during colonization is that they were not considered equal; therefore, they could not obtain the power that was desired. Hilda Smith, a white woman who adopted Marina’s mother-in-law, explicitly states the outlook of Afro-Caribbeans from the white race when stating: “The poor things imagine that if they could only change their skins [...] they would be white. It’s more than skin, Smithy my dear. It’s culture. Civilization. Intelligence” (Nunez 168). Presenting the underlying colonial ideology that Afro-Caribbeans have the desire to become white and that they do not have the culture, or upbringing, to be accepted into the white community exposes the additional hardships the

Afro-Caribbeans, even if only partially African, faced. Marina's fate was established for her since birth, and Emilia knew that even though her father was white, Marina would always be considered black. This is why she wanted to teach her daughter that she needed to seek power through advantageous relationships, not dominating relationships. This presents the trouble of race in the Caribbean. The duality between African and European heritage, and the inability for the two to co-exist harmoniously, defines the need for power within Afro-Caribbeans. This stems from a difference in culture and is recognized through religious, familial, and social practices.

Marina's race and gender play a role in her alienation from power. In order for her to achieve the power that she promised herself as a child, she must still find an advantageous relationship with a man. She does not want to follow in her mother's footsteps and be a mistress who is dependent upon men, but in colonized Trinidad, she had no choice but to succumb to the ideologies that presented power to men over women. Marina took her biracial background to her advantage. She may have been seen as black in the eyes of white society, but to any of the "colored" Caribbean societies she possessed beauty that was not bestowed upon the other women due to the whiteness of her features: "her face framed by light almost golden hair—wild, unkempt, uncombed hair...the bridge of her nose was long, her nostrils wide and flaring. High cheekbones set off wild, gray eyes. Her full-lipped mouth was warm and generous. Tamed. And her skin was pale, almost white, breasts projecting forward, backside high and rigid" (Nunez 67). To her advantage, she is considered more attractive than other women of color due to the features conferred by her father, and it is these features that enable her to catch the eye of a man that has the ability to provide her an advantageous relationship. Antonio, a Warao

Indian, is the son of the chief, and heir to a large portion of land. Antonio is taken by Marina's beauty and a relationship forms to a marriage between the two, not simply due to Marina's physical beauty, but because of the love that blossomed between the two. The fact that Marina seeks out a man of color to forge a relationship with exposes her want to separate herself from her mother's identity. If she entertained a relationship with a white man, she would be accused by society of utilizing her sexual charms, as her mother did, in order to achieve social ranking. However, a courtship with a man of color shows that Marina is not only seeking societal power through land ownership, but also a sense of equality within her relationship. She is not automatically considered inferior, solely based on skin color, to Antonio because he is not white. Emilia was resistant towards the relationship between Marina and Antonio because she did not think Antonio was good enough for her daughter, and there were rumors of his ability to have a successful relationship. She accused Antonio of murdering previous wives and even told Marina she would put a curse on the marriage. Emilia's experience with men showed that a relationship with a man would suppress a woman's identity; she never experienced a relationship of equality. Marina knows that she must find a man that will provide for her, but will provide *with* her as well. It cannot be a one-sided relationship.

Marina's objectives in life are to gain power through land ownership and have a relationship with a man that promotes equality. The relationship between Marina and Antonio initiated through her physical appearance and sexuality, but evolved to a marriage when her class and education enabled her ability to have an actual relationship that was not merely based on sex. Even when Marina questions Antonio on why he married her, his simple reply was "because I love you" (Nunez 116). Marina did not seek

out the relationship with Antonio solely for the power she would be able to achieve from it. There were certain perks that were given to her from this relationship, but she was able to forge a partnership with a man that progressed both of their lives forward.

Marina's strong foundation for recognition of self enables her to overcome her mother's outlook of male/female relationships, and create a relationship that promotes partnership between a man and a woman. She is able to take her mother's experience with men and adapt a different type of relationship with men, not allowing herself to be taken advantage of.

Marina has learned from Emilia to use her sexuality in order to obtain a lifestyle that she wants. She relies on her physical appearance in order to court a man that can afford her the opportunity to gain power through land ownership. Sexuality becomes a part of Marina's identity, but not in the subjective way in which it degraded Emilia. Marina learns through her mother that sexuality can be used to achieve goals, and from Anne that physical attraction between a couple is important, but not the only binding portion of the relationship. It was engrained in Marina's identity from a child that she wanted to be powerful. This made her aware of her surroundings, susceptible to the teachings from women in her community, and assertive enough to go after what she desired in life. The learned behaviors that were enforced on her did not hinder Marina's ability to move past a life of servitude to a man. She was able to relate to her mother, recognize that she was not her mother, and create an identity that was influenced by her mother and other female figures in her life, and make an identity that was different and powerful. She achieved her goals and recognized that she was a strong-willed, sexual woman that could achieve power through her gifts. One could say that Marina

successfully completed Lacan's mirror stage, and embraced that her sexuality not as fragmented, but something that was desired by the male sex—he wants her and she needs him. By embracing an identity through sexuality, Marina is able to dismiss the generalization that a colonized woman of color cannot have an identity without a man. Of course, being a woman in colonial Trinidad asserts a certain amount of dependency on men as they hold power in society. Even men of color yield more power than women, but Marina engages in a healthy relationship with Antonio that moves women's ability to obtain power in society forward. Marina gains power through her relationship by not entertaining an oppressive relationship with a man. She creates an identity within her relationship that allows for her to have an opinion in monetary affairs, which attributes to her not being completely dependent on Antonio.

Lacan develops that a relationship with the mother is essential to the development of an identity for a child. For a female child, this relationship will teach a girl how to be a girl, and what expectations are set upon the female gender by a given society. A strong relationship between the mother and daughter will enable the daughter to absorb lessons presented by the mother and mold them into their identity. This does not mean that the child will have to solely mimic the mother and adopt the exact identity of the mother, mirroring her every move and personality trait, but to take on these traits and mold them into a cohesive structure of their own identity by adapting the traits into the personality. However, when the mother is not present in the child's life due to absenteeism, the female child is left to learn through mimicking only. When a child must learn at a distance, she will have difficulty developing an identity of her own because she only knows to adopt the ways of femaleness to her identity, not adapt them to what meets her

personal needs. The relationship with a mother is crucial to the development of the child, and will prove problematic if she is unable to form this relationship.

### Developing the Female with an Absent Mother

Nunez's novel, *Bruised Hibiscus*, presents readers with a strained relationship between a mother and daughter, as the mother in this novel is absent from her daughter's life. When stating absent mother, I am referring to a mother that lives in the household, her presence is felt in the household, but there is no direct relationship with the child. The mother is engulfed in other activities that take away from the relationship building that should be placed with the child. The child is left to develop knowing that she has a mother, but without a direct relationship with the mother that would provide guidance towards the development of identity.

In the case of *Bruised Hibiscus*, this is shown through the Appleton family, and specifically the relationship between the matriarch of the family, Clara, and her youngest daughter, Rosa. The Appleton family is a wealthy white family that descends from plantation owners in Otahiti, Trinidad. The family name is well known throughout the community due to their heritage of descending from plantation owners, and that they employ many of the locals. Although this family is the envy of the majority of people of Otahiti, based upon their materialistic goods and picture perfect lifestyle, there is a dark secret that haunts the family. There was a strain put on the marriage between Thomas and Clara Appleton due to the fact that Thomas was a closeted homosexual who took a lover and no longer displayed affection towards his wife. Clara sought refuge in the arms of a black man, and from this affair conceived her youngest daughter, Rosa. Even though Thomas knew that Rosa was not his daughter, he protected his family's reputation (and his own, as the fact of knowing that he was homosexual would be an outrage and tarnish his own reputation) by raising Rosa as his own daughter. This task was not difficult, as

Rosa took the complexion of a white person. However, this secret impacts the way in which Rosa is raised. She is not treated the same way as her sisters and she does not know that it is her heritage that is alienating her from the affection of her mother. Nunez has created a character, Rosa Appleton, that has to overcome her heritage, estrangement from her mother, and societal rules in order to find an identity of her own.

The role of the mother in the development of the child's identity is a key theme that crosses theoretical platforms. Jacques Lacan utilizes the mirror stage in psychoanalytic terms to convey the importance of the mother to the development of the child. Essentially, the mirror stage is when an infant is able to look into a mirror and recognize their own reflection, which in turn allows for the child to form an identity of his or her own (Lacan 2). According to Lacan, "We have only to understand the mirror stage *as an identification*, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: mainly, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image" (2). The ability to recognize the difference between his or herself and the mother allows the child to recognize that he or she is not one with the mother. This identification allows for the child to begin building an identity of his or her own. This identity will surely be influenced by the mother, as she provides guidance and exhibits certain behavioral roles and interactions, but allows for the child to realize that there is a line of separation. The observation of self allows for the child to mimic the mother and still take on an identity of his or her own.

By having an absent mother and being raised by her nanny, Mary Christophe, from an infant, Rosa is predisposed to having trouble developing a sense of identity. There are flashbacks to Rosa's childhood throughout the novel that provide readers a

glimpse into her life as a child. Clara, being more involved with the upbringing of her two older daughters, is not a stable mother figure to provide the necessary steps for an infant to begin to develop an identity. Regardless of the reasoning behind Clara's estrangement from her daughter, which will be further discussed later in this chapter, her lack of interest towards her child leaves a lasting impact on how Rosa develops an identity as an adult. Mary Christophe cannot be a full-fledged substitute for Rosa's mother because Rosa is aware that she has a mother. From a child she knows who her mother is and accepts that she does not have a relationship with her. Rosa is able to decipher that there is not an attachment between her and her mother; however, this still disables her from the beginning stages of identity formation due to the lack of relationship with the mother. The mirror stage allows for a child to literally see his or herself in a mirror, but also in the image of their mother. It allows for the child to recognize that they are a separate entity, but does not allow for the child to not need their mother for guidance and influence. The child will mimic the mother in order to learn acceptable social behaviors, which in turn creates the child's identity. The identity of the mother will influence the development of the identity of the child. Since Rosa does not have a relationship with her mother, even from infantile stages, she displays difficulty in the ability to understand how to form an identity; leaving her to lost in her search for establishment of identity. Clara's blatant disregard for her child ultimately leaves Rosa challenged from infancy in developing identity because she does not have a relationship with her mother in which to learn her identity.

In a Caribbean specific study in regards to maternal influence, Leo-Rhynie and Pencle develop the role the mother plays in the formation of the Caribbean female

identity, stating that “all behaviour is learned behaviour, and sex role learning occurs through a process of imitation and modeling of sex-appropriate behaviors observed first in the home, then in the wider environment” (202). Leo-Rhynie and Pencle also relay that in addition to sexual roles, the female child will also mimic her mother for learned social and domestic roles as well. They argue that the family unit is the cornerstone for the female child to learn their identity, and that the mother of the family is the one that will teach the female children how to behave, thus forming their identity. Leo-Rhynie and Pencle do acknowledge that identity formation is linked with gender roles that are assigned in given societies: “within each society, certain norms of gender behaviour and stereotypes of male and female behaviour become established and culturally accepted, and there are sanctions for persons whose behaviours do not conform to the societal norm for their gender group” (203). Therefore, the gender roles and identity for women has been established by the community in which she lives. In terms of the Caribbean woman, “traits such as caring, empathy, and nurturing” are assigned to the female, but are looked at “in a less favourable light by society than the aggressive, dominant traits which are deemed typical of masculine behaviour” (Leo-Rhynie and Pencle, 202). The mothers of the Caribbean are giving their daughters the only identity that they know, which parallels that of how a woman should act and behave according to social ideologies. Guidance for identity formation begins at the home with the mother, establishing a foundation for the female child to build upon and create an identity of her own to an extent. More than likely the child will adhere to the roles that have been assigned to her by society and taught to her from her mother, but may develop personal adaptations to these roles after she has learned the basics. It is this teaching process by the mother that enables her

female child to develop a sense of self and identity. Therefore, the bond between mother and child, especially female child, is the link for the child to develop a sense of identity within Caribbean society.

Rosa, having an absent mother, is only able to mimic familial and social roles from a distance. The lack of interaction with Clara leaves Rosa to try to form opinions that will influence her identity based on glimpses of how women in society act and information that is relayed to her from Mary Christophe. The main focal point of Clara's attention to her children throughout the novel is to her two older daughters. It is revealed through Rosa's perspective how her mother favored her two sisters: "Rosa's mother sent both her sisters to England to find husbands, and when their marriages failed, she found white men for them in Trinidad. But she had not sent Rosa to England; she had not searched for white men in Trinidad for her to marry. She was held behind closed doors" (Nunez 18)<sup>2</sup>. Clara spent a great deal of time and money attending to her other daughters, while leaving Rosa to be tended to by Mary Christophe. Rosa's relationship with her mother was always from a distance. She watched her mother travel and attend to the marital affairs of her sisters, and from this Rosa was able to decipher that marriage is important and that finding a mate will create a union, thus an identity, because she will have someone to share her life with. Due to the fact that Rosa does not have a close bond with her mother, she does not understand why Clara put so much time and energy into the marriages of her sisters. To the outside eye it is clear that Clara is concerned about the well-being of the older daughters, and that a prosperous marriage to a wealthy white man would be advantageous to the family. The mindset that a woman must marry a man to

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<sup>2</sup> Nunez, Elizabeth. *Bruised Hibiscus*. Seattle: Seal Press, 2000. Print. All subsequent references to Nunez in this section will refer to this citation.

take care of her is clearly established in Clara's meddling in the love affairs of her daughters. It is also made very clear that Clara is only interested in the sisters marrying white men; there is no mention of trying to court a black man, which represents that Clara is also interested in preserving the white race and the family name by adhering to the Caribbean social hierarchy, which white Europeans dominate. Rosa, only being able to look at her mother's influence through clouded vision, does not realize that there are multiple layers as to why Clara is fixated on creating prosperous marriages for her sisters. She is only able to interpret that a woman should get married, leaving her blind to the other female identity behaviors that a young adult, Caribbean female should possess. Rosa is disabled in the formation of identity from her infancy, as she is abandoned by her mother, for reasons that are kept secret from her, and must learn an identity without having a maternal bond in order to help develop and exemplify this identity for her.

Clara's disregard for Rosa may be blatant, but there is a reason lurking behind this abandonment. As Rosa is the illegitimate child of Clara's interracial affair, there are very clear reasons as to why Clara is not concerned with trying to marry her daughter to a well-off white man. Clara's worst fear is that if Rosa married a white man, she might have a black child. Clara's fear is exposed when Mary Christophe tells an adult Rosa that she is biracial and that this was the reason why her mother was not concerned with her marital affairs: "She know if you marry a white man, your black blood could show up in your children. Then everybody know what they suspect already. They know what she do and that your daddy not Mr. Appleton" (Nunez 115). This would severely tarnish the Appleton's reputation, and possibly cause the family to lose the power that has been bestowed upon them by their ancestors. The older daughters may be affected by this

secret and not be able to find a husband if Rosa is married before them, so Clara is determined to marry off the older daughters and leave Rosa to find a husband on her own. The fear of Rosa's biracial identity causes Clara to abandon her, which epitomizes Fanon's argument on Caribbean identity and abandonment neurosis. Rosa is the lost Caribbean child whose white mother has turned her back on her, just as European countries turned their backs on the countries they once occupied post-colonization. As much as Rosa may try, she will never be purely white so she will never be completely accepted by her mother because of the implications that race holds in the Caribbean.

Fanon's main argument in developing the Caribbean identity is that the race of the individual impacts their interpretation of self. The rejection of the black race from the white race creates an identity crisis which forms from abandonment neurosis. This abandonment neurosis that Fanon develops implies how the black and biracial descendents of the Caribbean develop a form of neurosis due to the dismissal of their existence (Fanon 75). During colonization the Caribbean was a large part of the slave trade, which brought the first Africans to the island nations. However, after colonization was over and the colonizing country no longer took interest in their colonies, the black and biracial descendents were left with no one to help them. According to Fanon, the black race wants to become part of the white race, to be socially accepted, and therefore creates a hatred and anxiety towards themselves (75). Although Fanon specifically aims his argument toward Martinique culture, the division between races is bountiful across the Caribbean. *Bruised Hibiscus* is set in Trinidad, 1954, an island that is almost a decade from its independences, haunted by the ghosts of colonialism, "and old resentments between the descendents of slaveholders and the descendents of their former

slaves are coming to a head” (Spillers 224). Anxiety and animosity between races is what causes the initial removal of Clara from Rosa’s life. Rosa watches her mother dote on her sisters as a child and cannot fathom the reason as to why she is treated like she is not part of the family. At the root of this behavior is Clara’s animosity towards the black race and the desire to preserve her own reputation. Fanon establishes this detachment from mother and daughter through his perception of how the black man establishes his own identity when in a relationship with a white woman: “he is black; so he is a Negro. There is the conflict. He does not understand his own race, and the whites do not understand him” (64). This is the same reality that Rosa faces in her relationship with her white mother. Clara does not understand her own daughter and is afraid to actually try to have a relationship with her because she is biracial. Even though Clara is the biological mother of Rosa, and one would think that the relationship with her known father would be the root of Rosa’s distress, Clara is the one that shies away from her daughter. The knowledge that Rosa is not white makes Clara believe that the relationship with Rosa is not as important as the one with her two older daughters because a relationship with Rosa could possibly lead to Clara’s undoing.

Due to the detachment to her mother, Rosa seeks to find identity through the only role that was provided through her observations of her mother—marriage. Marriage leads to a sexual identity for Rosa, but this sexual identity turns into the identity that is forced upon her by her Afro-Caribbean husband, Cedric, and his ideas of how a woman should be sexually submissive to her husband. Barry Chevannes discusses this expression of sexuality in his essay, “Gender and Adult Sexuality.” He argues that “the expression of sexuality favours the male over the female,” which in turn exposes that the male in

society is also creating an identity for women through their sexual unions with women. Chevannes argues that in Caribbean communities homosexuality is indicative of a male/male relationship, and in order for young boys to discredit the fears that they might be homosexual they take on sexual relationships at a young age. However, it is looked down upon for women to embrace this same thinking, and the female in Caribbean society is expected to not partake in sexual activities until they have had their rite of passage into womanhood through marriage. Chevannes is presenting the virgin/whore mentality that is placed on Caribbean women, establishing that for a woman to be accepted in society, she must take on the virgin persona. He is also manifesting the double-standard that a man does not have to adhere to these strict sexual guidelines. Rosa displays the ideology that women are to not partake in sexual intercourse as she blatantly states that she is a virgin until she marries Cedric, and that one of the main reasons that she marries Cedric is because she is twenty-eight and ready to have a sexual relationship. The culmination of the first sexual interlude allows Rosa to feel as though she now has a place in society because she now has a relationship with someone that has a mutual interest with her. In accordance with Chevannes' notion that "women are in search of men with whom they share mutual respect, freedom and fulfillment, who will honour obligations" (491), Rosa believes that she has found a mate that will help her find her identity. Rosa only knows this to be true due to the engrained ideologies that are present for women to take in the Caribbean. Clara supports the relationship between Rosa and Cedric, dismissing the fact that he is black, because she will not have to worry that her secret affair with a black man will be exposed by the coloring of Rosa's children. The Appletons are content with the marriage because it will protect the family name: Clara

will not be exposed as an adulteress, Thomas will not be announced as a homosexual, and the older daughters will be able to maintain their well-off marriages. Clara reinforces Rosa's marriage for selfish reasons and does not provide guidance to Rosa that a sexual relationship, even through marriage, does not create an identity for a woman.

In Clara's defense, she may not have known much more about the sexual unions between a man and a woman as she is also a victim of the ideologies that are present in colonial-Trinidadian society. However, without providing guidance for Rosa, Clara has left Rosa to develop her identity through the mimicking of her own interpretations of societal roles. A one-on-one relationship between Rosa and Clara would have afforded Rosa the opportunity to take guidance from her mother and integrate this into her own identity. Instead, Rosa is left to her own devices in order to develop her identity, devices in which she thinks she is mimicking the women in Trinidadian society. However, with Rosa being left behind by her mother, she was never afforded the opportunity to understand that there is more to the female identity than her sexual identity. Rosa understands the overarching sexual expectations that a woman must remain a virgin until marriage, since Clara was obsessed with marrying off her two older daughters, Rosa miscalculated the need for social stability that a marriage affords a woman as the milestone that will enact a woman's sexuality and provide an identity for her that is dictate by a man. The development of Rosa's sexual identity was formed through her witnessing of a rape as a child. The man dominated the girl he was raping and demanded that she beg him for sex. This was something that Rosa took to her own sexual identity with Cedric. Cedric, as form of showing dominance over his wife, would demand that she beg him for sex, and Rosa not knowing that this was a form of domination conceded

to his demands. This is possibly something Rosa would have done even if she had been influenced by her mother, but it cannot be determined if she would have known differently because the only exposure to sexuality was her witnessing of the rape.

Chevannes explains this Caribbean cultural mindset through his study on adult sexuality by exploring gender stereotypes based on sexuality. It is essential for the Caribbean male to show his masculinity so that he is able to gain a stable place in society. This affects the female because she is then dominated by the aggressive male. He uses an anthropological approach of symbols used for the genders: the sun is representative of the male and the moon is representative of the female. Chevannes explains these symbols as, “the sun is regarded as a male principle, a source of strength and power, light and life. It rules the day. The moon, on the other hand, is the female principle, multiple phased and apparently ambiguous. It rules the night” (488). This symbolic analysis of Caribbean outlook towards gender exposes that the male will dominate the female, and the female is left as a sexual figure for men to rest with while they are not ruling the day. This is the mindset that is explored through the relationship that Rosa has with her husband.

Cedric has his own issues with identity, but his are related to the fact that he is black and lives in a society which does not praise the accomplishments of black men the same way white men receive recognition. Cedric is seeking recognition and power; he achieves this through his marriage to Rosa. The dynamic that Cedric, a black man, dominates Rosa, a so-called white woman, overturns the usual dynamic that a white man in the Caribbean will dominate a black woman. Rosa is being subversive to the white male domination in the Caribbean by allowing herself to be dominated by a black man. This, however, is unknowingly accomplished, as Rosa is simply seeking a relationship

with a man to establish a sense of self. With the Appleton family being wealthy and respected, Cedric has helped pave his way to the acknowledgement of his accomplishments that he has dreamt of since he was a young boy. However, this is at the expense of Rosa's identity development. Since Rosa is isolated from her family and unable to build friendships as a child, she seeks acknowledgement and recognition through her marriage to Cedric. Marrying Cedric, however, only forces Rosa into how Cedric views a wife should behave based on the colonial ideologies that he knows. Rosa is to stay at home during the day, while Cedric advances his career as schoolmaster. Cedric rules the day and only acknowledges Rosa's existence when he wants to be satisfied. He demands she cook specific meals for him and please him sexually. This objectification of Rosa leads to her inability to form a sense of self within her marriage, as she is dictated to on how to behave and when to perform duties—she has no choice, or knowledge that she has a choice, on how she should live.

Due to the lack of having a mother present in her life, Rosa is left to attempt developing her own identity based upon the ideologies of traditional Caribbean female roles. Rosa tries to develop a sense of self based off the relationships she has with others. She is that youngest daughter of the Appleton family, and the wife of Cedric DesVignes. The roles that she adopts in these relationships are formed through her observations of how each relationship *should* work, without having any guidance. In the relationship of being the daughter of the Appleton family, Rosa does not have a close relationship with anyone in the family due to the lack of nurturing from Clara. Clara's abandonment of Rosa also leads to Rosa's distance from her sisters. Rosa does not have a solid role within her family because she is discarded and left for the hired help to raise. This leads

to her difficulty in forming relationships and friendships outside of the home. The marriage to Cedric does not allow for Rosa to develop a personal identity either. For Rosa, the marriage is an outlet for her sexual desires, and for Cedric, it is an advantageous relationship in the advancement of his rank in the social hierarchy. Cedric's desire for power is reflected in his relationship with Rosa as he dominates her and is only using her for personal gain. Since familial relationships initially develop the identity of a child, mainly through a bond with the mother for female children, and then through social influences, Clara's locking away of Rosa represses Rosa's true "racial" identity, which leads to Rosa's inability to develop a sense of self. Rosa's self-worth is determined through her relationships with her family and husband, and she does not have a clear role where she is able to have an opinion in either of these settings. The only way for Rosa to function in either setting is to adhere to the role that has been provided for her, without being able to have her own opinions or attitudes towards how she is told to act.

*Bruised Hibiscus* presents the problem of racism between a mother-daughter relationship, exposing that Fanon's abandonment neurosis is not simply theoretical. Race is a defining part of a person's identity due to the social implications that are stereotyped through the color of one's skin. Rosa is not aware of her actual race until she is an adult. Prior to Mary Christophe's confession of Rosa's true heritage, Rosa had no way to know that she was not the white daughter of Thomas and Clara Appleton. It is through Mary Christophe's confession, after Rosa's marriage, that Rosa is able to piece together why her mother abandoned her as a child; unfortunately, this does not help Rosa in the recognition of identity, but confuses her even more. She questions where her real father

is and who she really is because she is not really an Appleton. Even though Thomas allowed Rosa to take his name, there is nothing else that links Rosa to the Appleton family. She did not have a solid relationship with her mother because of her mother's fears that her secret affair would be exposed, which in turn also kept her from having a relationship with her sister. Prior to the illumination of her true heritage, Rosa interpreted her identity through her family name and what people thought of her family. Afterwards, she realized that she did not have a relationship with her family at all. She was very alone in the world. Clara's secret love affair with a black man caused Rosa to be emotionally abandoned by her mother, allowing her only to find an identity through mimicking her mother's actions that she only caught glimpses of from a distance. Essentially, Rosa is unable to self-identify and develop an identity of her own due to isolation from her family and domination from her husband. The restrictions placed on Rosa disable her ability to truly form an identity of her own.

Although Rosa's identity development fails to solidify, she has a foundation because there are maternal influences in her life. The restrictions placed on her identity development are due to the distanced relationship with her mother and the affects of male domination from her husband. Even a distanced relationship between mother and daughter will teach femininity to a female child because she will be able to mimic her mother. The child may not completely understand her actions, but she will make an attempt at developing a sense of female identity by trying to be like her mother. However, when there is no maternal figure in a female child's life, she will be left to find a female identity by understanding that she is not male and interpreting that into her identity. Irigaray believes that all females develop identity through recognition that they

are lacking being male, but influences from other females will allow her to recognize a sense of self within her femaleness. When a child does not have any maternal or female influence in her life, her identity will develop through the demands of the male in society. Her identity development will be even more strained, as she does not have a way to interpret that her difference from the male is not a lack, but merely a difference in which to embrace a separate identity.

### Developing the Female Without a Mother

Nunez's novel, *Prospero's Daughter*, presents how a young girl, Virginia Gardner, develops in a foreign, Caribbean land without a mother. Virginia does not remember her mother, as she died when Virginia was only three years old; leaving Virginia to be raised by her father, Dr. Peter Gardner, without the direct influence of any white females. Gardner plays an active role in Virginia's life; however, this relationship becomes problematic as Gardner forces an identity on Virginia that is not conducive to her own wants and needs. Gardner has certain ideas of how a white-European woman should behave and attempts at creating an identity through ideals for Virginia. While he dictates to Virginia the white-European female identity, Virginia is incapable of establishing this idealized identity due to the lack of white female influences that could demonstrate learned behaviors that should be incorporated into this identity. The problem Virginia will face in her quest for identity development is that her identity will be created for her by a man without a maternal influence to teach femininity. Themes of isolation and domination employed throughout the novel expose how patriarchal influence prohibits the ability for women to develop an identity of their own in a society that is dominated by men and lacks influence by women.

Dr. Gardner was known as Dr. Peter Bidwedder in England. Gardner was a research doctor, influenced by his father becoming paralyzed during war, that was seeking to build mechanical limbs. During his studies he did not form any allegiances with his classmates as it was believed he was "playing God." While practicing medicine in England, Gardner inadvertently killed one of his patients by using experimental medicine on her that had worked on rats in his lab, but killed this rich, high profile patient

within hours of being given the medication. After the death of his patient, it was necessary for him to flee England in hopes of finding a safe haven elsewhere; his brother suggested he move to Trinidad with his daughter, Virginia. Gardner's brother had connections where he would be able to set up for them to move to an island, Chacachacare, a leper colony off the coast of Trinidad until things were able to clear up. This move was necessary for Gardner; he feared imprisonment and did not know what negative repercussions would come from the accidental death of one of his patients. So, Dr. Peter Bidwedder changed his last name to Gardner and moved to the leper colony with his daughter in order to free himself from the crimes he committed in England. This move saved Gardner, but left his daughter to be raised in a new land that she did not quite fit into without the care of a mother to provide guidance for personal identification. The novel utilizes the character, Virginia Gardner, to exemplify the importance of having a mother present in the developing years of a young woman's life, and the additional challenges she will have to overcome while being raised in a foreign land that is not white. It is possible in the Caribbean for white children to live in a white community; however, the island of Chacachacare is isolated from the white community. This alienation from other Europeans hinders Gardner's ability to teach Virginia ideals of whiteness, as she is separated from other white females that would establish learned behaviors for her to adapt into her identity.

In a study that is aimed at defining the Caribbean, Ben Heller exposes how the Caribbean is defined in terms of femaleness in his article, "Landscape, Femininity, and Caribbean Discourse." Heller presents the "linkage of landscape and culture, and the femininity of both" (392), arguing that the identity of the Caribbean is gendered and

influenced by the European ideals that colonized the land. Defining how the Caribbean is characterized, Heller asserts, "A signal characteristic of Caribbean discourse has been the tendency to figure the shaping environment as female, or with qualities such as fluidity and relationality that have often been associated with women, femininity, and the female body in both patriarchal and feminist discourses" (392). Using female discourse in order to define the Caribbean also defines the females within the Caribbean because it brings to the forefront how women are viewed from within the culture. Even though the women may be looked at as beautiful and fertile, just as the land, they are also a space to be conquered. And since the Caribbean is situated in an isolated area, there is no outside influence to expose the dominating characterization of the women and culture. The feminization of the Caribbean occurred through the founding nations bringing their European influence to the culture with a need to dominate. In European colonial culture women were looked at as inferior, the colonizers feminized the land in order to create a sense of dominance for white males. It is this same discourse that is used in order to develop an identity for females in the Caribbean. Since the women are the embodiment of the land, they are taught they are inferior to males and must embrace the identity which is created for them. This methodology of thinking is what enables Gardner to dominate Virginia and create an identity for her.

Gardner is able to construct an identity for Virginia, as he has total control over her life and dictates her education. This is first done through the act of isolation. Moving to a leper colony was not meant to sequester Virginia, but to protect Gardner from the negative repercussions of his actions, which inadvertently creates a perfect scenario in which Gardner is able to have complete control over his daughter without the worry

about external influences. The relationship an individual has with his or her surroundings is a main focal point in psyche development. Lacan is concerned with the psyche development of the child beginning with the relationship to the mother in the symbolic order and moving to the relationship with the father. However, it is Lacan's *Feminine Sexuality* that begins to bridge the gap between the impact society has on the female psyche in addition to paternal impacts. Virginia has a very small community that she interacts with: her father, Ariana, and Carlos—two Afro-Caribbean children that were on the island of Chacachacare when the Gardners arrived. Carlos' mother was also living on the island when the Gardners arrived, but died shortly after due to illness. She was a white woman who may have been able to serve as a white female influence in Virginia's development, but was unable to fill this position or forge a bond with her due to her early death. Everything Virginia learns in terms of identity development is dictated to her from her small community. If we view Virginia's identity development in terms of Lacan's mirror stage, we can assume Virginia was able to recognize she was not one with her mother as an infant since her mother did not die until she was three years old. It is her latter development that is affected by there not being a mother present in her life.

The first obstacle that Virginia must hurdle in her quest for self identification is the simple fact that she is being raised in a single parent household where there is no female figure for her to mimic. The child, according to Lacan, will develop by learned behavior that is exhibited through the mother, but in this instance the mother figure is not present. This leaves a void in Virginia's identity, as she does not have the attachment and relationship with any mother figure in order to enhance her view of her self while she is developing. Lacan asserts that every little girl has demands of her mother: "to dress her,

to make her hurt go away, to take her for a walk, to belong to her, or to her alone, in short all sorts of demands, including at times the demand to leave her alone” (*Feminine Sexuality* 130). Lacan interprets the relationship between mother and daughter as the relationship that will teach a girl how to be female; the father cannot teach the girl child these behaviors as he does not understand them due to his inability to understand a being without the phallus (Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality* 126). Virginia’s identity development does not have maternal influence; therefore, she cannot be taught how to be female. Instead, she is left to develop a sense of femininity by first understanding what it means to be male and then trying to incorporate the opposite into her identity. Gardner can only relay what how he *believes* the identity of a woman should be, which exposes the assertion that the male in society creates the female identity for her. Gardner has a clean slate without any external influence to develop his daughter exactly as he sees fit. This will ensure that Virginia is raised according to how the male ideal is thought of to be a woman. The only other woman living in the household is Ariana, a child herself, that does not exert any power. Gardner keeps the interaction between the two girls to a minimum, since Ariana is black, he believes that she should tend to Virginia and not be her playmate. Gardner believes that Ariana’s racial identification would impact Virginia’s development, and he is adamant about creating a “proper” European lady. Ariana’s influence would only lead to Virginia taking on unappealing traits of Afro-Caribbeans, according to Gardner.

The lack of a maternal figure forces Virginia to learn how to be a woman by interpreting how her father construes how women should behave. Therefore, Virginia must develop her identity through her vision of her father’s ideal without guidance from

any woman. This creates two forces that are working against Virginia's ability to develop an identity of her own. First, she does not have a mother to have a relationship with that will teach her what it means to be a female and expose female behavioral characteristics for Virginia to mimic and mold into her own identity. The second is that she is told how to be a woman by a man so Virginia is unable to understand why there must be differences between her and her father. Irigaray focuses on the teachings of femaleness through language that demonstrates how a female understands her gender by first recognizing that she is not male. These are behaviors that are verbally taught to females by society but also by behaviors demonstrated by other females. The younger females will learn by example on how to make an identity by being the other to the male as exposed by their female role models. The learned behaviors that essentially make up one's identity are excluded from Virginia's development because there are no strong females for her to identify with, leaving her with ideologies that have been forced on her, without a clear understanding of why she must behave in certain ways. This makes Virginia's development of a personal identity halt because she has cultural influences being presented to her by her father, who she views as a loving role model that would not cause her harm, but is in fact attempting to instill a sense of inferiority in Virginia based upon the European-colonial ideologies that influenced Gardner's upbringing. There are certain roles and characteristics that Virginia may have taken on that would have adhered to female inferiority in 1950's Trinidad, but without a maternal influence in her upbringing, Virginia cannot adopt and adapt an identity of her own that would be conducive to her personal needs and potentially move her forward from male oppression.

Gardner implements the ideology that women are either virgins or whores in his upbringing of Virginia. Virginia is raised to be a virgin, like her mother was when she married Gardner. This was the virtue that Gardner admired most about his wife, and wanted to make sure that his daughter would be virtuous as well. Even Virginia's name reflects the importance of a woman's chastity to Gardner. It is easy for Gardner to make sure that his daughter is pure because she is isolated from male influence and curiosity since there is only one other boy that is present in her life, Carlos. Gardner is able to keep a careful watch on the relationship that his daughter has with Carlos, and when he sees that temptation might be heading towards his daughter, he hinders their interaction by accusing Carlos of rape. Although Gardner's intentions to keep his daughter pure were not incited from negative wishes, the virtue of virginity was forced upon Virginia since she was not allowed to interact with any boys her age. Virginia does not have the choice to be a virgin, but to accept that she is one because she has no other options. Virginia may very well have kept her chastity from the morals that were instilled in her from her father if she interacted with boys, but the fact remains that she was forced into this role of purity without any other options. It is simply another part of her identity that her father has created for her.

Gardner maintains governance over Virginia through domination and control. The act of isolating his daughter is only one way in which he is able to control his daughter, but he also instills a sense of fear in her through molestation. The physical and sexual violence that is forced upon Virginia by her father not only forces her into submission, but also teaches her that this is a form of violence that happens within families. In order to maintain Virginia's "purity", Gardner does not vaginally rape his

daughter, but forces her to perform oral sex. This form of rape creates a silencing within Virginia—literally and metaphorically. Paula Morgan and Valerie Youssef approach the act of rape as “a system of gender and power relations”, stating that “beyond a doubt, sexuality is a particularly appropriate slate on which to signify power relations” (171). With men, generally, being the rapist and women the raped, the power is given to men because they are able to dominate women and force unwanted sexual relations upon them. This forces women into submission as they are silenced due to the act: “For the victim, the trauma of rape is so severe that she [...] is often constrained to relive the horror in a struggle to grasp it and bring it into the realm of articulation and representation” (Morgan and Youssef 170). The molestation that Gardner forces upon Virginia silences her, as she does not speak about the rapes to anyone. Her voice has been taken from her; therefore, taking part of her identity away from her as well. Virginia’s identity formation is affected by Gardner’s dominance because he not only teaches her how he believes a woman should think and act, but also takes her body from her. “The body shelters, masks, reflects, expresses, shields the body from the gaze of the other” (Morgan and Youssef 171), and through molestation Gardner has taken the only sense of security and individuality that Virginia could have possessed by invading her body. After being molested, Virginia’s ability to “permit or deny access” to her own body is taken from her (Morgan and Youssef 171). Virginia recognizes this loss of self when reflecting on the rape:

I lose part of myself when I glimpse back to that first time when Father violated me, the self I need to believe is lovable, is good, is *pure*. The self I need to believe was *not soiled*, was not *defiled*. The self I fantasize has a girlhood like

the girlhood of those innocent girls, those pretty women, in the stories I read.

This fantasy keeps me steady; it holds me back from tumbling down the tunnel of despair from which I fear I may never return (Nunez 252, my emphasis)<sup>3</sup>.

Virginia self-admits to living in a fantasy world because of the sexual violence that was forced on her by her father. She is taught by her father that women are either virgins or whores, and she is neither. She is technically not a virgin, but she is not a whore either because her loss of purity is not by choice. This causes Virginia to realize that her identity falls somewhere in between, and hinders her ability to recognize where she falls in this classification that is placed upon women.

The hybridity of Virginia's sexual identity links into the theme of hybridity that is used to develop Caribbean identity. Virginia has been moved to the Caribbean as a child, and does not remember what life was like in England. She is being raised by a father that spent his life in England, and therefore teaches her how to be an English woman. Even though Virginia is native to England, she never had the exposure to the culture, which moves her to the same category as native Caribbeans in the sense that she must learn to be European from the thoughts and ideals of others that have brought this culture to the island. Virginia is an Other—she is not Caribbean nor is she British, she falls somewhere in between: “She was not born here, but she had known only [Chacachacare]. The landscape, the sun, the sea had shaped her” (Nunez 191). Virginia's identity is that of the Caribbean landscape: beautiful, lush, innocent, and susceptible to European influence and domination. Virginia knows she is not like her father because she was not raised in England, and also is aware, from her father's influence, that she is not like Ariana and

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<sup>3</sup> Nunez, Elizabeth. *Prospero's Daughter*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2006. Print. All subsequent references to Nunez in this section will refer to this citation.

Carlos because of their skin color. However, the lack of interaction with a larger community prohibits Virginia from understanding identity development through racial identification; although, this type of identification is expected of her from Gardner. Isolation has shielded Virginia from racial identification and racism, even though it is presented to her from her father.

Fanon recognizes the affect that racism has in the development of identity within both the black and white races. Both races are alienated due to the restrictions and expectations that are socially placed on them due to the color of their skin. Fanon believes that “The Negro [is] enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation” (60). Although Fanon’s main argument is the impact this alienation has on the black race, he briefly acknowledges that the white race is also affected by the lines that are drawn in the Caribbean community based on skin color. The white race has to alienate itself through superiority in order to maintain dominance over the community. Even though the white community is taking the authoritative role in this situation, they are also hindering their ability to prosper and move past stereotypes that are placed on them. Expectations of prosperity, wealth, and class are placed upon the white men in the Caribbean. As such, a white woman is expected to marry a man of this stature. The disconnect between the expectations of white women in the Caribbean and *Prospero’s Daughter* is that Virginia is not exposed to the influence of Caribbean society, but merely the influence of her European father. Even though Virginia forms a relationship with Carlos, there is not much exposure to Caribbean culture as a whole because Carlos is isolated on the island as well. His mother was an outcast white woman (because she had a black child), and

Carlos was never really brought into the Caribbean culture. The bond these two develop is based upon Carlos' ability to further Virginia's education. Gardner attempts to diffuse this relationship between the children because he wants to preserve Virginia's pureness and teach her that she is "better" than Carlos because her race grants her power. Virginia does not understand the implications of her race because she is alienated from society. Growing up in isolation with only the influence of her father hinders her ability from being influenced by others in society, and causes confusion because she does not understand the social implications of her race. This causes an identity crisis within her because she does not recognize that her white skin implies that she is superior to Ariana and Carlos, which is why she is treated better by Gardner, not simply the fact that she is his daughter. The literal alienation from the world prohibits Virginia from fully understanding the expectations that are placed on her by her father.

Even though Virginia is isolated from the world outside of Chacachacare, she is exposed to racism within her home. Gardner treats Ariana and Carlos very differently than he treats her, but Virginia does not exactly know why. Ariana is kept in the home to cook, clean, and tend to other "womanly" duties, while Carlos is brought out to the garden to be taught how to cultivate the land and perform other manual labor tasks. Virginia, however, is left to be tended to by Ariana, but not to perform the "womanly" duties that Ariana does. Gardner makes it very clear that due to their skin color, Ariana and Carlos must work, while Virginia is tended to by the workers in the home. Gardner is the ideal character to utilize when representing how colonialism infected the Caribbean. He believes that "before the arrival of his people [Afro-Caribbeans] were nothing—wild, savage creatures who had accomplished nothing, achieved nothing, had

made not one iota of contribution to the advancement of human civilization” (Nunez 168). Gardner is a white male from England that escaped his past and fled to the Caribbean in order to start a new life. He dominates his new home and takes it as his own without a care for the current inhabitants. Gardner is the colonial mindset and European civilization personified, and according to Fanon, “European civilization and its best representatives are responsible for colonial racism” (90). It is through Gardner’s ability to manipulate and conquer, that he is able to hold control over his daughter’s identity. She has no way of knowing that what her father is doing is necessarily wrong, or that he is instilling racism in a secluded island, but thinks that he has her best interest at heart. Even after Gardner has violated Virginia and abused the other children in the home, she questions whether he is motivated by evil: “I clung to his flamboyant declaration of paternal love, hoping to chase away the dark shadows drifting between us. Would a father who so loved his daughter, who lived for her, given up friends, comfort, England, all for her, do anything to harm her” (Nunez 245)? Being isolated from large scale racism enables Virginia to realize there is an inconsistency to how Gardner views others, but she does not have the capacity to understand the identification and stereotypes that are related to one’s race.

By not clearly understanding the instilled racism in Gardner, Virginia questions why he feels that skin color is significant to the identity of a person. Even though there is a clear distinction between how Ariana and Carlos are treated as compared to Virginia, Virginia relates herself to the two other children in the household. Virginia is white, but her skin has been tanned by the Caribbean sun, which makes her look at her own skin as being brown just as Ariana and Carlos’. Ariana and Carlos recognize the difference of

their skin color to Virginia's, and understand the implications that the color of her skin holds for her:

The European colonist had set the rules. They had discovered that they could use gradations in skin color to replicate a class system that would give them ranking impossible for them to attain in their own countries. Here, they realized, color, not bloodlines, could make a lord. White skin alone was all the credential they needed for entry into the upper class. The rest followed (Nunez 160).

Gardner was completely aware of the implications of being born with white skin as well. He was a fugitive in England, but in the Caribbean he was a notable doctor that received respect from the outside community. Although the color lines were clear to the other children and Gardner, Virginia was not able to comprehend why she was treated differently than the other children. Virginia assumed it was due to the fact that she was her father's only child and that he was allowing the other children to live in the household with him. In fact, Gardner was instilling these outside ideologies on the secluded island because he was the only adult that could influence these children: "A child does not think less of another child because the color of that child's skin is different from hers. Adults are the ones who plant the disease; adults are the ones who nurture it" (Nunez 256). Just as Gardner nurtured his botanical gardens, he also nurtured the ideology that white skin is "better" than black skin. This is an idea that he holds as truth and infects the leper colony with racism.

Race is a socially constructed phenomenon that is utilized in order to overpower a group of people. In order to achieve domination, the superior race must instill stereotypes that eventually become truth in society in order to achieve and maintain their

power. Race then denotes specific traits because of the stereotypes that have been placed on people and begins to factor into the development of identity. When one is raised in isolation from society at large, he or she is unable to self-identify through race, which becomes problematic when everyone they associate with recognizes the power and impact that race plays on the individual and social identity. Since Virginia is not able to understand why her skin color made her different than her playmates, the matter of race, which is a defining characteristic in terms of Caribbean identity, confuses her. Gardner instills a hierarchy in his household; Virginia relays this when stating: “My place, he said, was just below his place and above the place where he had put Carlos and Ariana” (Nunez 243). The social order implemented in the household in Chacachacare by Gardner is the same order instilled in the social hierarchy of the Caribbean: white male, white female, black male, black female. It is also instilled that a white female should not enter into a courtship with a black male. When Gardner realized there were romantic feelings developing between Virginia and Carlos he immediately hindered their ability to communicate. Virginia did “not think Father allowed himself to imagine that [she] could have feelings for Carlos, yet something instinctual in him that he could not or would not articulate made him decide that night to block my view” of Carlos from the dinner table (Nunez 242). The fact that Virginia views this separation from communicating with Carlos as something instinctual within Gardner implicates that Virginia does not fully grasp the racial ideologies that Gardner is presenting to her. She understands that her father recognizes that they are above Ariana and Carlos, but the social implications of race are not completely engrained in her method of thinking. The isolation from social interaction with people outside of her household and the only strong influence in her life

being her father's, hinders Virginia from being able to form opinions of her own. It is clearly played out in the text that racial ideologies are being presented to Virginia, she acknowledges that she understands she is considered above Ariana and Carlos, but does not understand why these stereotypes hold true within her household. She knows that it is because of the color of their skin that Ariana and Carlos are looked at as below hers, but Virginia relates the coloring of her skin to being similar to her playmates.

The inability to recognize her own race causes identity confusion within Virginia. She does not believe that she was white. In a discussion with Gardner, Virginia is told that she is better than Ariana and Carlos because she is white, but this only confuses her further because of her alienation from society. Virginia literally interprets the meaning of white: "He had shown me white. Snow was white; flour was white. 'No Father,' I said. I stretched out my arm. I wanted to prove to him that I had learned my colors. 'This is not white'" (Nunez 234). As much as Gardner tried to explain the difference between white and black, even if tanned by the sun, Virginia does not comprehend the difference between skin color and the underlying implications of what these indicate to the individual in Caribbean society. The fact that Virginia is not able to understand racism is not what hinders her ability to recognize a sense of self, but the fact that race is such a major part of Caribbean development of self and she is not able to recognize the difference between skin colors. Virginia views the world with color-blindness, thinking that everyone is equal regardless of their skin color. It is this noble trait that causes her to not understand how she is perceived by others and develop a strong sense of identity. She is not a white woman that is striving for equality between races in the Caribbean, but a woman that does not recognize herself in the community. One must recognize who

they are within society before they can move for a change in society, and Virginia does not have the ability to recognize her standing due to the fact that she was raised in isolation.

*Prospero's Daughter* illuminates the need for maternal or female guidance in the development of female identity. Virginia's identity is solely dictated to her by her father—forcing patriarchal and racist ideals into Virginia's development. Although in 1950's Trinidad Virginia would have been presented with a male dominated world that also presented social standards of race, she does not have the ability to take on any identity of her own. Virginia is trapped by the domination of her father, and forced to take on the identity he creates for her because she does not have any maternal or female influence to demonstrate femininity to her. The fact that Virginia does not take on a racist identity is not the key to her inability to develop an identity; it exposes the need for social interaction. Gardner has an ideal set on how a white female should act and behave, and he believes this is the identity of a female. Virginia is taught behaviors, but without having a social setting to incorporate these to, her identity remains confused. Lacan's "law of the father" exhibits that the father will enforce acceptable behaviors, but it is the mother that will exemplify how to put the behaviors into practice. The female child will then mimic the mother and adapt a way of incorporating these behaviors into her own identity. Since Virginia does not have a female influence in her life, she is unable to mirror the actions of how a female. Her isolation also affects her ability to develop an identity because her social interaction is limited and she is unable to learn from others in society. Virginia's identity fails to cohesively develop because her development is confused. She has ideals dictated to her, but no female to teach her how to be female, or

social interaction to put the ideals she has learned into practice. Virginia's identity remains fractured as she is unable to connect lessons taught by her father (even if she chose to not agree with them) to the practice of associating with others.

## Conclusion

The role of the mother is critical to the development of the female in society. Lacan asserts that the mother plays an essential role by first being the main source of comfort and guidance for the child, and then allowing for the child to realize that he or she is not one with the mother. Even after this initial detachment from the mother, the female child will still seek out her mother for identity development because she is the figure that will solidify acceptable social behaviors. These will be learned behaviors that are dictated by that father, or male in society, and reinforced by behaviors the mother presents in her daily actions. This breakdown of female identity development shows that identity is compiled by a set of learned behaviors that are taught by the mother through example.

Historical approaches to female identity development are that she develops out of a lack. The lack that she does not have a phallus, and the way society has verbalized what it means to be female by comparing how she is not male. Language plays an integral role in the development of the female psyche as on overall whole because it is the vehicle which allows society to instill her inferiority. Irigaray aids in the notion that the female must overcome her lacks in order to understand her femininity and build an identity with it. The only way for a female to understand her femininity is through observing other females actions in order to incorporate learned social behaviors into her identity. Society, which is dictated by the male, has a set of standards and expectations of the female role already laid out for her. The female must be able to embrace the lack of inferior demeanor as she does not have the phallus, and incorporate set expectations, that often include double standards, in order to create an identity. She must first embrace

that she is the Other in society, and then create an identity for herself through the demands enforced by social ideology.

Transferring the development of female identity to the Caribbean setting affords a second notion of Otherness. Afro-Caribbean identity as an overall whole develops through a lack because of the racial hierarchy that is built in the Caribbean. The Afro-Caribbean female must overcome her race and gender. White Caribbean females will have to overcome their Otherness of being female for their identity development. In order to overcome these barriers that are created for these females in Caribbean society, strong female influence is necessary. The problem for Caribbean women is that their identity has been created for them. Fanon plays a large role of the creation of the Caribbean female's identity through his text. The interpretation of the Caribbean female, by Fanon, leaves an identity of a woman that is lustful and only strives to achieve a higher social ranking by disowning her race and pursuing the opportunity for whiteness by chasing after white men. This generalization creates a loss of identity for Caribbean women, as they are stereotyped by their own society. Although some women in the Caribbean may embody these traits, not all women do. The dictation of female identity by a male creates another problem as well. This continues on the sense of colonization, even after the colonizing countries have left the islands. Lingering ideologies present a persona of how Afro-Caribbeans view themselves and each other, and stereotypes forge forward.

Caribbean female authoresses have the task of factual female representation in their works. The authoress can write from the female perspective and challenge stereotypes that have been placed on females. This allows a platform in which women

can begin to make a voice for themselves in a region that continues to be dictated by the male, and present the opportunity for empowerment of females in the society. The creation of role models, even if fictional, allows for a community of women to embrace their heritage and adapt historical stereotypes into new methods of power. Nunez accomplishes this in her fictional writings, as she presents realistic females facing problems of identification, which the Caribbean female can relate to. Each of the works explored in this text offer a female Caribbean child that is searching for an identity, but has specific obstacles to overcome. The mother, or lack of, in each of the works presents a connection to the need for female authority in order to establish an identity within female children. Nunez does not displace current ideologies, or incorporate ideologies from other countries, but stays true to form of the time period in which she is writing and addressing. She reinforces the need for female empowerment, and finds relationships within family units to explore this need. There are specific themes addressed in each of the novels—isolation, domination, and mimicking—that coincide with the developmental struggles females in the Caribbean, specifically Trinidad for her writings, will encounter. Although she does not offer a solution to the problem of social influence, she explores how female influence will cultivate a stronger, more self-identified female future.

Nunez's works present different scenarios in the upbringing of a female child in the Caribbean. Each work has its own approach to how the specific familial situation will forward the development of female identity. In order to change the way women in the Caribbean are viewed, it must first start in the home. Caribbean mothers have the task to teach their daughters that they can embrace an identity that is presented to them and mold it to a more suitable persona. This will not facilitate a complete change in the female

identity or perception immediately from society as an overall whole, but the identity is capable of developing and changing through generations. Power is attainable for a female.

The stability of strong female figures in a female child's upbringing enables a sense of empowerment, which will in turn reflect upon a positive advancement of her psyche development. All people are subject to the societal rules which govern the community they live in, but change is possible. The problem for females in the Caribbean is that their identity has been created for them through patriarchal influences of colonization. The racial and gender stereotypes that have become truth in the Caribbean, hinder the ability for the female to justify a sense of power and purpose in her life. As reflected in the works of Nunez, the Caribbean authoress must now create a dialogue in which the female can discover the roots of her inferiority, and justify that she is entitled to a different identity. She can build an identity which she creates for herself. Since the Caribbean woman is hindered in her ability to project a powerful standpoint, the female authoress needs to become the mother of the Caribbean to show a new way of life for the women to follow. The first task of the literature is to relay the problem, and then to open avenues for a solution. The solution is to empower the female, and show there are possibilities for taking on a new identity. To create female role models which enable the ability to harness the identity of the female and pass it on to future generations is an undertaking for Caribbean authoresses. This is a task that will not happen overnight, but will be moved forward with the progression of education and reflection of the female in society.

The literature produced from Caribbean authoresses acts as a mirror to the region. It presents the problems of domination through isolation that have plagued the Caribbean female for centuries, and establishes an identity that Caribbean women can observe and adapt, in order to create a new-found, stronger identity. With literature acting as a symbolic mirror of the Caribbean life and family unit, the Caribbean female will be able to view the reflection of her life and see what she is willing to accept into her own identity. Literature becomes the vehicle that cements Lacan's mirror stage into a tangible source, and provides guidance for women that would not have had a solid foundation to build off of. Domination and control from patriarchal colonial society has crippled the Caribbean female's ability to adapt an identity which is created by the female in order to represent her femininity in a positive light. However, the literature being presented by the Caribbean authoress allows for the female to view the problem at hand, detach from it, mimic learned behaviors from powerful and influential women, and successfully break free from the identity image the Caribbean motherland has created for her.

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