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Topographies of Time: The Spatiohistorical Imagination in Caribbean Narrative

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TOPOGRAPHIES OF TIME:

THE SPATIOHISTORICAL IMAGINATION IN CARIBBEAN NARRATIVE

Robert William Decker

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Abstract

Topographies of Time: The Spatiohistorical Imagination in Caribbean Narrative addresses the inscription of the concepts of space and time in historical narratives of the francophone Caribbean. Spatiotemporal thought plays a fundamental role in the politics, aesthetics, and epistemological premises of Caribbean letters and manifests in the latent tension between *universality* and *particularity*, concepts that motivate and orient this literature from before the rise of Negritude in the 1930s up to the present day. Close attention to this conceptual history demonstrates that the dominant understanding of Antillean literary history in the twentieth century, which can be summarized as a shift from the anticolonial concept of Negritude to that of the postcolonial concept of *créolité,* obfuscates a more intricate and dynamic history.

Part one, "The Caribbean Stage of Universal History," examines the historical narratives of two Caribbean historians, C. L. R. James and Léonard Sainville. These authors work within a model of universal history to position the Caribbean as the central stage on which a globalizing modernity develops. In part two, "Emplacing History: from the Discontinuities of Time to the Poetics of Place," I consider two novels by Édouard Glissant and Vincent Placoly that exemplify the transition, in the 1960s through the 1990s, towards a theoretical and narratological engagement with the concept of particularity. They turn away from the universalizing rhetoric of Pan-Africanism and look toward the geographic and cultural specificity of their native Martinique. The final part, "Antilleans Abroad: The Caribbean Author in a Postcolonial World," offers a reading of two Haitian authors, Edwidge Danticat and Dany Laferrière. In addition to negotiating the perils and problematics of migration itself, Laferrière and Danticat must contend with the expectations of the transnational and postcolonial literary marketplace, one which exerts

specific pressures on the writers it encompasses. This focus on individual experience (including that of the transnational author) results in a return to the linear narratival forms of the first phase of universality. This dissertation challenges the boundaries between theoretical and historicist approaches to literature and proposes an alternative to the common dualistic framework in francophone studies between the colonial and postcolonial.

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Introduction

Literary Geographies, Critical Histories

Topographies of Time: The Spatiohistorical Imagination in Caribbean Narrative addresses the inscription of the concepts of space and time in popular, academic, and literary historical narratives of the francophone Caribbean. I argue that spatiotemporal thought plays a fundamental role in the politics, aesthetics, and epistemological premises of Caribbean letters and that it manifests in the latent tension between *universality* and *particularity*, concepts that motivate and orient this literature from before the rise of Negritude up to the present day. Close attention to this conceptual history demonstrates that the dominant understanding of Antillean literary history in the twentieth century, which can be summarized as a shift from the anticolonial concept of Negritude to that of the postcolonial concept of *créolité,* obfuscates a more intricate and dynamic history.[1] Specifically, recognition of a particularist interlude, characterized by a textual insistence on local geographies and the discontinuities of time, disrupts a literary-historical narrative of progression that demarcates the boundary of the anti- and postcolonial based on a criterion of increasing conceptual complexity.[2] In its place, I propose a geopoetic

[1] The periodization proposed by Régis Antoine in *La Littérature franco-antillaise: Haïti, Guadeloupe, et Martinique* (1992) typifies this understanding. After devoting three chapters to Césaire and Negritude, Antoine leaves off his initially diachronic approach, instead presenting three thematic chapters before finishing with a short chapter on what he calls "La Modernité littéraire en Guadeloupe et Martinique (1980-1992). This occultation of over two decades of literary production is extreme; more commonly, the period is summarized as that of *antillanité*, itself seen as an immature form of the more robust concept of *créolité* or *créolisation*.

[2] Briefly, this "criterion of complexity," frequently invoked by postcolonial critics, holds that anticolonial texts, despite their apparent hostility towards colonial regimes, nonetheless retain the binary mode of cultural differentiation between the colonizer and the colonized that underpinned colonial discourse. Much of postcolonial criticism then consists in demonstrating how these binaries are disrupted by third terms, how the clashes of "traditional" and "modern" cultures result in the emergence of hybrid identities incompatible with the conceptually simplistic cultural models of both colonial and anticolonial thought. Here, my aim is not to draw attention to the troubling implications of a predominantly Western school of thought positing the inherent

history that demonstrates the existence of three major movements in Francophone Caribbean letters, defined less by specific ranges of dates than by constellations of ideas concerning the interrelation of space, history, literature, and politics: first, an initial anticolonial phase in which Antillean writers sought to inscribe Caribbean histories within the geographies of world-historical revolution; second, a reactionary phase in which spatiohistorical thought turned away from global concerns and worked to develop a stronger sense of Antillean particularity; and finally, the contemporary moment, properly "postcolonial," but defined less by the ways writers reengage with the broader world through a novelistic exploration of the themes of transnationalism and diaspora than by the necessity of contending with the universalizing aesthetic and marketing priorities of postcolonial textual practices.

The purpose of *Topographies of Time* will be to build the case for a different methodological approach to the study Caribbean letters and this reconceptualization of Francophone Caribbean literary history. In this study I make two far-reaching and interrelated claims. The first is for the acknowledgement and study of the particularist interlude in Caribbean thought, not as an immature stage in the development of a more postcolonial (and thus theoretically-robust) conception of Caribbean time-space, but as well-developed alternative; that between the anticolonialism of negritude and the postcolonialism of contemporary transnational or diasporic literatures, there exists a middle period during which writers reject the universalizing, Marxist rhetoric of anticolonialism and insist on the specificity, and to some extent, the unknowability of the local. Furthermore, I argue their inscription of space-time, and specifically their insistence on how the particular histories and geographies of the Caribbean

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simplicity of intellectual frameworks developed by radical anticolonial intellectuals, but to indicate that the assimilation any sufficiently complex thought into postcolonialism constitutes a form of appropriation, which, in many cases, distorts and homogenizes that thought. This argument will find fuller expression in the preface to part two.

resulted in specific and ungeneralizable cultural formations, mark their thought as incommensurate with the universalizing theoretical models proposed in postcolonial theory. The second of my claims addresses the relation of explicitly spatial reading practices and the "discursive" and "real" spaces they address. I argue that the perceived distinction between these two categories, particularly in the context of the Caribbean past, constitutes an ideological borrowing from the debates between traditional Marxist and culturalist approaches to postcolonial studies and ultimately translates into an inoperable subject-object distinction that should be superseded.[3] The perspective offered by spatial and historical analysis provides an alternative to both the dominant culturalist paradigm and its Marxist counterpoint through which scholarship in recent decades has considered Caribbean literary history. By refocusing critical attention from the question of identity and cultural formation to those of space and time, *Topographies of Time* offers new approaches to Caribbean letters, and new conclusions.

Studies of both Caribbean history and geography share a common preoccupation with fragmentation, but too often remain within the boundaries of their domains. In what follows, I address the interrelation of spatial and historical imagination that inform Antillean fiction from the anticolonial period to the contemporary postcolonial era. I concur with Mary Gallagher, who, in *Soundings in French Caribbean Writing 1950-2000* (2002), writes of the necessity of thinking

[3] In the penultimate section of this introduction, I address the uncritical tendency to view space through an idealist paradigm in which tangible spaces, perceived in the plenitude of their materiality, are thought to constitute a more "real" object of study than discursively-constructed notions such as the communal, national, or cultural spaces. Here, I argue that this false dichotomy may reflect a longstanding cleavage between critics who defend the theoretical turn towards the study of culture and discourse and those who insist that the properly political aims of postcolonial studies should remain focused on the material and economic practices that maintain the continued subservience of the post-colonial world (Hallward xix; cf. Bhabha 33. I discuss Hallward and Bhabha's positions in the prefaces to parts two and three, respectively). Turning toward the fundamentally imbricated concepts of space and time offers, in my view, a way forward that obviates the problem of determining the primacy of either the material or the discursive.

through the historical and spatial problems of the Caribbean in tandem: "there is no doubt that the Caribbean situation lends itself exceptionally well to thinking that refers to time and space … It is impossible to imagine the Caribbean past in non-spatial terms … It is a past which is, if not obliterated, then doubly dislocated because of its supplementary geographical inaccessibility" (59). This will not be the first work of criticism to address the interrelation of concepts of space and history in Caribbean literature. This interpretative approach has been adopted and explored by a growing number of scholars such as J. Michael Dash, Mary Gallagher, Paul B. Miller and Françoise Simasotchi-Bronès, among others, who frequently focus on the historical novels of, for example Alejo Carpentier, Patrick Chamoiseau, Édouard Glissant, and Marie Chauvet.[4] These novelists' engagement with the historical past, which overwhelmingly occurs through an exploration of the lived spaces of the archipelago, seems to have reached its apex in the 1980s with the publication of Glissant's *Discours antillais* (1981) and Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant's *Eloge de la Créolité* (1986), which both offered novel perspectives on how the particular histories of the Caribbean lead to unique forms of cultural formation. Certainly, this period, coeval with the "spatial turn" in Western critical theory, represents a particularly intense moment of intellectual and artistic production. However, from the macro-perspective that this dissertation takes, it becomes clear that the spatiotemporal preoccupation of Caribbean literature in French can by no means be limited to this now-historical moment, but instead pervades all periods of its development from Negritude up to the works of contemporary authors such as Edwidge Danticat or Dany Laferrière.

[4] Dash, Michael J. *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context.* University of Virginia Press, 1998; Gallagher, Mary, *Soundings in French Caribbean Writing 1950-2000: The Shock of Time and Space*. Oxford University Press, 2002; Miller, Paul B. *Elusive Origins: The Enlightenment in the Modern Caribbean Historical Imagination*. University of Virginia Press, 2010; Simasotchi-Bronès, Françoise. *Le Roman antillais, personnages, espace et histoire: Fils du chaos*. Paris: Harmattan, 2004.

I argue that the history of Francophone Caribbean literature, considered from a spatiotemporal perspective, displays a non-linear evolution that oscillates between a set of conceptual poles: *particularity* and *universality*. Although different authors and texts work towards either of these two poles, all of them deal with the problem of memorializing or historicizing origins by turning to seemingly more concrete notions of geography and space. One of the most salient difference that emerges between these two approaches concerns the question of narrative form: as I will show, an author's orientation toward either universality or locality corresponds with formal aspects of their work, such as perspective, focalization linearity, and emplotment. I do not propose an airtight division between these two approaches: individual authors may explore both over the course of their careers. Nor do I posit the superiority of one over the other. Rather I identify them as opposing-yet-overlapping approaches to the problems of representing space and history in Caribbean fiction, and particularly, the confronting the problem of origins that lies at the heart of the Caribbean spatiotemporal paradox.

By particularity (or locality), I designate the project of creating a sense of geographically-situated culture, independent from if influenced by, the plurality of and diversity of that culture's origins.[5] In theoretical works, this approach, linked to concepts such as *Antillanité* and *Créolité*, emphasizes the specificity of Caribbean time-space and focuses on how its position results in a unique developmental trajectory at the same time that it valorizes elements of Caribbean culture specific to the archipelago, such as cultural syncretism, linguistic creolization, and continental interchange.[6] Novels that align with this vision of space often restrict their geographic scope to

[5] A more expansive meditation on the nature of spatiohistorical particularity and its distinction from simplistic notions of ethnic or racial nationalism can be found in the preface to part two.
[6] Antonio Benitez-Rojo writes, in *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (1989) that "the culture of the Caribbean, at least in its most distinctive aspect, is not terrestrial but aquatic, a sinuous culture where time unfolds irregularly and resists being captured by the cycles of clock and calendar. The Caribbean is the natural and in dispensable realm of

specific islands. Formally, these texts reject linear emplotment and instead present discontinuous, fractured stories related by multiple or undifferentiated narrators. These narratives largely focus on the problems of social formation through an interrogation of spatial history beginning with the arrival of African and European peoples. In so doing, they often concern themselves less with the stories of their characters as individuals than with representing communities and societies.[7] Although geographically-distant sources of culture are recognized, these novels present them as inaccessible, illusory, or imagined. In this approach, the problem of origins takes a distinctly spatial character, or better put, origins are posed as a form of globality absent from the place of writing.

In contrast, my concept of universality refers to the centuries-long engagements of Caribbean writers with global intellectual and creative movements, for example, Enlightenment ideals of universal rights, Marxist internationalism, Pan-Africanism, or postcolonial studies.[8] Beginning with the black Jacobinism of Toussaint Louverture, progressing through Negritude's engagement with Pan-Africanism, and leading to contemporary transnationalism, this approach explores both the Relation (in the Glissantian sense of the word) of Caribbean cultures with broader intellectual and creative world and (like the locality-focused approach) the disconnection of the authors and their cultures from their point of origin. Novels of this type frequently recount stories of emigration and diaspora or explicitly relate Caribbean history to global intellectual

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marine currents, of waves, of folds and double-folds, of fluidity and sinuosity. It is, in the final analysis, a culture of the meta-archipelago: a chaos that returns, a detour without a purpose, a continual flow of paradoxes" (11) This distinctively poetic characterization of Caribbean culture not only insists on its uniqueness but also stresses its resistance to notions of linear time, an idea whose currency was of particularly high value during the period I associate with particularism.

[7] That said, certain writers, and in particular Chamoiseau, devote particular attention to the role of the intradiegetic narrator, the *conteur* or *marqueur de paroles*, a move that has been understood to reflect their conviction that Antillean culture is primarily oral as opposed to written as well as dissatisfaction with more conventional extradiegetic narrative frames.

[8] For a more sustained discussion of the term "universalism" and its history, see the preface to part one.

movements. These narratives tend to be far more invested in relating the stories of their characters as individuals who often struggle to come to terms with the broader societies in which they live and often focus on the process of individuation and identity formation. In contrast with particularist narratives, the plots of these texts progress in a more linear fashion, presenting the lives of the characters or historical figures as they live and feature more frequent instances of traditional first- and third-person narrative perspectives. This approach poses the problem of origins in terms of historical rupture, that is, history and memory come to represent a desire to reconnect with sense of locality absent from the moment of the composition.

As I have already suggested, the starting point of this particular literary history lie in a reconsideration of the legacy of anticolonialist though and the (perhaps unlikely) alliance of cultural production (and specifically avant-garde literature) and radical politics that emerged in the work of Antillean writers such as C. L. R. James, Aimé Césaire, and Franz Fanon. In this moment, Marxist internationalism provided an intellectual framework in which literature and politics could serve the same end, that of a radical revolution on the world-historical scale. But in the decades following the Second World War, which saw political decolonization in most of Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, the feasibility of that alliance came to be seen as increasingly tenuous. The failures of decolonization appeared particularly apparent in the French Caribbean, where Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Guyana did not become independent, but rather achieved a partial political integration with the *mère-patrie*, acceding to the status of *Département d'outre-mér* in 1946. Although some Antillean intellectuals, such as Léonard Sainville and Vincent Placoly (whom I discuss at length in chapters two and four, respectively) remained committed to

Marxist politics, others, and notably Césaire and Glissant, abandoned the communist party and its international agenda for a more particularist politics.[9]

Concomitant with this spatial reorientation of the political sphere came a similar reorientation of the horizon of historical thought: whereas the Marxist-inspired historiography of the anticolonial movement looked towards a post-colonial, postcapitalist future, Antillean intellectuals in the 1960s-80s turned their historical imagination back towards the historical rupture that has become synonymous with the middle passage. Historical thought and its corresponding literature ceased to predicate Pan-African solidarity or demonstrate the inevitability of world revolution and instead came to justify a profound pessimism with regards to the possibility of enacting radical political change. As such, the domain of academic history could no longer offer the possibility of establishing historical truth; what truth that could be found lay instead in the psyche of the (still) colonized subject or in the holistic experience of the

[9] Gary Wilder, in *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World*, notes that Césaire's "commitment to both departmentalization and the French Communist Party wavered after France's disastrous intervention in Indochina and the commencement of the Algerian War. The party opposed the Vietminh's and FLN'S demands for national independence and backed the metropolitan government's assumption of emergency powers in Algeria in 1956. Césaire shared the PFC'S belief that self-determination did not *require* state sovereignty' but supported the FLN'S revolutionary struggle for national liberation" (167). Wilder's overarching argument posits that Césaire sought to secure decolonization and self-sovereignty for the Antilles outside the framework of national autarky, suggesting a more nuanced balance between universalism and particularism (170-1). Nick Nesbitt, in his article "From Louverture to Lenin: Aimé Césaire and Anticolonial Marxism," argues in contrast that Césaire remained "in the 1950s and 1960s both committed to a Leninist understanding of peripheral socialism and an active participant in postwar French parliamentary democracy and capitalism [and that] this entailed no contradiction whatsoever." (137). Despite their differences, Wilder's and Nesbitt's arguments both highlight the idiosyncrasy of Césaire's political and theoretical trajectory. Although Nesbitt convincingly demonstrates that Césaire continued to espouse a Leninist (in his non-adherence to Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution) socialist theory, his political career, and in particular his founding of an autonomist, social-democratic parliamentary party, indicates a political praxis far removed from the orthodoxies of revolutionary socialism.

geographies of the past. This moment in Francophone Caribbean thought can be characterized by the privileging of the local over the global.

Furthermore, this selfsame refusal of the universal distinguishes their work, and the worldview their texts develop, from that of the field of postcolonial studies. Although scholars have read (or perhaps co-opted) the work of writers such as Glissant and Patrick Chamoiseau through the prism of postcolonial studies, they arguably do so without sufficient regard for the internal logic of space-time developed in the texts themselves.[10] The problem with postcolonial theory, as Peter Hallward writes, is that it "often seems to present itself precisely as a sort of general theory of the non-generalisable as such … [it] claims an almost global jurisdiction. Definition of the domain in terms of a vague reference to colonialism and-its aftermath justifies a purview scarcely less inclusive, both historically and geographically, than that of something like the study of everything affected by modernisation and its consequences" (xi). In light of these universalizing tendencies of postcolonial theory, I will consider with critical scepticism the appropriation of Caribbean texts that display the hallmarks of a particularist orientation.

In contrast, Antillean authors active in the 1990s to the present, especially those who publish in North American literary marketplaces, necessarily contend with a readership conditioned to some degree by the widespread institutionalization of postcolonial readerly practices in (especially American) universities. These institutions have trained generations of new readers to privilege interpretations of texts that consider questions of identity formation and acculturation, migration, and struggles against sexism and racial bias. Regardless of whether or

[10] Neil Lazarus makes a similar point in an essay entitled "The Politics of Postcolonial Modernism," describing postcolonial scholars' insistence on reading typically "postcolonial" texts solely through the prism of concepts such as multiculturalism, imagined communities, or hybridity as "sheer appropriativeness." He continues, arguing that even if the work of writers such as Patrick Chamoiseau, Maryse Condé, or Tahar Ben Jelloun (to cite Francophone examples) "undeniably lends itself to what we might call pomo-postcolonialist reading," it is not "necessarily best or most illuminatingly approached in these terms. (427).

not postcolonial studies' claims to work of francophone Caribbean authors such as Edwidge Danticat, Dany Laferrière, Gisèle Pineau, or Marie Chauvet is validated in the works themselves, there can be no doubt that these authors reckon with the immense cultural and literary influence postcolonialism has levied on the broader field of literature in the contemporary moment. My work will have less to do with the internal politics of postcolonial studies than the ways in which the field conditions the practice of narrative, and particularly historical narratives from the francophone Caribbean; writers must either embrace or reject their perceived role as spokespeople for the ethnic, gender, or racial identities that postcolonial readerly practices valorize.

Between Literature and Politics: The Dark Horizon of Postcolonial Studies

Throughout the history of Caribbean literature in French, and particularly since the emergence of distinctly Caribbean aesthetic forms during the rise of the Negritude movement, writers worked to come to terms with the experience of historical rupture born out of the legacy of slavery, colonialism, and assimilationist politics. They do so by delving into a tangled web of intersecting and occulted histories and narratives emanating from the Caribbean past and invoke the imaginative power of narrative to fill the gaps left by a Western historiographical tradition that showed little concern for the lives and experiences of the (primarily, but not exclusively) black populations of the French Caribbean. Accordingly, the dominant critical approach to Caribbean historical narratives, and perhaps more broadly to most francophone narratives, has been to identify and valorize those texts that present narratives of resistance to slavery and colonialism, and that challenge narratives produced by white European patriarchal culture.

My study emanates from an ambivalent period in a field of scholarship on Caribbean literature and theory that has, in the last two decades, become increasingly imbricated with the

imperatives and concerns of postcolonial studies. The publication in 2003 of the collection of essays *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction* represented a formalized and overt effort to address the seeming linguistic divide between French- and English-language counter-colonial textual practices.[11] Charles Forsdick and David Murphy argues for the essential congruency of the two fields, writing that the collective of scholars who contributed to the volume "would argue that Francophone Studies is engaged in the same intellectual pursuits as Postcolonial Studies, exploring 'postcolonial issues' in relation to France and its former colonies" (7). Although scholars such as Peter Hallward and David Scott have called into question the continued viability of the field, postcolonialism designates today a scholarly project in which my work takes part: the development of a critical field that attends to the cultural and literary production of the formerly or currently colonized world and attempts to describe and critique the global systems of economic and political control that have been designated with terms such as colonialism, imperialism, neocolonialism, or neoliberalism.[12] Although theorists

[11] As Forsdick explains in his introduction, those imperatives and concerns are reflected in the organization of the volume, which divides itself into four "strands": contestation of historical discourse, the politics and culture of language, the articulation of the nation to the broader world, and the particularities thought and culture in francophone regions. A fifth, implicit strand runs throughout the volume, that of comparatism.

[12] The first two terms, colonialism and imperialism, have often been used interchangeably to designate the domination of non-European territories by European, and later, non-European imperial polities such as the United States and Japan. In *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Robert Young argues for the careful distinction of the terms "colonialism" and "imperialism" (despite the fact that both resulted in the creation of transcontinental empires). According to Young, imperialism constitutes an ideologically motivated territorial expansion "bureaucratically controlled by a government from the centre," whereas colonialism is more haphazard, a form of expansion resulting in empires "developed for settlement by individual communities or for commercial purposes by a trading company" (16). Both of these two forms of empire, predicated on the nation-state as the foundational geopolitical entity, declined globally following the seizure of national sovereignty by nationalist movements in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, culminating in the wave of decolonization that reached its peak in the 1960s. Neocolonialism, a term notably used by Jean-Paul Sartre and Kwame Nkrumah, designates the regime of capitalist power that replaced colonialism and imperialism and that uses financial instruments as mechanisms of control. The final term, neoliberalism, refers to a set of economic prerogatives that, as Deborah Johnston and Alfredo Saad-Filho write, are "part of a hegemonic

disagree, often polemically, as to the value, purpose, and viability of postcolonial studies, nearly all postcolonial thinkers agree that the field can be characterized by an overwhelming sense of its own belatedness, a notion that history has already outstripped postcolonial conceptualizations of the world, that the cultural, economic, and political paradigms it created to adapt to an increasingly globalizing world have fossilized, or even more damning, a fear that the postcolonial never amounted to more than a collection of academic buzzwords whose cultural capital has already entered a terminal decline.

Despite the near-incessant handwringing of postcolonial critics as to the enduring relevance of their field, in the last two decades, the domains of postcolonial studies and francophone Caribbean literature have grown closer together. In the early 2000s, the creation of the Society for Francophone Postcolonial Studies and its eponymous journal, the publication of two edited volumes, the abovementioned *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction* and *Les Etudes litteraires francophones: Etat des lieux* (2003) marked the emergence of what Chris Bongie has termed the "institutional *métissage*" (2) of francophone and postcolonial studies.[13] If we accept Anne Donadey's and H. Adlai Murdoch's premise that the two constitute "discrete but intersecting" critical traditions, they do so nearly exclusively within the domains of cultural and discourse analysis.

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project concentrating power and wealth in elite groups around the world, benefiting especially the financial interests within each country, and US capital internationally.

[13] Richard Serrano goes even further in his critiques of the two fields; in *Against the Postcolonial: "francophone" Writers at the Ends of French Empire* (2005), he writes "that Francophone Studies is mostly a mirage while Postcolonial Studies is mostly a delusion" (1), in that the former makes far too much of the use of the French language and that the latter fails to take account of its implication in the world-systems it criticizes. Although I agree with Serrano's overarching argument regarding postcolonialism, he fails to properly recognize the autocritical aspect of postcolonial theory, which, as I discuss in the preface to Part III, develops along with the field itself.

For critics such as Bongie, Hallward, and Robert Young, this privileging of the discursive and cultural represents a distraction from the real, material injustices that leftist criticism should address; as Hallward writes in *Absolutely Postcolonial* (2001),

> Against the predominant tendency of cultural studies in general and of postcolonial criticism in particular, we need therefore to make and preserve a sharp conceptual *break between culture and politics.* The idea of a 'cultural politics' is a disastrous confusion of spheres. If politics is to mean anything at all, it should apply only to the domain of strictly indifferent principles: principles of justice and equality, principles that apply to all relations without discrimination. (xix)

This position, which stresses the essentially political promise of postcolonialism, has met with fierce contestation. Notably, Vivek Chibber, in *Postcolonial theory and the Spectre of Capitalism* (2012), insists that the original domain of postcolonial studies was literature, and that its lack of coherence and systematicity doom its efforts to "generate a theory adequate to the needs of a radical political agenda" (2).[14] Singling out the work of Ranajit Guha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and others associated with the school of subaltern studies, Chibber castigates their mischaracterization of the operation of global capital and argues for the primacy of a Marxist critical framework in the domain of politics.

[14] Chibber's book is but one recent manifestation of a sustained critique of postcolonial theory to which scholars such as Aijaz Ahmad, Arif Dirlik, Neil Lazarus, Benita Parry, amond others, have contributed. Highly polemical, *Postcolonial theory and the Spectre of Capitalism* has elicited criticism not only from the scholars implicated in Chibber's work but also from his other skeptics of postcolonialism, such as Parry and Lazarus. Nearly all his detractors take issue with his reduction of a broad and varied field to the work of a few members of the subaltern studies subfield: Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee and Dipesh Chakrabarty. Furthermore, as Neil Lazarus points out, his critiques "are not likely to seem so impressive to those working within postcolonial studies, who have seen such arguments before, and have, indeed, already been working with them themselves for some time" (92).

As I discuss in the preface of Part III, this kind of theoretical bickering over the inherent value and proper agenda of the field have continued since its coalescence in the early 1990s. However, as I have already suggested, the origins of the problem date back decades further, to the twinning of global politics and Pan-African literature that characterized the anticolonialism of negritude. As such, the present quandaries as to the future of postcolonial critique have a historical origin that requires properly historical analysis. I concur with David Scott, who, in *Conscripts of Modernity* (2004), argues that to remain vibrant and productive, postcolonial criticism must work to historicize its relationship to earlier forms of counter-colonial thought.

The *Problem-Space* of Caribbean History

Scott insists that the first step in this process involves a careful consideration of the questions that scholarship in the field sets out to answer. He expresses concern that postcolonial studies, understood in a broad sense, critiques earlier anticolonial writing without considering that the "problem-spaces," or questions, anticolonial writers addressed are not the same as their own. For Scott, the concept of a problem-space is "more than a cognitively intelligible arrangement of concepts, ideas, images, meanings, and so on—though it is certainly this." Rather, it is "a context of argument and, therefore, one of *intervention*. A problem-space, in other words, is an ensemble of questions and answers around which a horizon of identifiable stakes (conceptual as well as ideological-political stakes) hangs" (4). The concept of the problem-space is important to my work because it challenges us to define both the set of interrogations and responses that a particular argument addresses. Scott's principle unease with the state of postcolonial studies is his impression that it uncritically adopts the same problem-spaces of earlier anticolonial texts. He identifies this anticolonial problem-space as one in which the problem of colonialism is conceived of as a negative systemic structure whose most salient

feature is that of limitation; limitation of the colonial subject through the systematic use of racism, violence, censorship, and oppression. The point that Scott makes is not to challenge the validity of this orthodoxy, but to cast doubt on the utility of contemporary scholarship's fixation with challenging the responses to this premise rather than to challenge the premise itself: "postcolonialism has continued to be concerned with exposing the *negative* structure of colonialism's power and with demonstrating the colonized's agency in resisting or overcoming these conditions … I should like to urge us away from this preoccupation" (6). Reading anticolonial texts, a category which includes the many of the works in question in my study, necessitates a consideration not simply of the answers that the author puts forward but also the questions that provide the intellectual context for those answers. The relationship between reading the colonial past and projecting a postcolonial future (actual or not) is fundamentally a question of narrative, and we must take stock of those narratives, past and present, that implicitly and explicitly delineate the horizon of expectations for postcolonial scholarship.

At the center of Scott's argument is the premise that the predominant mode of anticolonial and postcolonial writing is that of the revolutionary romance. This mode responds to the portrayal of colonial modernity as a negative, limiting system with narratives of overcoming and vindication that point towards a utopian denouement as the ultimate horizon of anticolonial thought and politics. He portrays C. L. R. James' *The Black Jacobins* (1938) as a "literary-historical exercise in revolutionary Romanticism" and "a modernist allegory of anticolonial revolution written in the mode of a historical Romance" (59). But Scott sees James and *The Black Jacobins* as indicative not merely of the dominant mode of anticolonial and postcolonial writing but also as aware of the problem-space generative of both its questions and answers. Specifically, Scott argues that James' revisions and additions to the 1963 reissue of the text reorient the text away from the mode of revolutionary romance and towards that of the tragedy of

modernity. This critical flexibility, this ability to reconsider the problem-space of a text and refashion it to better suit the preoccupations of the present is exactly the kind of critical perspective that Scott sees as necessary to reinvest postcolonial studies with new energy and direction. Although I disagree and with and will respond to several of Scott's claims in my own discussion of *The Black Jacobins* in chapter one, I find his use of the concept of the problem-space and his challenge to move beyond narratives of resistance to colonial modernity to be of particular relevance and importance.

If the stagnation in Postcolonial studies has resulted from an obstinate and belated preoccupation with crafting narratives of resistance to colonial modernism, what viable alternatives offer themselves to the field? For Scott, the answer lies in the reexamination of modernism itself. Rather than view it as a narrowly-defined set of negative limitations, he proposes a new assessment of its positive or constructive influence; rather than understand it as a force to be overcome through valiant resistance, he supports acknowledging its role in the production of historical contexts that defined the choices available to the anti- and postcolonial agents. Scott believes that redefining modernity from a set of problems to be heroically overcome to one that must be examined with an eye towards the tragic circumstances it engenders can lead to productive criticism. Reading *The Black Jacobins* from this prospective "may offer us some guidance in reconceiving the moral-political predicament of a postcolonial present not only drained of the fervor of the anticolonial revolution and the certainties of the first decades of nation-state sovereignty, but one also confronted by the seemingly intractable dilemmas of modernity" (172). Although Scott's critique of Postcolonial studies is both trenchant and opportune, the alternative he proposes falls well short of resolving the problem he so accurately defines. He urges us to dispense with the ultimately unfulfilled dream of total revolution, but rather than propose some new future temporality, he retrenches the consequences

of his argument by going no further than calling for a renewed critique of modernity, albeit with different premises.

The question of temporality in both Scott's argument and the broader field deserves more thorough analysis. One way in which Scott might have illustrated the productive role of modernity in the crafting of anticolonial politics and poetics would have been to connect it more forcefully to the common assumption of a future-oriented, teleological temporality. Both colonial modernism and those who advocated for its overthrow proposed a progressive vision of the future, whether that vision entailed a capitalist dream of prosperity or a classless Marxist utopia. Although he does recognize that "the narrative of revolution is inseparable from the larger narrative of modernity" (89), he falls short of suggesting that perhaps the tragic choice that he sees as central to the tragedy of modernity and enlightenment may be between to equally impossible futures.

If the impasse in which postcolonial studies currently resides results from an assumed future temporality that no longer aligns with the present, this study proposes to dispense with assumptions about the future to instead take up the question of space and place in relation to the past. Although resistance to slavery, colonialism, and assimilationism will feature prominently in most if not all of the texts that I will analyze in subsequent chapters, my purpose is not to demonstrate how these operations proceed, nor to evaluate their respective strategies. I leave questions of identity formation or cultural hybridization, or at least those that have not already been addressed, to other scholars. Rather, this dissertation sets out to contend with a different problem-space altogether, that of the relationship between the writing of space and history. It will pose and respond to the following questions: How do historical narratives construct or contribute to understandings of the Caribbean as space and place? What modalities does the writing of space and place take, and can we productively group texts according to their

respective approaches? How does the spatiotemporal imagination of Caribbean authors translate into formal and narratological structures? Does examining the spatial representations and configurations of Caribbean narrative allow for a more nuanced vision of the region's literary history?

The value of this interpretative model is threefold. First, it offers a methodological approach that precludes the division of the world into the discursive and real, of the cultural from the tangible. Second, it allows us to explore how the inscription of time and space determines and is determined by narratological forms. Finally, it proposes a vision of Caribbean literary history whose periodization does not definitively separate writers into narrowly-defined periods and schools, but rather, by demonstrating how the themes of time and space evolve over the course of the last century, restores a sense of consistency to the field.[15] The literary and spatiohistorical metanarrative that I present offers a means of drawing connections between disparate approaches and styles and coming to terms with a thematic continuity that I see as fundamental to the field of Caribbean theory and fiction. In what follows, I situate my interpretative method within a spatially-oriented field of criticism and its changing relationship to the concept of time.

The Spatiohistorical as Concept: A Brief History

[15] Although the intellectual history that I present in this study does rely to a certain extent on the demarcation of periods, they should not be understood as categories that define the writers that I associate with these periods. As I have indicated, they are less chronological than thematic. Writers may engage with one or more of these approaches during the course of their careers. A particularly notable example would be Glissant, whose early writing exhibits a strong sense of Antillean particularism but who, by the 1990s, abandons the overtly political and nationalistic focus of his early work, opting instead to develop a totalizing theory of cultural and identitary cultural exchange and hybridization.

Beginning in the late 1960s, theorists begin to rethink the concept of space to understand a world that longer seemed to conform to the vision of history on which European modernism had been posited. In the theoretical space between Marxism and Postmodernism, philosophers such as Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari developed understandings of spaces that proved highly influential in the fields of cultural studies, literary criticism, and beyond. However, the rise of the "spatial turn" and the widespread adoption of the vocabulary of spatial studies has led to a kind of terminological dilution in which space becomes a catchall metaphor applicable to a wide variety of domains. As such, it will be necessary to provide a clear statement of my definitions of space and place.

The emergence of spatial analysis is itself a recent phenomenon: for centuries, the teleologically-structured myth of progress that began during the Enlightenment and endured throughout the modern era dominated critical thought and relegated spatial considerations to secondary position.[16] Most thinkers considered space was in one of two ways. Many saw it, like Isaac Newton, as a three-dimensional, infinite, and uniform void, an absolute and objectively measurable container to be filled with matter.[17] Others followed Immanuel Kant, who held that

[16] This idea, which, in the interest of brevity, I will not examine in detail, holds that the Renaissance ideal of the perfectibility of man, coupled with the rise of positivist theories of science, led to the founding in the Enlightenment of a myth of progress wherein the continual advancement of human knowledge would lead to the continual betterment of man and society. Jean-François Lyotard, in his seminal *La Condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir* (1979), argues that when an epistemological discourse "recourt explicitement à tel ou tel grand récit, comme la dialectique de l'esprit, l'herméneutique du sens, l'émancipation du sujet raisonnable ou travailleur, le développement de la richesse, on décide d'appeler 'moderne' la science qui s'y réfère pour se légitimer" (7). The metanarrative of progress "ne représente rien d'autre [according to this logic] que le mouvement par lequel le savoir est supposé s'accumuler" (52). As such the postmodern thought distinguishes itself by its "incrédulité à l'égard des métanarratifs" (7).

[17] *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687). Newton articulates his understanding of space in the *Scholium* proceeding book one. He divides space into two categories, absolute space, which "always remains homogeneous and immovable" (54) and relative space, which "is any movable measure or dimension of this absolute space; such a measure or dimension is

time and space are pure concepts or categories with which we understand the relationships between physical bodies as well as our own perceptions, represented the other influential school of spatial thought.[18] During the nineteenth century, the two most important philosophers with regards to the conception of history, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx, both saw time as inherently more dialectical, and thus important, than space, and both structured their philosophies around principles of a socially-oriented telos.[19] Although Marx did analyze colonialism as a product of globalizing capitalism, as Kevin Anderson demonstrates in his study *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies* (2010), those of his texts that formed the primary corpus of what twentieth century Marxists called historical materialism (such as the famous 1859 Introduction to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*) did not.

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determined by our senses from the situation of the space with respect to bodies" (55). For Newton, place designates "the part of space that a body occupies" (55). It is his insistence that space can be studied objectively through the use of mathematical principles that became particularly influential in the development of the social and geographical sciences, as well as the "abstract" understanding of space that sees it as devoid of meaning.

[18] Building out of the Cartesian tradition that posited reason as a solid epistemological basis, Kant explains in his *Inaugural Dissertation* (1770) that space cannot be abstracted from the senses, because external sensation presupposes spatial distance. As such, space is "pure intuition," a subjective and ideal schema that allows for "for co-ordinating everything which is sensed externally" (396-7). Although he uses the example of geometry to demonstrate the intuitive quality of space, he strongly critiques philosophers, such as Newton who would interpret the abstract, intuitive nature of geometry as evidence of the "reality" of space.

[19] Although concepts of history do not occupy a dominant position in Marx's theoretical work, the subsequent development of a 'Historical Materialism' (a term Marx himself never used) in the early- to mid-twentieth century Marxism display keen attention to the questions of global space. As Robert Young writes in *Postcolonialism: an Historical Introduction* (2001), Marxism played a crucial role in the history of anti-imperial resistance and provided a foundation upon which postcolonial studies could emerge. As he demonstrates in the third section of his book, questions such as the relation of center to periphery, the combined and uneven development of capitalism, and the importance or irrelevance of spatially-derived concepts such as nationalism were vigorously debated at each of the socialist and communist international conferences and decisively determined the thought of Caribbean Marxists such as C.L.R. James and Aimé Césaire.

It would not be until Gaston Bachelard's *La Poétique de l'espace* (1958) that a theorist would make an explicit attempt to explain the human experience of space. Although Bachelard's work breaks important ground, his subjective, phenomenological, and poetic approach to the experience of both lived and abstract spaces does not easily apply to social or political questions. If he was the first to devote explicit attention to space in as critical concept, it was Michel Foucault, who argues in his 1967 essay "Des Espaces autres," that that it will replace time and history as the dominant concern of the latter half of the twentieth century:

> La grande hantise qui a obsédé le XIX' siècle a été, on le sait, l'histoire, thèmes du développement et de l'arrêt, thèmes de la crise et du cycle, thèmes de l'accumulation du passé ... L'époque actuelle serait peut-être plutôt l'époque de l'espace. Nous sommes à l'époque du simultané, nous sommes à l'époque de la juxtaposition, à l'époque du proche et du lointain, de la côte à côte, du dispersé. (752)

Foucault indicates the need for a reexamination of the world that focuses on global space as a network of interrelated sites, both real and imagined, that can be defined relationally and not simply as a function of historical processes.[20] The two decades that followed Foucault's proclamation saw a period of intense critical attention to space and particularly to how our understandings of it were changing as a result of the breakdown of modernist thought. Furthermore, Foucault's essay presages the emergence in the Caribbean of a school of historical

[20] It is exactly this imperative that Foucault sees as the reason for the shift towards a more prominent theoretical engagement with space. Although he does not provide an explicit reason for this shift, he argues that unlike time, which has undergone a kind of desacralization, our experience of the relationship between different forms of space and place remains animated by a "sourde sacralisation" that poses a set of oppositions between, for example, "l'espace prive et l'espace public, entre l'espace de la famille et l'espace social, entre l'espace culturel et l'espace utile, entre l'espace de loisirs et l'espace de travail" (754). Despite decades of overt theorization of space, some of these binaries persist. To Foucault's list I would add, and my work addresses these directly, the oppositions between space and place and between real space and imagined space.

thought emphasizing the irreducibility of the past and the ultimate impossibility of establishing a coherent and linear historical consciousness.

In the same 1967 essay in which Foucault predicts the spatial turn, he also elaborates a theory concerning the relationship and interaction of individual sites within social space. Foucault understands space as a network of individual sites or "emplacements," discrete units of space that define themselves through the relationships they form with other sites: "l'emplacement est défini par les relations de voisinage entre points ou éléments; formellement, on peut les décrire comme des séries, des arbres, des treillis" (753). For Foucault, the nature of these relationships depends not simply on proximity, but also the heterogeneity of sites:

> L'espace dans lequel nous vivons, par lequel nous sommes attirés hors de nous-mêmes, dans lequel se déroule précisément l'érosion de notre vie, de notre temps et de notre histoire, cet espace qui nous ronge et nous ravine est en lui-même aussi un espace hétérogène. Autrement dit, nous ne vivons pas dans une sorte de vide, à l'intérieur duquel on pourrait situer des individus et des choses. Nous ne vivons pas à l'intérieur d'un vide qui se colorerait de différents chatoiements, nous vivons à l'intérieur d'un ensemble de relations qui définissent des emplacements irréductibles les uns aux autres et absolument non superposables. (754–55)

Here we can observe a number of similarities with the concepts of space and place I proposed ealier in this introduction. We cannot understand space as a void or geometric grid which lacks the invested meaning that defines places, but as network of relations between sites. Just as individual sites display remarkable heterogeneity, so does the network of relations designated by space. If the humanist geographers saw human experience and cognition as the principle vector whereby specific sites gain meaning and become place, for Foucault it is the relationships between sites that contribute to their definition. This model bestows a means of both moving

away from an anthropocentric conception of the meaning of place and conceptualizing the ability of space to act upon its constituent sites.

Foucault, who seeks to reveal the plenitude of relational space in a relatively short essay, chooses to focus his analysis on those sites that exercise the greatest influence on the spatial network. Such sites have "la curieuse propriété d'être en rapport avec tous les autres emplacements, mais sur un mode tel qu'ils suspendent, neutralisent ou inversent l'ensemble des rapports qui se trouvent, par eux, désignés, reflétés ou réfléchis" (755). For Foucault, these sites function as liaisons between all the other sites within a particular spatial network and can be divided into two major categories. If the first, utopias, are widely understood to be unreal, imagined spaces that take on an analogic relation to actually existing societies, his second category, that of heterotopias, appeared wholly original. Unlike utopias, heterotopias can be very real places, both in the sense that they exist and that we can indicate their physical location in representations of space such as maps, texts, or in oral language. Furthermore, the "reality" of the heterotopia expresses itself most clearly through its effect on the socially defined experience of other spaces; in heterotopias, "tous les autres emplacements réels que l'on peut trouver à l'intérieur de la culture sont à la fois représentés, contestés et inversés" (755).

In order to render the concept more intelligible, Foucault illustrates the heterotopic effect using the analogy of a mirror; when we look into it, we see ourselves in a place that does not actually exist, a virtual representation of our actual location that we could call a utopia. What makes the mirror heterotopic, however, is the fact that

> le miroir existe réellement, et où il a, sur la place que j'occupe, une sorte d'effet en retour; c'est d partir du miroir que je me découvre absent de la place ou je suis puisque je me vois là-bas. A partir de ce regard qui en quelque sorte se porte sur moi, du fond de cet espace virtuel qui est de l'autre côté de la glace, je reviens vers moi et je recommence à

> porter mes yeux vers moi-même et à me reconstituer là où je suis; le miroir fonctionne comme une hétérotopie en ce sens qu'il rend cette place que j'occupe au moment où je me regarde dans la glace, à la fois absolument réelle, en liaison avec tout l'espace qui l'entoure, et absolument irréelle, puisqu'elle est obligée, pour être perdue, de passer par ce point virtuel qui est là-bas. (756)

Thus, the heterotopia functions by reflecting a kind of unreality onto the sites conventionally regarded as part of the real world or by calling into question the cultural knowledge with which these sites are defined and understood. It is in this sense that we can see the heterotopic function of the text as a site: like mirror, it is an object which creates a virtual image of the space of the world that is both absolutely determined by its relationship to the real while maintaining a categorical distinction from it. Although Foucault proceeds from this initial analogy to a discussion of sites in the real world that function as heterotopias, such as cemeteries prisons, colonies, and archives, we can see how the concept of heterotopia extends beyond physical manifestations of place in the real world and can productively enter into relation with the its representations in narrative.

The heterotopia, in addition to its capacity to mediate the relationship between sets of real-world sites, also provides the means to reexamine configurations of space and time. It serves as a site where the experience of time can deviate from its traditional forms: "les hétérotopies sont liées, le plus souvent, à des découpages du temps, c'est à dire qu'elles ouvrent sur ce qu'on pourrait appeler, par pure symétrie, des hétérochronies; l'hétérotopie se met à fonctionner à plein lorsque les hommes se trouvent dans une sorte de rupture absolue avec leur temps traditionnel" (759). Foucault gives two examples of space-time configurations in two heterotopias: the archive and the travelling fair. In the former, the ephemerality of the conventional experience of time gives way to one in which time accumulates infinitely within the

bounds of an unmoving place. In the latter, the site itself succumbs to time in its most temporary and fleeting form: the fair as a place will inexorably move on and disappear from its original site of emplacement. Chronologic techniques such as prolepsis, analepsis, and embedded narratives allow texts to disrupt the homogenous and unilateral movement of traditional understandings of time. The text-as-heterotopia benefits from an even greater freedom to configure time and space according to its needs, a function critical to my readings of the Caribbean texts that follow this introduction; historical discourses, fictional or factual, become heterotopic in that, as reflections of past chronotopes resonating in the contemporary of a text's publication, they call into question conventional understandings of Caribbean space-time.

Following Foucault, the most decisive contribution to the field of spatial studies was undoubtedly the work of Henri Lefebvre, and in particular *La Production de l'espace* (1974). In this seminal text, Lefebvre makes the case that cultural practices and production serve to expound our understanding of our physical, mental, and social environment.[21] He explores the ways in which capitalist societies participate in the reproduction of the social spaces that they engender and in doing so ensure their survival. However, we should not understand this

[21] Lefebvre divides the means of spatial production between three distinct categories: "la pratique spatiale," "les représentations de l'espace," and "les espaces de représentation." Each of these categories deserves individual attention, as each function individually and within the broader system. By spatial practices, or the "perçu," Lefebvre refers to the movements or flows of commodities or people, transportation and communication systems, physical infrastructure, privatization of property, governmental and administrative schemes, or social architecture, and other concrete processes. In contrast, representations of space, the "conçu", involve mental and conceptual tasks such as cartography, measurements of distance, urban planning and social engineering. The third category, spaces of representation or the "vécu," are the lived spaces of human experience. As Lefebvre explains, spaces of representation present "des symbolismes complexes, liés au côté clandestin et souterrain de la vie sociale, mais aussi à l'art, qui pourrait éventuellement se définir non pas comme code de l'espace mais comme code des espaces de représentation" (43). In Lefebvre's formulation, the role of art is to contest the ways in which we experience the spaces we inhabit and to challenge or to affirm the ideologies that seek to define them.

interaction as unidirectional: the particular forms of interrelation between discrete social sites partially determine their evolution in time. Whereas the teleological historiography of thinkers like Hegel subordinated geographical considerations to an overarching historical model, Lefebvre employs historical perspectives primarily to explain the creation of spatial knowledge. But Lefebvre's influence extends beyond his recognition of social spaces as inherently socially produced: they are both a product and a means of production. In particular, he suggests that the capacity to produce social space is itself a means of exerting control and perpetuating political power: "d'autant que l'espace ainsi produit sert aussi d'instrument à la pensée comme à l'action, qu'il est, en même temps qu'un moyen de production, un moyen de contrôle donc de domination et de puissance" (35). That the ability to control and define space functions as source of social power helps to explain how and why European colonialism extended across the world so quickly.

Many theorists, especially those associated with Postmodernism, emphasize the degree to which the historicizing impulses of modernist epistemology prevented a systematic understanding of the interaction of space and place. Edward Soja writes in *Postmodern Geographies* (1989) that

> the hegemonic tendencies of historicism tended to occlude a comparable critical sensibility to the spatiality of social life, a practical theoretical consciousness that sees the lifeworld of being creatively located not only in the making of history but also in the construction of human geographies, the social production of space and the restless formation of geographical landscapes: social being actively emplaced in space and time in an explicitly historical and geographical contextualization (11).

Soja articulates one of the key critical gestures of the spatial turn: it is not a question of turning entirely to geographical concerns without any regard for time. To do so would be repeat the same

problems of the predominantly historical criticism of the modernist period. Instead, they seek to restitute a balance, to consider space-time as a articulation of two equal concepts, as dialectical in and of itself.[22] Soja also identifies another of the crucial claims of spatial thinking: that no understanding of space and its relationship with human experienced exists a priori to its own formulation; that is, all forms of geography or knowledge attempting to explain space are socially produced. As Fredric Jameson explains in *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capital* (1991), the distinction between the historicist modes of modernist thinking and those of an explicitly spatial theory "is between two forms of interrelationship between time and space rather than between these two inseparable categories themselves ... What one means by evoking spatialization is rather the will to use and to subject time to the service of space (154).[23] Jameson's point is crucial because it recognizes that conceptualizing history through the prism of spatial thought does not mean disregarding temporal concerns. Instead, it entails producing a concept of history free from the presuppositions of empiricist and ideological models of time.

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[22] Although the term "spacetime" is more commonly rendered without a hyphen, I have chosen to include it in order to serve as a reminder that, despite the interconnectedness of the two constituent terms, space and time, they should not be understood as an amalgamated and undifferentiated whole. (Massey, 18)

[23] For Jameson, the act of subjecting time to the service of space, or the spatialization of the temporal, begins with the writing or the inscription of time. What marks such texts as spatial is their sense of loss: "what is mourned is the memory of deep memory; what is enacted is a nostalgia for nostalgia, for the grand older extinct questions of origin and telos of deep time and the Freudian Unconscious … for the dialectic also, as well as all the monumental forms left high and dry by the ebb tide of the modern movement" (156). Such a formulation, illustrated in reference to J. G. Ballard's dystopian short story "The Voices of Time," would seem to position spatialization in the act of cultural creation, however of equal importance is a mode of reading inaugurated in the wake of modernism's collapse. In perhaps his most pertinent example of spatialization, Jameson points to the problems of reading posed by deconstruction, which challenge the assumption that a reader progresses chronologically through a text. For example, the convoluted use of tense in first line of Jacques Derrida's essay "Hors livre" (itself the preface to the book *La Dissemination*), "Ceci (donc) n'aura pas été un livre" (9) illustrates the paradoxical position of the preface in relation to the textual chronology of the book. This problem of boundaries extends out beyond the limits of the book itself, and coupled with the deconstuctivist textualization of the outside world, forms what Jameson identifies as "a fundamental form of postmodern spatialization" (158).

Following the prediction of Foucault, the closing decades of the twentieth century saw an exponential increase in the use of space as a critical concept. While the newfound theoretical enthusiasm for approaching social and cultural studies from the perspective of space has certainly corrected, to some degree, the imbalance between analyses of history and space, it has also led to a kind of dilution of the term "space" itself. Thinkers such as Jameson, Soja, or Harvey have posited that the sustained engagement with matters of space stems from the dislocating cultural experience of the postmodern condition, and the result has not been any kind of reassurance of our place in the world, but on the contrary a widening of that spatial anxiety to the constituent discursive realms adjoining and overlapping with critical theory. From the literary to the ideological to the psychological, the imagery of space and its metaphorical possibilities furnish writers with a tantalizing means to express diverse concepts with a vocabulary that has, for the contemporary critic, become more than familiar. We must take care that space as a critical concept and spatial analysis do not veer too far into the realm of metaphorical argumentation. Therefore, before venturing into the realm of historical thought and literary production, it will be necessary to provide a series of critical and terminological precisions in order to remain focused on the examination of places and the space of their historically-mediated interrelation.

My intention is to establish clear and functional definitions of the concepts of space and place that, while emerging out of a field of spatial theory whose heritage is predominantly western, can be brought into productive conversation with the conceptions of space and place developed in Caribbean letters. Reevaluating the spatiohistorical experience in the Caribbean and more specifically French Antillean context requires *avant tout* a careful consideration of terminology and scope. The need to carefully define and refine terminology results from the vast diversity with which scholars have employed concepts of space and a lack of consensus as to what spatial analysis entails. In my work, the term "place" refers to a discursive construction: the

set of culturally-produced ideas that serve to define, delineate, and understand specific geographic units. Thus, to speak of a plantation as *place* emphasizes the uniqueness of the particular site: the meaning created by human subjectivity in order to understand the real, physical elements of a site such as architecture, the emplacement of its buildings, its inhabitants, or its location within geography.[24] In contrast, the concept of space designates a field of relation and interconnection between two or more places. To consider the plantation as *space* is to account for the globalized system of places, the network of individual sites, from the colonial ports of Nantes and Bordeaux to slave trading stations such as Gorée or Porto-Novo to the North American colonies, in which a site like a plantation in Martinique is a part.

Although I have adapted my definitions to better suit the specificities of Caribbean literature, they develop out of a long line of spatial thinking. My use of the term "place" will appear relatively conventional to the reader familiar with humanistic geography. The foundational work of scholars such as Edward Relph and Yi-Fu Tuan widely adopted the notion of place as space imbued with meaning, subjectively- and socially-constructed. Tim Cresswell, in *Place: A Short Introduction* (2004) indicates an important Foucauldian nuance when he defines place as "space invested with meaning in the context of power" (12). The way I use the term "space" may appear somewhat more unorthodox. Many scholars, including Cresswell, adopt a view of space as place without meaning, or, as Tuan puts it "space is more abstract than place" (6), a kind of modified Newtonian coordinate-point system suitable for determining the

[24] The discursive construction of the plantation as place is one of the most fully-developed topics within the domain of Caribbean spatial studies. See, for example Bohls, Elizabeth A. *Slavery and the Politics of Place: Representing the Colonial Caribbean, 1770-1833.* Cambridge University Press, 2014; Glissant, Édouard. "Lieu clos, parole ouverte." *Poétique de la relation*. Paris: Gallimard, 1990; Crichlow, Michaeline A., and Northover, Patricia. *Globalization and the Post-Creole Imagination: Notes On Fleeing the Plantation.* Duke University Press, 2009; Russ, Elizabeth Christine. *The Plantation in the Postslavery Imagination.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, among others.

location of places but in itself relatively non-discursive. Such definitions risk creating a hierarchy in which place, rich in meaning, becomes infinitely more interesting than space (defined inversely as place devoid of meaning). I understand space to be deeply meaningful and important, like place but unbound by geographical limitations. Space acts as the interrelation between places, the medium that allows us to conceive, as Doreen Massey first suggested, place as process.[25] Not only does this reconceptualization of place and space free the concept from the reactionary, conservative ideologies of nativism and nationalism that have become all the more resurgent in the second decade of the twenty-first century, it provides a newfound dynamism that has long been credited to time; that is, by accepting place as process and space as the medium through which places interact and evolve, we can theorize space and history as part and parcel of the same process.

Despite the abundance of overt theorization of space produced in the last half-century, there persists within academic and literary discourses the tendency to assume a dichotomy between "real" and "imagined" space, an uncritical assumption that networks, relations, and interconnections are fundamentally abstract, whereas to examine "real" places such as the dwelling, the neighborhood, or the city is to engage with space on a concrete, tangible level. In the same way that Louis Althusser insists that the Hegel's thought unknowingly borrows its sense of time from "the most vulgar empiricism," I contend that this distinction between real and

[25] Massey's idea of place as process, put forward in her 1991 essay "A Global Sense of Place," seeks to respond to the problem of time-space compression that came out of the work of postmodern philosophers and most famously articulated in David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989). Specifically, Massey objects that time-space compression does not affect the world uniformly, or to borrow a term from the Marxist lexicon, that compression follows a pattern of uneven development. She proposes a progressive concept of place adapted to an era marked by time-space compression, one that does more than resist the impulse of globalism. Such a conception is "absolutely not static. If places can be conceptualized in terms of the social interactions which they tie together, then it is also the case that these interactions themselves are not motionless things, frozen in time. They are processes" (29).

imagined space likewise derives from "the empiricism of the false obviousness of everyday practice" (243).[26] The distinction that Althusser, following Marx, advances between the "real-concrete," or in this case the real space of the world, and the "thought-concrete" (232), or the concrete, constructed knowledge of that same real, will be instrumental in rebutting this false dichotomy.[27]

Althusser, reading Marx through the lens of Spinoza's epistemology, affirms that both thought and the real constitute two dimensions or two ways of approaching the world, that the action of thought does not extract or reveal knowledge immanent to the real, but rather, regardless of whether that action proceeds via perception or conception, that knowledge

[26] In part four of *Reading Capital* (1965), Louis Althusser expands on Marx's argument for the necessity of devising thoroughgoing concepts of history adapted to specific aspects of human society. He writes that what definitively separates the work of Marx from that of his predecessors is the conception of the historical evolution of economic categories and furthermore, the need to distinguish a "scientific" mode of historical thought from the ideologically-determined historicism of Hegel. Rather than view human social totality as a spiritually-unified whole, Marx argued, in Althusser's famous reading, that society has a complex and differentiated structure made up of different levels or instances each with a unique history, and "each of these peculiar histories is punctuated with peculiar rhythms and can only be known on condition that we have defined the *concept* of the specificity of its historical temporality and its punctuations (continuous development, revolutions, breaks, etc.)" (247). In this view, Marx proceeded first by laying out a rigorous concept of bourgeois economics and only then developing a historical temporality specific to the object of his study. As Althusser insists, we cannot import this temporality wholescale from other domains (which would constitute an ideological borrowing) but must derive it from the object of analysis itself. As he writes, "the time of economic production is a specific time (differing according to the mode of production), but also one that, as a specific time, is a complex and non-linear time - a time of times, a complex time that cannot be *read* in the continuity of the time of life or clocks, but has to be *constructed* out of the peculiar structures of production. The time of the capitalist economic production that Marx analysed must be *constructed* in its concept" (248). Although my work does not concern itself with the economic structures of capitalism directly, the imperative is to produce a concept of historical time specific to the object of analysis (here the spatially-determined concept of "the Caribbean") out of the constituent elements of that concept, namely Caribbean theory and literature.

[27] For a thorough explication of the process by which Marx's analytical method proceeds from the real-concrete to the thought-concrete, see Iñigo Carrena, Juan. "Method: From the Grundrisse to Capital." *In Marx's Laboratory: Critical Interpretations of the Grundrisse. Leiden: Brill, 2013*

necessarily exists and operates solely within the facet of thought.[28] For Marx, then, the value of the thought-concrete lies not in its fidelity to empirically-observable existence, but rather in its demonstrability, complexity, and coherence, which together constitute the index of its adequacy.

Take, for example, a place such as the plantation, a place central to both Caribbean space and history. Critical attention to its tangible materiality might describe its *espaces perçus*, such as the construction and emplacement of buildings, the modes of production of commodities, or the sensual and sensorial experiences of those people who dwelled on the plantation's grounds. But moving beyond mere description to the analysis of these attributes, in other words, drawing out the *constituent, causal necessity* that led to the manifestation of those "real" attributes, invariably engages spatiohistorical process. How can we explain the material and architectural differences between the slaves' quarters and the *grande case* without considering how those spaces encode hierarchies of class and social order? How can we understand the necessity or the imperative to engage in large-scale sugar (or coffee, or indigo, etc.) production without understanding the development of transatlantic, and later, global, trade and the structures and

[28] In the appendix to part one of the *Ethics*, Spinoza writes that those who succumb to the impulse to attribute a putative 'order of the real' through recourse to sense impressions and the empirical betray an uncritical attitude that reasons inadequately from effects to causes, rather than the revers: "mistak[ing] their imagination for understanding, such persons firmly believe that there is an order in things, being really ignorant both of things and their own nature" (63). Rather, Spinoza insists that proof of an idea's validity must come from its internal coherence and demonstrability within the order of thought. Perception of exterior reality constitues in this view a particularly unreliable source of knowledge, a point Montaigne famously makes in his essay *L'Apologie de Raymond Sebond*, writing that "les choses ne logent pas chez nous en leur forme et en leur essence, et n'y facent leur entrée de leur force propre et authorité, nous le voyons assez: par ce que, s'il estoit ainsi, nous nous les recevrions de mesme façon; le vin seroit tel en la bouche du malade qu'en la bouche du sain" (II.12.562). Spinoza thus concludes that sensory perception is no more authoritative than the action of the imagination, and that "the explanations commonly given of nature are mere modes of imagining, and do not indicate the true nature of anything, but only the constitution of the imagination; and, although they have names, as though they were entities, existing externally to the imagination, I call them entities imaginary rather than real (66).

dynamics of early modern capitalism? How can we attend to the physical pain of whipping or the mental horror experienced by its witness without conceiving of those experiences in their necessity, as providing material support to the regimes of violence and discipline that served to assure the European domination of the very territory on which the plantation stood?

As such, to speak of "real" places in literature or historical narrative is just as much an exercise in conception as to speak of nations, networks, or cultural spaces. One is not a priori more abstract than the other, as both involve creating knowledge about the real-concrete that does not derive from an autonomous real. The real places of the world and the meaning through which human understanding conceives of them are not synonymous; as Doreen Massey writes in *For Space* (2005), "space itself, the space of the world, far from being equivalent to representation, must be *un*representable" (28). Nor, for that matter, are they wholly autonomous from one another; Massey's point is to underline that we cannot reduce representations or knowledge of the real to the real-concrete, that the world does not retain its reality within the realm of representation. Consequently, the subject-object distinction between "real" and imagined space becomes inoperable. Social and cultural factors inform and are informed by conceptions and representations of space and place and must be understood within that context.[29] The temptation to indulge in the vulgar empiricism of space, undoubtedly a symptom of our daily, tactile experience in the world, can have no place in rigorous spatiotemporal analysis.

[29] Derek Gregory, in the introduction of *Geographical Imaginations* (1994), describes the interconnection of geography and social theory and comes to a similar conclusion regarding the impossibility of any empirically-derived science of space. For him, social theory "is not the possession of any one discipline — not sociology, not even the social sciences — but is rather, that medium within which anyone who seeks to account for social life must work. I say 'must work' because empiricism is not an option. The facts do not and never will speak for themselves, and no one in the humanities or social sciences can escape working with a medium that seeks to *make* social life intelligible and *challenge* the matter-of-factness of 'the facts'" (12).

Towards a New Literary-Spatiohistorical Consistency

In the preceding pages, I have attempted to provide the critical, conceptual, and literary-historical context necessary to frame the intervention that *The Spatiohistorical Imagination in Caribbean Narrative* performs. In the three-part argument that follows, I turn my attention to the three major constellations of spatiohistorical thought and narrative that have emerged from my analysis. In each part, which consists of a preface and two chapters, I expand upon this initial framing, deepening the intellectual context at each of these literary-historical junctures. Over the course of this study, I will sketch the contours of three major periods in the evolution of Caribbean literature in French's engagement with spatiohistorical thought, each of which tending toward either universality or particularity. Again, these phases should not be understood as a kind of airtight periodization; authors inevitably reject dominant schools of thought and literary trends. Nor should this development be seen as teleological, building towards a "better" approach to the problems of history and geography.

The first part of this project focuses on the work of two historians and novelists from the Caribbean, the well-known Trinidadian C. L. R. James and the largely forgotten Martinican Léonard Sainville. The similarities between these two authors are striking: both born in the Caribbean, they emigrated to Europe in the early 1930s, where they became involved in communist and anticolonial activism, journalism, and historical research. Both published works of fiction and history that engage with a forgotten or occulted Caribbean historical legacy. I argue that the historical and historicizing narratives of both James and Sainville represent a conceptual move towards the universal in that both authors take as their starting point moments of local or regional history and employ those narratives in an effort to build Pan-African and

Marxist solidarity. Additionally, both express optimism in the possibility that history as an academic discipline can be redeemed and that, once it has been separated from colonial and capitalist ideologies, it can offer the possibility of recuperating a sense of the past. For Sainville and James, historical research on Caribbean cultural sources provides a more stable basis for development of Pan-Africanism and thus the kind of racial and anticolonial solidarity necessary to the political struggle against imperialism and later, neocolonialism. In other words, history grounded in local contexts and concerns offers a corrective to overarching visions of history that, although claiming an objectivity or universality, were in fact motivated by political and ideological assumptions developed in the West. Although the historical narratives they recount from an objective and detached point of view bear witness to a sense of time as fundamentally linear, their texts nonetheless present a trenchant critique of Western historiographical assumptions.

In contrast, the authors whose works I consider in Part II appear far more skeptical of the possibility that academic history can restore a sense of spatiohistorical consistency to the Caribbean. Although authors such as Édouard Glissant and Vincent Placoly likewise present narratives that delve into the Caribbean historical past, they tend towards increasing geographical specificity: novels such as *La Lézarde* (1959) *Le Quatrième siècle* (1968) and *Frères Volcans* (1983) all occur in Martinique and present alternative, albeit discontinuous, visions of the past. Temporal consistency falls by the wayside as these authors delve into the cultural specificity of their island, and as a result, these narratives present nonlinear, fragmented narratives that emanate from multiple or intentionally undifferentiated perspectives. If these authors show, both in their form and meaning, a distinct pessimism towards the possibility of restoring the continuity of Caribbean historical narratives, they succeed in creating a culturally-specific sense

of place, a form of creole identity or a process of identification that appears well-developed in the texts of their successors.

The third part of this study considers the most recent phase of the Caribbean spatiohistorical imagination and engages with writers who return towards the pole of universality but with a significantly different modal variations than that of their anticolonial predecessors. This is the literature of the second Caribbean diaspora, stories of individuals who travel across an increasingly globalized world and for whom the geographically-grounded perspective of authors like Glissant and Placoly is unavailable. In addition to negotiating the perils and problematics of migration itself, these authors must contend with the expectations of the transnational and postcolonial literary marketplace, one which exerts specific pressures on the writers it englobes. I begin with the work of Edwidge Danticat, one of the best-know authors of Haitian origin in the anglophone world. In novels such as *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994), *The Farming of Bones* (1998), and *The Dew Breaker* (2004), Danticat explores the experience of Haitian people who, forced from their homes in the wake of personal or political catastrophe, must work to come to terms both with the contingency of their migrant lives and the intergenerational legacy of memory and trauma. Danticat's status as a writer of widely-recognized brilliance and a Haitian-American woman marks her as a kind of archetype of the postcolonial author and has become a leading spokesperson for the Haitian diaspora in America. In sharp contrast, Dany Laferrière, well-known for his semi-autobiographical novels that explore both his memories of his childhood in Haiti and his life as an aspiring (and later, successful) author in contemporary Montreal, explicitly rejects attempts to explain his work through the prism of his origins. Of particular interest are the formal and tonal differences between his texts set in Montreal and Haiti. His novels set in Haiti, for example *L'Odeur du café* (1991), *Le Goût des jeunes filles* (1992), and *L'Énigme du retour* (2009), present portraits of life under the Duvalier regime and its

aftermath and take a serious and often elegiac tone. In contrast, novels like *Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer* (1985), *Cette grenade dans la main du jeune Nègre est-elle une arme ou un fruit?* (1993) or *Je suis un écrivain japonais* (2008), he adopts a playful, irreverent, and often burlesque style and interrogates, often with great irony, the nature of national identity, cultural affiliation, and artistic individualism.

As is the case with any work of criticism, I leave out more than I include. In Part One, I choose to focus my analysis on the work of writers at the margins of Negritude, Sainville and James, neglecting better-known luminaries like Césaire or Senghor. Part Two will give but passing attention to the texts of the Créolité movement, such as Chamoiseau's *Texaco* (1992), Raphaël Confiant's *Le Nègre et l'Amiral* (1988), and priviledges Glissant's earliest novel, *La Lézarde,* at the expense of his subsequent fiction. My final section considers but two of the contemporary Caribbean authors whose work represents the second Caribbean diaspora and responds to the increasing globalization of Caribbean narratives. Nowhere do I address the novels of Maryse Condé; despite my immense admiration for the quality and originality of her work, her novels defy classification and periodization. Despite the inadequacies of this study, I believe that the implications of its overarching argument justify the breadth of its scope and indicate new and productive directions in the study of Caribbean literature.

Part One

Decolonizing Universalism:

The Caribbean Historian and the Geographies of World Revolution

Preface

Universal History Matters

"… with global challenges on every level, from the most material to the most moral, universal history matters."

Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*

The title of this section can be read two ways, but both readings designate facets of the same political and theoretical project that Caribbean historians, and here I will focus on C. L. R. James and Léonard Sainville, enacted in the period leading up to and during decolonization of most of Africa and the Caribbean. One facet of the project involves decolonizing the universalizing principles, inherited from European Enlightenment thought, that underpinned mid-century Marxist dogma. While embracing a Marxist theoretical orientation, they demonstrate how the particularist myopia of Marx and his predecessors, Hegel and Kant among others, neglects the world-historical importance of Caribbean history and its central role in the development of what Immanuel Wallerstein has called the modern world-system. The other facet of the project consists of the elaboration of a universalizing worldview and historical perspective through which the decolonization of the world might be achieved. This historical perspective, calibrated such that the narratives it features would radiate outward from their originary time-space and speak to anticolonial dissidents throughout the African diaspora, portrayed the political and cultural autonomy of Africa and the Caribbean as inevitable, the product of transhistorical rules of a teleologically structured historiography. Although the quotation of Susan Buck-Morss' study that serves as the epigraph to this preface applies, in its authors original intention, to the contemporary moment of scholarship, it aptly describes the historical

moment of two writers I will address in the following chapters. Both James and Sainville grasped the necessity of conceptualizing world revolution through universal moral and material principles. Both understood their anticolonial struggle as connected, ideologically and rhetorically, to the struggles of Caribbean historical actors from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who fought enact universal emancipation. Before examining the work of James and Sainville, we should consider what exactly the notion of universalist thought entails, both in the history of Western thought and in the Caribbean context more specifically.

On Universalism and Particularism

The concept of the universal, as an epistemological quality designating a transcendent, all-encompassing form of knowledge or moral principle, has, in recent decades, garnered a distinctly sordid reputation. It conjures images of religious fundamentalism, uncritical faith in notions of reason and objectivity, or a systematizing, homogenizing, Eurocentric intellectual discourse that served and continues to serve to justify the misdeeds of centuries of colonial and imperial endeavors. Yet, at the same time, in political dissident thought, such as that of many anticolonial activists, functions through an appeal to the concept of natural rights, that is, the idea that rights to liberty, equal opportunity, and social justice are universally applicable principles that should apply consistently to all humankind. Although the aforementioned examples tend toward the spectrum of political thought, universalism and particularism, understood as epistemological qualities, likewise apply to concepts of time and space. Thinking through history and geography can constitute a decisive political gesture.

As epistemological qualities, universalism and particularism have a history of their own, of their deployment and development over the course of time. This history deserves some exposition. Although a thoroughgoing account of universalism and particularism in human

philosophy and thought far exceeds the scope of this preliminary excursus, a consideration of Ernesto Laclau's 1992 essay "Universalism, Particularism, and the Question of Identity" will provide, at the very least, sufficient context to understand how the role universalism in the Marxist historiographic schema through which my primary interlocutors, James and Sainville, might have conceptualized the role of Caribbean history within a wider universal history. In 1992, the balkanization of eastern Europe following the breakdown of the Soviet Union, anti-immigrant hostility in western Europe, and continued identitarian contestation in the United States led Laclau to understand the moment as one in which a politics of particularism had become particularly intense and reflect on the configuration of particularism and universalism itself. "Now the question arises" he begins, "Is this proliferation thinkable just as proliferation—i.e., simply in terms of its multiplicity? Is particularism thinkable just as particularism, only out of the differential dimension that it asserts? Are the relations between universalism and particularism simple relations of mutual exclusion?" (84). For Laclau, however, no simple answer will suffice.

He begins formulating a response to these questions with a short history of the relationship of the universal and the particular in European thought that, despite its imprecision and somewhat schematic nature will be of some use. "A first approach" which he identifies with classical ancient philosophy, "asserts that there is an uncontaminated dividing line between the universal and the particular, and that the pole of the universal is entirely graspable by reason. In that case there is no possible mediation between universality and particularity: the particular can only *corrupt* the universal" (84). The problem with this initial position lies in its inability to account for the frontier between the two: if that frontier lies within the domain of the particular, then the universal is reduced to a "limitless exclusion, and if the universal comports its own frontier, then its claims to universality appear irrational. Another approach, which Laclau

identifies with Christian eschatology, holds that comprehension of the totality of the world "exists, but it is God's, not ours, so that it is not accessible to human reason" (85). The only means of access to the universal thus became the eschatological inevitability found at the end of temporal sequence, or in other words, the final revelation. Seemingly paradoxically, Laclau argues that this conception indelibly conditions the European intellectual tradition in that it posits a "privileged agent of history, whose particular body is the expression of a universality transcending it. The modern idea of a universal class and the various forms of Eurocentrism are nothing but distant historical effects of this logic of incarnation" (85).

The final stage in the development of this relationship emerges out of the European Enlightenment, when reason once again came into value, replacing the notion of incarnation central to the Christian framework:

> this was the task of Hegel and Marx, who asserted the total transparency, in absolute knowledge, of the real to reason. The body of the proletariat was no longer a particular body in which a universality external to it had to be incarnated. Rather, it was a body in which the distinction between particularity and universality was canceled; as a result, the need for any incarnation was eradicated. (86)

But this development again leads to paradox: the social body in which particularity and universality were to be reconciled, i.e. Marx's proletariat, remained a particular body, particular to "European culture of the nineteenth century" (86). Laclau notes that European particularism took on, in its own self-conception, the function of the universal, that is, it sought to universalize its particularism. His explanation as to how this contradictory configuration could be justified is the same that Wallerstein gives in his book *European Universalism: The Rhetoric of Power*:

> Only European "civilization," which had its roots in the Greco-Roman world of Antiquity (and for some in the world of the Old Testament as well), could have produced

> 'modernity'—a catchall term for a pastiche of customs, norms, and practices that flourished in the capitalist world-economy. And since modernity was said to be by definition the incarnation of the true universal values, of universalism, modernity was not merely a moral good but a historical necessity. (33)

European imperialism thus conceived of itself as fulfilling a universalizing function that operated both spatially and temporally: just as the teleological notion of progress would advance inexorably towards the future perfection of civilization, so would the realm of the modern spread to every corner of the globe. The ostensibly self-evident virtues of modernity served to justify imperialism by positing its propagation as not only desirable, but inevitable.

This same universalizing metanarrative undergirded both capitalist imperial policy and its supposed antithesis, international socialism. Why then, did Caribbean anticolonial intellectuals, from Franz Fanon to James to Sainville, embrace a political agenda, Marxism, whose spatiotemporal teleology so closely mirrored that of the imperial ideologies they opposed? If mainstream understandings of Marxism hew to a universalizing ideology, they are not and have not been the exclusive ways in which anticapitalist struggle has been understood. Robert Young makes this point clear. Writing of the debates of the Second International, he asserts that "the question for Marxism--which remains in a sense its question even up to the present day--has always been whether to ally itself to nationalist movements or work separately from them" (119).[1] In other words, contrary to Laclau's perhaps oversimplistic formulation, the relationship

[1] Within the context of the debates, the question of whether or not to ally with national movements was controversial specifically because nationalist movements were deemed "bourgeois" and thus anathema to socialist doctrine. As manifestations of bourgeois politics, then, nationalist movements were understood as emanating from a universal class, the bourgeoisie. This classification would have certainly clashed with the self-conception of most nationalist movements, whose rhetoric demanded the satisfaction of particularist claims, such as self-rule, an end to (or at least the reconfiguration of) ethnic hierarchies, or a more equitable distribution of local resources.

between the universal (international) and particular (national) in Marxism cannot be unilaterally reduced to a single party line.[2] If we accept that this relationship was not set in stone, that, as Young convincingly demonstrates, Marxist intellectuals and activists from the colonized world were engaged, throughout the anticolonial period, in a debate internal to Marxism and worked to controvert the universalizing Eurocentric assumptions latent in the work of Marxism's most prominent theorists.

For the Marxist whose subject position did not align with these particularist-but-universalizing assumptions, they appeared plain and in need of correction.[3] Herein lies the first meaning of decolonizing universalism: James' and Sainville's project of demonstrating how the overlooked "colonial" or "marginal" histories of the Caribbean were in fact just as central to anything happening in Europe to the development of the modern capitalist world-system they sought to overturn. The result would be a decolonizing universalism capable of structuring the dissident action necessary to ending colonialism and imperialism. Their work should thus be read not as a purely particularist rejection of an overarching and inaccurate worldview, but as a correction emanating from a particularist position. I read their work as accepting of an inherent

[2] Although analogous in this instance, "national" and "international" do not serve as synonyms for the universal and the particular in all (or even most) contexts. Universal principles apply regardless of geopolitical divisions, and particularism can arise intranationally (such as with contemporary identity politics in the United States) or supranationally (for example, Kurdish people's struggle for safety in territory claimed by the nation-states of Iraq, Syria, and Turkey).

[3] Sylvia Wynter, in an essay on the interrelation of C. L. R. James' theoretics and aesthetics, writes of his identity in a way that, despite certain specificities that apply only to James, encapsulates the contradictions of the Caribbean Marxist subject position. "Given the pluri-consciousness of the Jamesian identity" she writes "a Negro yet British, a colonial native yet culturally a part of the public school code, attached to the cause of the proletariat yet a member of the middle class, a Marxian yet a Puritan, an intellectual who plays cricket, of African descent yet Western, a Trotskyist and Pan-Africanist, a Marxist yet a supporter of black studies, a West Indian majority black yet an American minority black—it was evident that the Negro question … could not be solved by an either/or—that is, by either race or class, proletariat or bondsman labor, or *damnes de la terre,* Pan-African nationalism or labor internationalism. The quest for a frame to contain them all came to constitute the Jamesian poiesis" (69)

tension between the universal and the particular, but whereas their successors appear to lose faith in the possibility of effecting that correction, James and Sainville remain committed to the idea that universalism could be redeemed.[4] As historians of the Caribbean, they understood the power and efficacy of the universal ideal: they needed only look to that seminal event of Caribbean history, the Haitian Revolution, for the proof.

A Universal Enlightenment?

Caribbean Marxist historians looked to the Haitian Revolution with from a perspective wholly unlike those of the European chroniclers whose works they freely cite (and critique). They were the first to understand the modernity-producing character of the colonial slave-system, and moreover, its overthrow at the hands of Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and the hundreds of thousands of individuals who, though their names may be lost to history, changed the course of world history by refusing a social order that denied them their rightful status as human beings. If Jean Jaurès was capable of perceiving how plantation slavery in the Caribbean provided the French revolutionary bourgeoisie the economic and societal power necessary to overthrow the aristocracy and assume power, the inaugural act of European modernity. It took a dissident subjectivity like that of James or Eric Williams to understand how the former slave's categorical rejection of bondage pushed universal history beyond its hitherto

[4] Robert Young, writing in *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* of the incontrovertible Marxist heritage of anticolonial (and by extension, postcolonial) thought, argues that the forms of Marxism theorized and practiced by anticolonial activists differed from the European mainstream: "If the bulk of anti-colonialist activism and activist writing in the twentieth century has operated from a Marxist perspective, for the most part it is a Marxism which has been aware of the significance of subjective conditions for the creation of a revolutionary situation, and therefore a Marxism which has been pragmatically modified to suit non-western conditions and which does not, as a result, altogether coincide with that of the classical mainstream. As a result of that history, postcolonial Marxism does not necessarily come in recognizable universal western forms" (6-7)

limited dimensions.[5] As Susan Buck-Morss writes, "Toussaint Louverture's constitution of 1801, without a doubt, took universal history to the farthest point of progress by extending the principle of Liberty to all residents regardless of race, including political refugees who sought asylum from slavery elsewhere, compelling the French Jacobins (at least temporarily) to follow their lead" (94). These arguments go beyond the restitution of a recognition of the historical agency of non-European Caribbean actors by calling into question the historiography of modernity itself, all the way back to its roots in the Enlightenment.

But framing the Haitian Revolution as the most radical extension of Enlightenment ideals of liberty and progress begs the questions: what (is the) Enlightenment? As Michel-Rolph Trouillot famously argued, the major figures of the European Enlightenment were wholly unprepared to grasp the significance of the Haitian Revolution as exemplary of the abstract ideals that they had formulated. "The Haitian Revolution," he writes, "entered history with the peculiar characteristic of being unthinkable even as it happened. Official debates and publications of the times, including the long list of pamphlets on Saint-Domingue published in France from 1970 to 1904, reveal the incapacity of most contemporaries to understand the ongoing revolution on its own terms" (73). Trouillot's assertion that the Haitian Revolution had "its own terms" suggests an incongruence between the ideological positions taken by the revolutionaries of Saint-Domingue and those staked out by European intellectuals.[6] Whether or not Condorcet, Kant, Hegel, or any of their contemporaries were unwilling or unable to grasp the significance of the

[5] Nick Nesbitt concurs, writing in *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment*, that "In part a result of his dual position as black Caribbean subject of colonialism and subject to a liberationist, anticolonial communism, James is perhaps the first commentator to envision the Haitian Revolution as a sequence of world-historical (as opposed to merely peripheral and secondary) events of global modernity" (129).

[6] For an in-depth discussion of the contradictions, if not incoherence of French enlightenment thinkers with regards to liberty and the slave trade, see Sala-Molins, Louis. *Les Misères Des Lumières : Sous La Raison, L'outrage*. Paris: Homnisphères, 2008.

Revolution matters little; the fact remains that Enlightenment philosophy failed to recognize or reconcile with its enmeshment in a material, economic system that functioned with utter disregard for the deontological moral principles they championed. Christopher Miller's *The French Atlantic Triangle* (2008) makes this point clear, noting that Montesquieu "sold his wines to the slaveholders of the Antilles, thus participating in the Atlantic triangle" (66), or that Voltaire "had stated in a letter that a good part of his wealth was invested in the Compagnie des Indes, which traded in slaves" (74). Furthermore, Miller argues that the *philosophes'* treatment of slavery was largely metaphorical and addressed "political slavery" in Europe rather than chattel slavery in Africa and the Americas.[7]

As Paul B. Miller argues, this discrepancy between the ideological principles and material practices of the *philosophes* reveals the heterogeneity of the Enlightenment itself. "Whatever the Enlightenment may have been, it was most certainly something fragmented, heterogeneous, and conflicted, represented not only by Rousseau and the *Declaration des droits de l'homme* but by Sade and the Code Noir as well, characterized both by revolution and reaction, republicanism and monarchy, reform and corruption." (18). Much like Marxism during the anticolonial period, the Enlightenment during the colonial era was not a monolithic, univocal, or even intellectually consistent movement. We can understand both the discursive practices and political actions of Toussaint, Dessalines, James, Sainville, and the "masses" for whom they

[7] Although Christopher Miller focuses more or less exclusively on the French Enlightenment, Paul B. Miller raises similar concerns regarding the major figures of German extraction: "The pattern emerges in both Kant and Hegel that though the belief in human emancipation from oppression is expressed abstractly and philosophically, an irreconcilable expression of European racial superiority and African inferiority persists in their concrete language … The thorny questions of precisely what Kant (and, by extension, the Enlightenment) meant by "people" and the nature of his thought regarding race, slavery, colonialism, and imperialism are emblematic of the unsettled legacy of the Enlightenment right up to the present moment." (9). He also notes that despite the intellectual heterogeneity of the period, Enlightenment figures nonetheless seem to be in full agreement as to the inherent inferiority of non-white peoples (11).

(successfully or not) spoke as taking part in the struggle for what Laclau (working out of Antonio Gramsci) called hegemony, that is, as Íñigo Errejón writes, "the capacity of a group to present its particular agenda as incarnating the general interest (a particular that builds a universal around itself), a contingent relation that is always incomplete, contested and temporary" (Errejón, *Laclau*). If "decolonizing universalism" served, in its material facet to seize the terrain on which the colony stood and the power to determine the political future of that territory, its discursive facet works to seize the ideological ground of universal rights and expand it beyond its Eurocentric, Enlightenment origins. As Nesbitt writes, conceiving of political and literary projects as part of a discursive struggle for hegemony

> reconfigures the traditional understanding of the relation between singularity and universality. The universal is no longer to be understood as the plenitude of an Enlightenment ideal, radiating outward from a transcendental point of perfection to illuminate humanity, but is instead fundamentally devoid of concretion, naming an impossible fullness that would ground an emancipated society. Universality is in this view a void on the horizon of the social, never fully instantiated, but always informing the struggle of different social actors to embody its promise. (*Emancipation* 135)

It is precisely such a reconfiguration that allows us to return to the question of why universalizing rhetoric might hold such an appeal to the particularist politics of anticolonial revolution: It is essential that we understand resistance to colonialism, whether it be of the colonial or anticolonial eras, not as proceeding from an established, immutable, and universal perspective or set of principles but rather as working *towards* the universal, towards an always-incomplete potentiality.

The historiographic project of redeeming the idea and the ideals Universal History, shared by James, Sainville, Buck-Morss, Nesbitt, and to some degree my own work, builds upon

an underlying assumption that deontological imperatives, natural rights, and transcendental principles not only exist but provide sound bases with which to come to terms with the question of how to comprehend and portray the temporal succession of events and processes of human societies. I understand each of these writers as practicing a form of historical though that, as Buck-Morss writes,

> works through the historical specificities of particular experiences, approaching the universal not by subsuming facts within overarching systems or homogenizing premises, but by attending to the edges of systems, the limits of premises, the boundaries of our historical imagination in order to trespass, trouble, and tear these boundaries down. The task is to reconfigure the enlightenment project of universal history in the context of our too-soon and not-yet global public sphere. (79)

In the two chapters that follow, I trace how James' and Sainville's particular experiences and particular literary and historical projects trouble understandings of Caribbean space both in their own time and in ours. I begin by reading James' celebrated historical account of the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins*, against the grain of two other texts that date from the same period in James' career: *A History of Negro Revolt* (1938) and his 1934 play *Toussaint Louverture*. The first of these two intertexts provides a geographic context for James' conception of anticolonial revolution by putting the Haitian Revolution into conversation with the history of anticolonial and antislavery struggles in North America and Africa. Then, pivoting towards a comparative analysis of *The Black Jacobins* and *Toussaint Louverture*, I demonstrate how James' framing of the revolution works to re-center narratives of the development of modernity such that the local Caribbean history he presents takes center stage in the larger drama of universal history. In the subsequent chapter, I turn my attention to the essays and fiction of Sainville, whose work challenges commonplace conceptions of the Caribbean historical

imagination during the Negritude movement, and consequently, the literary history of that movement and its place in the broader history of Caribbean letters. I end with a spatiotemporal analysis of his novel, *Dominique, négre esclave* (1951), a text that overtly positions itself as a literary supplement to a narrative occulted in the annals of colonial history: that of the *négre marron*, the renegade slave who categorically rejects the colonial slave system. Not only does this novel mark the debut of a project intending to resuscitate the historical memory of Antillean peoples through narrative fiction, it displays a keen attention to the dynamics of space and place in the plantation era.

Chapter One

Situating the Caribbean on the Stage of Universal History:

C. L. R. James' Haitian Narratives

The Trinidadian born historian and author Cyril Lionel Robert James rightly occupies, in the history of Caribbean letters, a preeminent place. Best known for his magisterial history of the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins* (1938), James sought throughout his career to promote African and Caribbean anticolonialism; as a committed Marxist, he saw revolution from below as the primary and most efficacious means of dismantling the capitalist and imperial institutions that structured European Colonialism. I identify James as an early and important practitioner of the spatiohistorical imagination because the nature of his historical intervention. Read as an ensemble, his oeuvre develops a hybrid form of narrative comporting both academic historical and literary discourse and works to locate the Caribbean as historically-grounded place within the broader world. Furthermore, James' narratives are emblematic of the tendency towards universality in Caribbean discourse because they resituate notions of universal history such that the local history of the Caribbean occupies a central position, both in terms of James' focus and those of the broader movements of that history. This universalizing tendency is particularly evident in his writings on Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution, a choice of subject matter that also marks an important step in the emergence of a Pan-Caribbean literary identity that subsequent writers such as Glissant will embrace wholeheartedly.

This chapter considers James' engagement with the Caribbean spatiohistorical imagination through an analysis of the different narratives of the Haitian Revolution, both

historical and literary, that he produced throughout his career. Although by far the best known, *The Black Jacobins* is in fact the third narrative that James creates; it was preceded by a short chapter in *A History of Negro Revolt* (1938) and by his play *Toussaint Louverture*, which was performed in London in 1934. Christian Høgsbjerg's 2005 rediscovery and publication, in 2013, of the original playscript provides a new perspective on the development of James' narrative of the revolution. By means of an analysis of *The Black Jacobins* and these two companion texts, I propose a reading of the liminal intertext that draws from both the academic and literary narratives. This broader textual context will be key to understanding how James' vision of the Haitian Revolution fits in with his conception of global historical movements. Although these works are among James' earliest, he returns to the Haitian Revolution throughout his career: in 1963 he augments the original version of *The Black Jacobins* with additional material including a new afterward and in 1967 a new version of the play, retitled *The Black Jacobins*, was first performed. That twice in his career James would simultaneously be writing or reworking dramatic and academic depictions of the revolution demonstrates to what degree both forms of narrative are interrelated.

In the first section of this chapter, I provide biographical and textual background of James' life career in order to better understand the place of *The Black Jacobins* in the context of his early works. I then situate my own argument with relation to the work of David Scott, and particularly his book *Conscripts of Modernity*, which provides a compelling, if incomplete, rereading of James' masterpiece. I argue that reading *A History of Negro Revolt* is key to understanding the geopolitics of *The Black Jacobins*, particularly with regard to James' conception of Caribbean and global modernity. Subsequently, I provide my own reading of *The Black Jacobins*, paying close attention to the spatiohistorical relation of the French and Haitian

revolutions. In conclusion, I suggest that James' historical narrative provides a model of spatiohistorical thinking that typifies the first wave of Caribbean universality.

James' Literary Past

James' past, both the collective Caribbean past he constructs in *The Black Jacobins* and his personal past that he documents in letters and memoirs, are marked by literariness. James was born in Port of Spain, Trinidad, in 1901, to an educated family. His father was a schoolteacher and his mother an avid reader of fiction. In an oft-quoted passage from a 1944 letter to Constance Webb, James writes that his "chief memory is of my mother sitting reading and I lying on the floor reading until it was time to go to bed … She was a reader. She read everything that came her way. I can see her now, sitting very straight with the book held high."[1] As he writes in his semi-autobiographical *Beyond a Boundary* (1963), James avidly read the books his mother had finished, and was composing his own stories by the age of seven or eight. James benefitted from the advantages granted by his parent's middle-class status: education and respectability. Educated both at home and in schools, he had already distinguished himself as a man of letters by the time he graduated from Queen's Royal College, immediately finding work as a schoolteacher. James began his literary career not as a historian or novelist, but as a cricket journalist covering local matches. In *C. L. R. James: The Artist as Revolutionary* (1988), Paul Buhle argues that it was his love of the sport that first put James on the path towards radical politics; a firm believer in the ideals of fair play, he saw talented black players denied opportunities because of their race, and subsequently begins writing (within the context of sports) against the systematic racism that pervaded all aspects of colonial life. Buhle writes that "no radical movement, no widely held political conception then in existence would

[1] Quoted in Buhle, Paul. *C. L. R. James: The Artist as Revolutionary.* New York: Verso, 2017.

accommodate an idea better suited to the rest of the twentieth century. Aesthetics, and not bourgeois or Communist-style proletarian aesthetics, offered the best avenue for experimentation" (24).

The portrait of James that develops in biographical and autobiographical works is that of an immensely talented and hard-working young man who, consumed by his twinned loves of literature and cricket, enters the political sphere belatedly and through the intermediary of sports journalism, and later, fiction. In the late 1920s, he begins writing a series of short stories that present scenes of the lower- and middle-class life in Trinidad, much like his novel *Minty Alley* (1936), written at the same time. Read as whole, James' early fiction presents scenes of life in Trinidad written in the style of social realism. The novel centers on an episode in the life of a young, middle-class man named Haynes, who, after the death of his mother, takes an inexpensive room in a working-class house in order to continue paying the mortgage on his mother's house, which he then rents. Haynes acts as an observer, and the narrative recounts his perspective on the troubles of the other residents. Although lacking any overt political or revolutionary sentiments, the novel presents the difficulties faced by the lower-class as well as the precarity of middle-class existence. What these texts demonstrate is that James, from his earliest publications, demonstrates an attention to the dynamics of social class, an aspect of his work that will become all the more relevant once his political engagement with Marxism comes to the forefront of his career.

But James was not blind to the social and political struggles taking place in Trinidad, and *Minty Alley* was not the only manuscript that James brought to England in 1932. Labor unrest began to accelerate after the end of World War I among the black workers, led by Arthur Cipriani, who would be the subject of James' first work of historical and political import. James wrote on cricket and national history for the *The Socialist*, the newspaper of Cipriani's Trinidad

Workingmen's Association. As Buhle observes, "James's literary bent, meanwhile, began to impel him towards a cultural politics congruent with Cipriani's radical reformism" (*The Artist* 26). By the time he arrived in England, James had written a biography of Cipriani that, originally published in 1932 as *The Life of Captain Cipriani: An Account of British Government in the West Indies*, would the following year be condensed and retitled simply *The Case for West Indian Self-Government*. This book, although less-read than James' later masterpieces, represents his first published in-depth study of anticolonial resistance and provides a close examination of the economic and social structures of modern Trinidad. Like *The Black Jacobins*, it uses a biographical structure in order to create a narrative of a broader social movement, a structure that indicates the importance of leadership to James' understanding of revolution.

If James clearly displayed a propensity for both politics and history in his early life and work, that predisposition flourished after his arrival in Britain. Spending eleven months in the Lancastrian town of Nelson, a working-class mill town, James began to frequent prominent intellectuals of the British left at the same time as he came into daily contact with the British proletariat. He became active in the Independent Labor Party, a more radical affiliate of the mainstream Labor party, and turned his attention, at least partially, towards the debates between Stalinist and Trotskyist factions of international Marxism. As Anthony Bogues writes, James' early experiences in Britain would prove decisive:

> James moved to London in April 1933 and within a few months had become a Trotskyist … Within a short period, revolutionary politics had replaced fictional/literary writing. By now James was absorbed in the study of Marxist theory. His first serious study importantly was not a classical work of Marx or Engels but Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution,* hailed by many commentators as a masterpiece of historical writing. (28)

Trotsky's complex and compelling narrative of the Russian Revolution would serve as a model for James' subsequent writing, particularly in the way that it balanced a close analysis of the crises that defined the moment with chronicling the deeds and decisions of the "great men" of the revolutionary leadership. Furthermore, it provided an example of how historical analysis could employ a method that posited transhistorical laws or principles that would allow for a logically-justified explanation of the course of historical events. But James never lost sight of the question of colonialism and how to bring about its end; in particular, the Abyssinian crisis, coupled with the rise of fascism in Europe suggested that the mid-1930's were indeed a moment revolutionary potential on par with that of the Russia in 1917.

Two years later, James, now an internationally-recognized spokesperson for revolutionary socialism and a vociferous anti-imperialist, crafts an anticolonial narrative that grapples with the question of political leadership in the moment of crisis. But whereas James was present in Trinidad for many of the events he describes in *The Life of Captain Cipriani* and knew Cipriani personally, here he turns his historical imagination towards the Caribbean past. His play, *Toussaint Louverture: The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History* distills the story of the Haitian Revolution and its leader into three acts. If the literary merits of the play have been called into question both by period reviewers and recent critics, its importance as a precursor to *The Black Jacobins* and as a testimony to James' historical imagination is unquestionable. As Laurent Dubois writes in his forward to the 2013 reedition of the play,

> this literary work is as crucial a contribution as *The Black Jacobins* has been. Written in a different register, and to different ends, it nevertheless captures the density and drama of the Haitian revolution. It bridges time and space, remarkably condensing an incredibly complex period into a series of memorable scenes and characters. It brings together the sense of an epic event with the apt portrayal of historical characters. (viii)

What the play demonstrates is that James' conception of the Haitian Revolution, from its earliest forms onward, was essentially that of a dramatic narrative centered on the story of its tragic hero, Toussaint Louverture, and his relationship with the "masses" of Saint-Domingue. James later revisits the idea of a dramatic presentation of the Haitian revolution, rewriting the play in 1967 and retitling it "*The Black Jacobins.*" The Haitian revolution is thus a narrative he returns to throughout his career, and already the work of examining its evolution within his political and historiographic enterprise has begun. Reading James' varyingly "historical" and "literary accounts of the revolution demonstrate the presence of what Kara M. Rabbitt identifies as "a clear tension between a 'literary' portrait of a powerful individual [Toussaint Louverture] and an analysis of historical materialism that remains unresolved" (128) in any of his singular narratives. The only way to disentangle these twinned ambitions will be to take into account questions of audience and political intent at each stage of the narrative's adaptation. In the subsequent section, I consider David Scott's *Conscripts of Modernity* which, although providing a brilliant analysis of the literary mode of James' historiography, needs to be nuanced through an examination of the place of *The Black Jacobins* within James' broader oeuvre.

The Black Jacobins Past and Present

If literary historians have, in recent decades, returned to James' oeuvre with a newfound enthusiasm, the question of how to incorporate his works into the fields Postcolonial, and more specifically, Caribbean studies, looms large. In hindsight, *The Black Jacobins* has come to be regarded as a seminal work of anticolonial scholarship. Although originally published in 1938, James' engagement with narratives of the Haitian Revolution both precedes and continues after this date. As such, readings of *The Black Jacobins* must consider the different forms these narratives take as well as the revisions and additions that James made at different historical

moments. The study that best and most thoroughly takes up this interpretative position is David Scott's *Conscripts of Modernity* (2004). In the third chapter of his book, Scott asserts that the most commonly read version of the text, the 1963 reedition, and particularly the afterword entitled ''From Toussaint L'Ouverture to Fidel Castro," should not be understood as wholly congruent with the 1938 text:

> In my view there is a very suggestive discontinuity between the picture each draws of the relation between slavery and modern power, and I am going to argue that the new picture of this relation alters significantly the conceptual problematic in which Toussaint Louverture's relationship to modernity might be understood and in which the story of the San Domingo Revolution, as a transforming historical event, might be told as a story for our time. (123)

Scott's reading of the two versions lays the groundwork for the conceptual move that he argues James also achieves, and furthermore, that Postcolonial scholarship as a whole should emulate James' sensitivity to the way in which a particular history need be told at a particular time.

Essentially, the argument holds that when James originally wrote *The Black Jacobins*, he did so in the heyday of anticolonial literature. With the Italian invasion of the Ethiopian Empire in 1935, nearly all of Africa chafed under European occupation. The colonial world sought independence and an end to European domination; young intellectuals fomented resistance, if not outright revolution, in the imperial metropolis. The moment called for bold action and clear intentions, and accordingly, a narrative of anticolonial resistance took form that portrayed the colonial regimes as an obstacle to be overcome. James looks to the Haitian revolution and its hero, Toussaint Louverture as a model for future anticolonial revolutions. In order to render it

suitable and relevant to the twentieth century, James draws parallels between the situation in late eighteenth century San Domingo and the (then) contemporary world.[2]

In the first chapter, entitled "The Property," he portrays both the degradations of plantation slavery and the slaves' near-constant resistance to it. Just as supporters of slavery in the centuries before abolition justified the practice by arguing that the slaves were better off on the plantations than they would have been in Africa, supports of the colonial system who were James' contemporaries argued that it brought the benefits of civilization to colonized peoples. James immediately refutes these claims and draws an explicit link between them: "The propagandists of the time claimed that however cruel was the slave traffic the African slave in America was happier than in his own African civilization. Ours, too, is an age of propaganda. We excel our ancestors only in system and organization: they lied as fluently and as brazenly" (6-7). Likewise, colonial unrest mirrored that of the San Domingo slaves. James describes how the San Domingo slaves would sing a song calling for the destruction of their white masters and their property: "The colonists knew the song and tried to stamp it out, and the Voodoo cult with which it was linked. In vain. For over two hundred years the slaves sang it at their meetings, as the Jews in Babylon sang of Zion, and the Bantu to-day sing in secret the national anthem of Africa" (18). Within a dozen pages, James has already established parallels between both colonial oppression and resistance in the past and present. Moreover, James, immersed in the cosmopolitan and metropolitan world anticolonial resistance, understood how the monumentally important but understudied narrative of revolution on a small Caribbean island could serve as a paradigmatic exemplum of the world revolution he saw as inevitable.

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[2] As Charles Forsdick writes, *The Black Jacobins'* niche is "associated with global politics in the 1930s (especially postrevolutionary power struggles in the Soviet Union), as well as with nascent anticolonialism (in particular the Italian invasion of Ethiopia)" but that "the project's origins are, however, located in the Caribbean" ("Refiguring Resistance" 226).

This observation is in itself unremarkable, as James himself acknowledges as much in a footnote added into the 1963 edition: “Such observations, written in 1938, were intended to use the San Domingo revolution as a forecast of the future of colonial Africa.” (18). James expresses much the same sentiment in the preface to that edition as well, writing that he decided to retain in “the concluding pages which envisage and were intended to stimulate the coming emancipation of Africa. They are a part of the history of our time” (vii). Here James insists both on the historical context of the original edition and its revolutionary import; the book was written and conceived as part of a particular struggle. By 1962, the year James dates his preface to the new edition, much of Africa had achieved independence, as would his native Trinidad later in the year.

For Scott, James’ commentary on his own motives, coupled with the differing focus of the afterword, leads him to conclude that the 1963 revisions indicate a major shift in James’ perspective on and treatment of the Haitian revolution and decolonization more broadly. For Scott, if the original edition was written with the intention of stimulating African decolonization, James’ thirty-page summary of the interval between the Haitian and Cuban revolutions represents

> the story of the distinctiveness, indeed uniqueness, of the Caribbean as a world-historical civilization. In ‘‘From Toussaint L’Ouverture to Fidel Castro’’ James tells the story of the Caribbean as a historically particular civilizational formation: the result of distinctive historical forces, it has given rise to a distinctive social and (most importantly) intellectual mentality. If The Black Jacobins was initially conceived and written with the decolonization of Africa in mind (‘‘as is obvious all through the book and particularly in the last pages, it is Africa and African emancipation that he [the author] has in mind’’),

> the new appendix was centrally preoccupied with the birth of a ‘‘West Indian’’ national identity.

This pivot in focus, from a form of history that explicitly presupposes a revolutionary future to one that proposes a retrospective account of cultural formation, is the same that Scott urges postcolonial criticism should effect.[3] Here, the Haitian revolution no longer figures as a model of radical revolution to follow in future political struggles, but as the inaugural event of Caribbean modernity, the history of leads directly to Castro and the Cuban revolution.

Indeed, James enunciates the connection between the two revolutions in cultural terms: “Castro’s revolution is of the twentieth century as much as Toussaint’s was of the eighteenth. But despite the distance of over a century and a half, both are West Indian. The people who made them, the problems and the attempts to solve them, are peculiarly West Indian, the product of a peculiar origin and a peculiar history” (391). From this, however, Scott concludes that the what is “peculiar” about the origin and history of the two revolutions is not, despite James’ repeated assertions, a geographical specificity (West Indian) but rather “the origin and history of modernity” (125). Furthermore, he argues that this passage indicates a significant change in James’ thought: “in the angle of this formulation alone, I think, one can discern that James’s perspective and the substance of his preoccupations has perceptively shifted from what it was in the body of the book” (125). While the second claim may be defensible within the narrow context of the textual history of *The Black Jacobins*, the first is not. If James insists on the geographical specificity of the Caribbean, it is for a reason. Rather than reinterpret his words ins

[3] Chris Bongie, in *Friends and Enemies*, takes issue with Scott’s characterization of postcolonial studies as merely rehashing the problems of anticolonial critique, arguing that “from its beginnings in the late 1970s, [postcolonial theory had] taken pains to distance itself from the blunt imperatives of the anti-colonial movements that preceded it” (260). For Bongie, however, the way in which postcolonial did so was by renouncing its overtly political orientation and attempting to ally itself with cultural studies, a move he sees as a misstep, and one that he sees Scott’s work as illustrating.

such a way as to suppress their spatial implications, a spatiohistorical mode of criticism must instead examine James' understanding of the spatial dimensions of the writing of history and the importance of regional context. In the following paragraph, James explains that the two most important factors in Caribbean history were "the sugar plantation and Negro slavery" (391). These institutions were by no mean universal traits of modernity. They developed specifically within the Caribbean basin, and as such are features of a particular Caribbean modernity that should be understood within the context of its particular contours.

In order to properly assess Scott's claim that the 1968 afterward signals a shift in James' focus from Africa to the Caribbean, it will be necessary to develop a more comprehensive view of James' spatial thought at the moment of the original text's composition. The 1930s represent an immensely productive moment of his career, and so there is a great wealth of materials to consider. Given that his first publications, the short stories, *Minty Alley*, and *The Case for West Indian Self-Government*, all focus on Trinidad, there can be no question that the idea of "West Indian civilization" would have been very much on his mind. But of particular use will be James' understudied *A History of Negro Revolt* (1938). Although published in the same year as James' better-known work *The Black Jacobins* and a year after *World Revolution: 1917-1936* (1937), few scholars have examined it. The reasons for its relative obscurity are plain: consisting of a series of short sketches of black insurrectionist movements in the Americas and Africa, it lacks the grand historical sweep of his other works. However, in that it provides a global and historical survey of black revolutions, it will demonstrate the differences and relationships between revolutionary movements, and, importantly, the sociohistorical context in which each occurs. If the organizing principle of *The Black Jacobins* is to presents a historical and linear narrative of the French and Haitian revolutions as a coherent whole, *A History of Negro Revolt* is instead organized geographically, that is, it presents a different narrative trajectory for each of the

regions it analyzes. Through an examination of the narratives of both Africa and the Caribbean it presents, I will elaborate a more nuanced understanding both of James' spatiohistorical thinking in the 1930s and the strategic reasons why he wrote *The Black Jacobins* the way he did. If Scott's analysis of *The Black Jacobins* provided a much-needed "vertical" interpretation of its textual history, I aim to develop a "horizontal" reading, that is, one that considers the geographic interrelation of this seminal moment of Caribbean history with the history of Africa and Europe.

A Geography of Black Revolution

The very first lines of *A History of Negro Revolt*, which begins without introduction in a chapter entitled "San Domingo," address the geographical divide between the two loci of black civilization: "the history of the Negro in his relation to European civilization falls into two divisions, the Negro in Africa and the Negro in America and the West Indies" (5). The primary difference that James establishes between Africa and the Americas is historical: up until the end of the nineteenth century European colonization of Africa had not progressed to the point that anticolonial unrest held great significance, and, as such, it was the antislavery rebellions that hold the most interest. The first chapter presents a highly condensed narrative of the Haitian revolution that shares most of its most interesting passages with *The Black Jacobins*. After a discussion of revolts in the United States leading up to and during the Civil War, James turns his attention to the contemporary situation in Africa, noting differences between regions such as varying levels of development and whether the form colonialism took involved widespread white settlement. He then returns to the Americas with a discussion of the importance of Marcus Garvey, whom he admires for his efficacy as a leader of a mass movement, despite dismissing his Back-to Africa movement as "pitiable rubbish" (69). The final chapter presents an overview of the three most recent flashpoints of anticolonial rebellion: Gold Coast (Ghana), Trinidad, and

Rhodesia (Zambia). Over the course of the book, James judges the character of different revolutionary movements based on the presence or absence of modern characteristics, principally levels of education and industrial organization. He sees Caribbean and West African black societies as the most developed, those of East and Central Africa to be comparatively retrograde, and the colonies of Kenya, Rhodesia, and South Africa to be a kind of hybrid between the two extremes.

In order to demonstrate the importance of this spectrum of modern character, which for James relates to levels of education and industrialization. I will examine each of these groupings in some detail, beginning with the modern Caribbean and then returning to the earlier chapter on Africa. The depiction of Trinidadian labor unrest in *A History of Negro Revolt,* like that of the Haitian Revolution, draws from James' corresponding larger work, and in this instance, *The Case for West Indian Self-Government*. He begins by stating that the long history of Caribbean rebellion, and particularly the victory of the Haitian slaves, provides for a unique set of cultural circumstances.

> The Negroes in the West Indian islands have therefore developed in a manner peculiar to themselves. The blacks speak French, English, or Spanish. They have lost all sense of their African origin and have become Westernized in their outlook. A Negro and Mulatto middle-class has emerged. Racial prejudice and discrimination, though by no means abolished, have gradually declined. Though the whites control most of the industries, the Negro middle-classes are gradually monopolizing the professions and the civil service. (73-4)

If the initial category that James uses to discern the African situation from that of the Americas was the presence of the plantation slavery system, here his emphasis is more cultural and

economic in nature. In Trinidad, James portrays the Caribbean black population as highly educated and professionalized, even if large sections of it remain impoverished.

What this passage indicates is that even if in 1938 the decolonization of Africa was the political project at the forefront of James' writing, the status of the Haitian revolution as the seminal moment in the evolution of a distinctly Caribbean culture is clear even at this early moment in his career. James began the project of developing the concept of West Indian civilization and history even earlier; as a teacher at Queen's Royal College in Trinidad, he taught the history of the region as a region, telling Paul Buhle in an interview that "I was one of the pioneers in that field Insisting that there *was* a West Indian history" (58). This conviction in the existence of a distinct Caribbean culture that could not be reduced merely to African antecedents marks a crucial distinction between James' thought and that of contemporaries like Aimé Césaire and Léopolde Sédar Senghor (as well as a fundamental similarity with that of Léonard Sainville). As Alex Dupuy writes, James

> did not share the view of the proponents of Negritude or black nationalism that the black peoples of the New World remained essentially Africans despite centuries of existence there. This is not because James sought to reject African culture in favor of Western culture, but simply because he had a historical materialist understanding of culture and argued that the predominant influences in the Caribbean were those of Western Europe. (116)

James' understanding of Trinidadian culture as creolized but predominantly Western-influenced reflects a doubly precocious understanding of Caribbean cultural formations in that it goes beyond the oft-reductive assumptions of Negritude and presages the theories of future Caribbean cultural theory, notably *créolité*. But James' interest in 1938 relates more directly to the praxis of anticapitalist resistance: Trinidadian workers and intellectuals, essentially westernized with

regards to class relations, should be understood and should organize like contemporary proletariat groups in Europe.

In typical fashion, James understands the radicalization of the underclass as necessary to revolutionary activity. Economic problems that he links to British colonial policy had, in the preceding decades, worsened the situation for the industrial workers in Trinidad. He writes that between

> 1919 and 1937 Trinidad, like the other West Indian islands, has lived an increasingly active political life. Self-government is one of the questions of the day, and the Legislative Council now has elected members. What has created the new Trinidad, however, has been the development of the oil industry, which now employs nearly 10,000 men concentrated in the southern part of the island. Large-scale industry has had the inevitable result of developing a high sense of labor solidarity and growing political consciousness. (76)

James builds towards the point that Trinidad in 1937 was ripe territory for Marxist politics: "Trade unions are being formed all over the island, and the advanced workers are clamouring for revolutionary literature of all sorts, by Marx and Engels and other writers on Communism" (79). In other words, the high level of industrial development and corresponding emergence of a Trinidadian proletariat, coupled with the presence of an educated black middle-class, means that Trinidad was, for James, in a pre-revolutionary state not unlike that of western Europe. Furthermore, the situation in Trinidad, and by extension much of the Caribbean, was radically different from that of much of Africa.

James devotes the largest chapter of the book to portraying the situation in different African colonies and develops a nuanced picture of each region. He begins with the "old colonies" of British West Africa, and specifically, Sierra Leone. James argues that the peoples of

the more economically and politically developed colonies, "are some of the most advanced in education and should be grouped with those of the West Indies rather than with those in Central or Eastern Africa" (41). Again, he insists that the decisive factor is the militancy of the proletariat. If the level of education in the old colonies resembles that of Trinidad, the state of labor and race relations does not:

> The conflict of capital and labour is intensified by the fact that capital is usually white and labour is black; this in a continent where the whites have always sought to justify their economic exploitation and social privilege by the mere fact of difference of colour. The class conflict, bitter enough in countries where the population is homogeneous in colour, has an added bitterness in Africa, which has been strengthened by the growth of nationalism among the post-war intelligentsia. The politically conscious minority increasingly realize that their future is with the developing Africans rather than with the European traders. (42-3).

In Sierra Leone and Gambia, "negro revolt" has already taken the form of labor unrest; James points to a series of workers' strikes in both colonies in the previous decade as evidence of a rapidly developing class and racial consciousness. Like Trinidad, these colonies appeared to James to be on the cusp of independence: "Should there be at any time a movement of the organized and educated blacks in the colony with a widespread peasant revolt in the protectorate, it would be difficult to prevent the Negroes of Sierra Leone and Gambia from gaining possession of the colony" (44-5)

In contrast, James characterizes the revolts of "the more primitive territories" of Eastern and Central Africa as religious revolts led not by the proletariat but by an educated leader, like John Chilembwe or Simon Kimbangu. Crucially, James portrays the economies of these regions as dominated by plantations; for example, he writes that the plantations of the Belgian Congo

were run by corporations "whose sole object was to make the maximum profit. Within these plantations which covered an area of 300 square miles and employed tens of thousands of Negroes, the companies permitted no school, no hospital and no missions" (48). Both the mode of economic exploitation and social organization of these colonies closely resembles that of pre-revolutionary Haiti, albeit without chattel slavery. Furthermore, charismatic leaders like Kimbangu used religious rhetoric and organizational strategies in the same ways that Caribbean revolutionaries like Mackandal and Boukman had in Haiti: "The natives left the plantations to listen to the Prophet, in much the same way as the Negro slaves in the West Indies a century before had been wont to plead religion and religious meetings as a convenient excuse for leaving the plantations at all times and without permission" (49). But unlike their Haitian predecessor, these rebellions failed; without the support of an educated middle-class, an organized industrial proletariat, or a foreign power, they lacked the resources to credibly challenge the colonial authorities.

The last region that James presents in detail are the colonies of South Africa and Rhodesia. Like Central and Eastern Africa, these colonies were economically dependent on large-scale resource extraction and used various means to compel colonized Africans to labor in mines or on plantations. Unlike the Caribbean or British West Africa, the need for manual labor stymied the development of an educated black professional class: "After four hundred years of European occupation, there are not half-a-dozen native doctors in South Africa. Over three-quarters of the native population is almost entirely without education … They are debarred by law from being even skilled labourers" (39). However, much like in Haiti in the previous century, the social circumstances created by industry resulted in the political awakening of the proletariat. Although he notes the rebellion of the Bondelzwart tribe in 1922, he argues that this older form of resistance was already an "anachronism" and that "South African industry has

brought the natives together in factories, mines, and on the docks, and the circumstances of their employment tended to drive them towards industrial organization in the modern manner" (58). This led to the development of a broad-based syndicalist movement, the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (I.C.U.), which proceeded to engage in the kind of economically-oriented unrest, that is, strikes and mass protests, that James portrays as having an essentially modern character. But despite this modern character, James again connects this movement with the Haitian revolution:

> The real parallel to this movement is the mass uprising in San Domingo. There is the same instinctive capacity for organization, the same throwing-up of gifted leaders from among the masses. But whereas there was a French Revolution in 1794 rooting out the old order in France, needing the black revolution and sending out encouragement, organizers and arms, there was nothing like that in Britain. (62)

Despite the differing societal structures in San Domingue and South Africa, James nonetheless makes the connection between them explicit where he can.

What becomes clear in James' *A History of Negro Revolt* the degree to which the Haitian revolution serves as model and reference for African anticolonial revolution, but in different ways in different places. In the Caribbean, the legacy of the Haitian Revolution is felt historically, that is, as part of a larger history of rebellion and cultural formation. The result of this particular history of Caribbean civilization is a predisposition towards revolution in the modern mode. In Trinidad, the presence of an organized industrial proletariat along with a highly educated middle class meant for James that the revolutionary possibilities of the island were analogous to those in Europe.[4] In contrast, the vast majority of African colonies, with the

[4] James' notion of the proletariat, particularly with regards to his claim that the slaves of Saint-Domingue represented a form of labor closest to that of a modern proletariat, differs from that of Marx in that it is based more on social and organizational criteria rather than categorical or

exception of those of West Africa, lack one or the other of these two crucial social formations. If James wrote *The Black Jacobins* with the intent of inspiring anticolonial revolution in Africa, it is because the model it provides applies better to territories still dominated by large-scale plantation labor. According to the kind of Marxist historicism that James employs, the revolutionary classes of these colonies simply were not sufficiently developed to generate modern and effective revolutionary movements. James presents the Haitian Revolution as a model for Africa because of the similarity of the socioeconomic structures in San Domingue and certain regions of colonial Africa. Furthermore, one of the defining characteristics of James' portrayal of the Haitian Revolution is its precociousness; one of the key narratives of *The Black Jacobins* is Toussaint's successful transformation of the uneducated masses of black slaves into politically-informed agents of the radical Enlightenment. Much as he portrays the Abbé Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes* as prophesying (and indeed inspiring) the rise of Toussaint, so does *The Black Jacobins* anticipate the coming of some great African revolutionary leader who will, in the space of years, transform the colonial subjects of Africa into a vanguard for world revolution.

The Centrality of Caribbean Modernism

In what follows, I will demonstrate how the historical narrative of *The Black Jacobins* works to situate both Caribbean slavery and the Haitian revolution at the center of the development of a global or universal understanding of modernity. This act of staging or "mise en scène" requires a careful balancing of both character and setting. Accordingly, in the preface to the first edition of *The Black Jacobins*, James introduces one of the tensions that he sees as central to the writing of history and that will pervade his narrative of the Haitian Revolution: the

analytical criteria (See Nesbitt, 2019). However, in this instance, the Trinidadian workers of the 1930s would certainly qualify as a modern proletariat even by the strictest definitions: "free" workers who exchange their labor-power for wages, they worked in mechanized sites (oil refineries, for example) where the division of labor dissociated their labor from the products (and value) created.

tension between the lives and deeds of historical actors and the circumstances and contexts in which their actions unfold. While acknowledging that the story he tells centers around his main character, Toussaint Louverture, he also emphasizes the importance of the stage on which his character acts: "Great men make history, but only such history as it is possible for them to make. Their freedom of achievement is limited by the necessities of their environment. To portray the limits of those necessities and the realisation, complete or partial, of all the possibilities, that is the true business of the historian" (x).[5] His foregrounding of the environment, social, economic, and political, of the theatre of history establishes the importance of thinking structurally, or rather thinking through how these structures permit and constrain historical actions. Accordingly, James begins his narrative with a prologue that chronicles the history of the island of Hispaniola from the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Caribbean to the establishment of plantations and slave labor in French Saint-Domingue. However rapid may be this resume of the nearly two hundred years between the debut of European colonialism and the first stirrings of the revolution that would inaugurate the first postcolonial state, its position as prologue underlines the fundamental importance of slavery to the colonial economy and the story of the two revolutions that follows.

For James, the crucial historical actors during these first two centuries of Caribbean slavery were the proprietors of the plantations themselves and both the French and English bourgeoisie, who oversaw colonial trade and supplied the proprietors with African slaves. The

[5] James' quotation, a rephrasing of the famous lines from the first chapter of Karl Marx's "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" (1852) indicates more than just the historiographical importance of Marx in his own work. It demonstrates an understanding of the French Revolution, and particularly its descent into despotism, as motivated by bourgeois concerns. But if Marx criticized the bourgeois revolutionaries of 1789 for their appropriation of classical language and politics, James deploys the example of the Haitian revolution, as we have seen, as a model to be emulated in the global anticolonial struggle. The enlightenment language that appears in, for example, Toussaint's November 5th letter, reaches a new level of force and authenticity.

colonial economic system, which was "woven tight into the economics of the eighteenth century" (26), had maintained an equilibrium that stabilized the system. The bulk of the first chapter, "The Property," details the horrific excess of slavery in Saint-Domingue, the state of the slaves themselves, and their methods of resistance. For plantation owners and colonial authorities, the brutality of regimes of control and punishment were deemed the only means of maintaining control of their slaves, who according to James, outnumbered them ten to one. However, near the end of the eighteenth century, internal and external conflicts in both Britain, France, and in the colony itself rendered it vulnerable as these actors were "moving blindly to explosions and conflicts which would shatter the basis of their dominance and create the possibility of emancipation" (26). The instability of this social environment is rendered the revolution possible: "men make their own history," James repeats, "and the black Jacobins of San Domingo were to make history which would alter the fates of millions of men and shift the economic currents of three continents. But if they could seize an opportunity they could not create it" (25). Here, James preempts the reader from misreading what follows; if, in describing the how the historical context of pre-revolutionary Haiti laid the ground for the revolution, it appears James was suggesting that the black Jacobins were merely products of their times, here he argues that their actions had global consequences that would shake the very foundations of European modernism.

In James' narrative, the importance of the Saint-Domingue plantations, and by extension, the Haitian Revolution, extends beyond the reach of the French colonial empire. He argues that the British colonial policy of the era, and especially with regards to the slave trade, sought to curtail the dominance of the French sugar growers and disrupt the French maritime bourgeoisie's exclusive commerce with the colony. In an argument that he first develops in *The Black Jacobins* but that will resurface in later works, he asserts that British abolitionism in the late-eighteenth

and early-nineteenth centuries gains political traction because it offered British merchants a means of undercutting their French rivals. Specifically, he argues that after the American Revolution, the profits from British trade with India far surpassed that of the remaining Caribbean colonies and that advocates of free trade such as Adam Smith and Arthur Young began to condemn slave labor as overly expensive. British slave merchants, instead of bolstering the labor force in British colonies, "was increasing French colonial produce and putting the European market into French hands" (53). As the French merchant marine lacked the resources to properly supply their Caribbean colonies with slaves, the cessation of the British slave trade would do more harm to French merchants than it would to their British counterparts. Had the British succeeding in conquering the colony in the 1790s, perhaps the British abolition of the slave trade in 1807 would never had occurred or would not have occurred in 1807.

In the second chapter, "The Owners," James again begins with a qualitative and moral account and judgement of the society of Saint-Domingue, which he characterizes as indulgent, ignorant, and vicious. Plantation owners, petit-bourgeois, bureaucrats, and mulattos quarreled constantly for power, influence, and profits. But however despicable was the system and those who ran it, "prosperity was not a moral question and the justification of San Domingo was prosperity. Never for centuries had the western world known such economic progress" (45). James then provides a quantitative analysis of the economic production of the colony, charting its rise to become the most profitable place in the world: "If on no earthly spot was so much misery concentrated as on a slave-ship, then on no portion of the globe did its surface in proportion to its dimensions yield so much wealth as the colony of San Domingo" (46). For James, as for Eric Williams, the profits of the plantation economy directly enable the development of capitalism, the rise of bourgeoisie as a dominant political force, and as a result, the French Revolution itself. "The slave-trade and slavery were the economic basis of the French

Revolution" he writes, and quoting Jean Jaurès' *Histoire socialiste de la Révolution française*, "'The fortunes created at Bordeaux, at Nantes, by the slave trade, gave to the bourgeoisie that pride which needed liberty and contributed to human emancipation'" (47).

Furthermore, in *The Black Jacobins*, the colony of Saint-Domingue comes to represent both a microcosm and exaggeration of the monarchical political system that had ruled France for centuries:

> This was the San Domingo of 1789, the most profitable colony the world had ever known; to the casual eye the most flourishing and prosperous possession on the face of the globe; to the analyst a society torn by inner and outer contradictions which in four years would split that structure into so many pieces that they would never be put together again … This strange San Domingo society was but a garish exaggeration, a crazy caricature, of the *ancient régime* in France. (57)[6]

Subtly but forcefully, James positions the Caribbean as the determinate stage on which the conflicts of global modernity will play out. Without the profits from the overseas trade, the French bourgeoisie could not have gained sufficient power to challenge the aristocracy in 1789 and begin the process of the destruction of European feudalism.

The affinity of the Haitian and French revolutions also grows out of structural parallels between the metropole and its colony, particularly with regard to social classes. At the top of the social hierarchy, the similarity between the plantation owners and French bourgeoisie was apparent: both chafed under the rule of law and sought to pursue their business as they saw fit. As revolution began to stir in France, the planters took aim at the King's representative, the governor, and proposed a colonial government in which legislative power would be fully

[6] In the 1938 edition, the first line of this passage reads "This was the San Domingo of 1789, worth more to eighteenth-century France than India to the Britain of to-day" (43). The revision may reflect a desire to make the argument more accessible to a non-British audience.

invested in local assemblies. Colonial representatives at the États généraux of 1789 allied themselves with the third estate, and as James suggests, unwittingly "tied the fortunes of San Domingo to the assembly of a people in revolution and thenceforth the history of liberty in France and of slave emancipation in San Domingo is one and indivisible" (60-1). What the colonial deputies failed to realize was the influence that the Parisian masses, the underclass of urban workers and servants known as the *sans culottes*, would have on the course of the revolution.

If not an industrial proletariat in the classical Marxian sense, James nonetheless draws a clear connection between the Parisian working classes and those of later socialist revolutions. Throughout his career, James consistently portrays these early modern urban workers as capable of revolution. For example, in a series of public lectures given in 1960 and published under the title *Modern Politics* (2013), he points out that the workers in the Flemish textile industry labored under a precocious form of capitalism and resultantly fought to establish a worker's polity in the Dutch city-states: "in the last half of the fifteenth century, we have fifty years of continuous battles, and of attempts by the workers in those cities five hundred years ago to establish what we can legitimately call Worker's States" (24-5). Never hesitating to dispense with Marxist orthodoxy, James pushes this argument even further by identifying the slaves of Saint-Domingue as a social formation analogous in character to the factory workers of nineteenth and twentieth century Europe:

> The slaves worked on the land, and, like revolutionary peasants everywhere, they aimed at the extermination of their oppressors. But working and living together in gangs of hundreds on the huge sugar-factories which covered the North Plain, they were closer to a modern proletariat than any group of workers in existence at the time, and the rising was, therefore, a thoroughly prepared and organized mass movement. (85-6)

The implications of this extraordinary argument are multiple. Not only does it establish the affinity of the class identities of Parisian workers and the slaves, an alliance of interests that James will comment on repeatedly, but it again repositions the Caribbean at the center of a universalizing or world-historical narrative: that of the inevitable economic transition from feudalism to bourgeois capitalism to socialism that Marxism predicts. Even if it did not result in a socialist or communist government in Haiti (which would have, in any case, been an anachronism), the Haitian Revolution represents, in James' historical outlook, the first successful instance of a revolutionary workers' movement successfully defeating a bourgeois capitalist regime.

In his fifth chapter "And the Paris Masses Complete," James argues that it was this proletariat in France that pushed the revolution further than its bourgeois leaders had intended: on the 10th of August 1792, the national guard stormed the Tuileries palace and imprisoned the royal family, and in the following weeks established the National Convention and abolished the monarchy. "What has all this do with the slaves?" James asks, rhetorically.

> Everything. The workers and peasants of France could not have been expected to take any interest in the colonial question in normal times, any more than one can expect similar interest from British of French workers to-day. But now they were roused. They were striking at royalty, tyranny reaction and oppression of all types, and with these they included slavery. (120)

The sans-culottes, who might have been expected to seek only redress of their own grievances, had adopted the enlightenment ideals of liberty and popular governance and moved to see them through to their logical conclusion. "Henceforth the Paris masses were for abolition, and their black brothers in San Domingo, for the first time, had passionate allies in France" (120). By this

point, they had identified the Saint-Domingue planters as the worst of the aristocrats and the staunch enemies of their new political ideology. “The slaves in San Domingo by their insurrection had shown revolutionary France that they could fight and die for freedom; and the logical development of the revolution in France had brought to the front of the stage masses who, when they said abolition, meant it in theory and in practice” (120). Here James underlines the supremacy of revolutionary action over ideology and rhetoric; it would be the oppressed peoples of France and Saint-Domingue who would translate the ideals of Diderot, Rousseau, and Raynal into tangible political action.

The power of the sans-culottes reached its apex in 1793 with the expulsion of the Girondins and the seizing of power by Robespierre and the Mountain. The constitution of 1793 did away with hated feudal laws and declared the political rights of the common people. It is in this moment of the revolution that James sees the greatest parallels with the next great popular revolution, that of Russia in 1917:

> As in Russia under Lenin and Trotsky, the people were told honestly of victory or of defeat, errors were openly acknowledged and where to this day reaction can only see a few thousand people who fell under the guillotine, Paris between March 1793 and July 1794 was one of the supreme epochs of political history. Never until 1917 were masses ever to have such powerful influence – for it was no more than influence – upon any government. (138-9)

This was the social and political context of what could be argued was the most radical, and at the same time fundamental, action of the French Revolution: the abolition of slavery. James carefully portrays the scene in the national assembly, quoting at length the discourses of the deputies and characterizing it as “one of the most important legislative acts passed by any

political assembly" (140). Less than a month later, Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, the republican commissioner in Saint-Domingue, unilaterally abolishes slavery in the northern and western regions of the colony. For James, the intervention of the sans-culottes was instrumental in securing abolition from the National Assembly, which in turn allowed the revolutionary government in Saint-Domingue to bring Toussaint and his insurrectionary army into the republican fold. The issue of abolition, and its importance within James' Marxist vision of the French Revolution, allows him to reinterpret the Jacobin supremacy, shifting focus from the excesses of the reign of terror to the empowerment of the working classes and the emancipation of the colonial slaves.

In these two chapters, James most thoroughly joins the narratives of the two revolutions. Here, turning to the dramatic intertext provided by the play *Toussaint Louverture* will demonstrate how James articulates the spatial relationship of the two revolutions. In the final scene of the first act, set in the mountains in the spring of 1794, Toussaint entertains envoys from both the British, now allied with the white planters, and the French Republicans. Spurning the British after they attempt to bribe him to cooperate, Toussaint receives the characters Vincent and Roume, agents of the French revolutionary commission. Roume (in whom the historical figures of both Philippe Roume and Sonthonax are combined) attempts to convince Toussaint to join them, arguing that he has abolished slavery in Saint-Domingue and therefore they should be allies. When Toussaint objects, stating that slavery still exists in all the other French colonies, Roume announces the general abolition enacted by the assembly, and Vincent, who was present, begins narrating the scene when the inner curtain of the stage rises and an inset scene, depicting the sitting of the National assembly, presents the same dialogue James will in *The Black Jacobins*.

That these two texts rehearse the same scene, both in a critical juncture of their narratives, does not fully demonstrate the degree of their interrelation. Compare for example, the stage directions following Lacroix's call for the Saint-Domingue deputies to be received by the assembly in the play with the corresponding passage from *The Black Jacobins:*

> *The motion is carried amidst applause. The three deputies of San Domingo advance to the President and receive the fraternal kiss. The hall rings with fresh applause.* (*Toussaint Louverture* 77)

> The motion was carried amidst applause. The three deputies of San Domingo advanced to the President and received the fraternal kiss while the hall rang with fresh applause. (*Black Jacobins* 140)

Not only do the two texts present the same scene and the same dialogue, James actually reuses the text of the stage directions in *The Black Jacobins*, the only changes being in verb tense and the replacement of a period with a conjunction. What this textual doubling demonstrates is to what point *Toussaint Louverture* serves as the direct progeniture of *The Black Jacobins.* Moreover, the play, enacted within the space of the theater, allows a reading of the spatial dynamics of the two revolutions that a purely textual narrative cannot. By staging the scene of assembly directly behind the action, James affirms its importance while nonetheless maintaining the centrality of Toussaint and the Haitian Revolution.

World Revolution, Regional Consequences

But despite the close association that James builds between the French and Haitian Revolutions, he also lays the groundwork for an explanation of how they diverge. Through a focus on the dynamics of social class, he makes a persuasive case that the Haitian Revolution

was not merely a slave revolt that coincided with the French Revolution but that both events were integral parts of a larger, global upheaval that itself figures within a broader and longer narrative of popular revolution.[7] This argument provides a sophisticated rebuttal to portrayals of the Haitian Revolution that focus solely on the issue of race; while certainly important, racial differences were but one of the many factors that scissioned the society of Saint-Domingue and ultimately led to its downfall. It is here that the fates of France and Saint-Domingue diverge. James writes that

> The struggle of classes ends either in the reconstruction of society or in the common ruin of the contending classes. The French Revolution laid the basis of modern France, the country as a whole being strong enough to stand the shock and profit by it, but so corrupt and rotten was the slave society of San Domingo that it could not stand any strain and perished as it deserved to perish. (128)

Here the point that James is making needs come clarification. He is arguing not that the nation of France survives the revolution whereas that of Saint-Domingue is destroyed, but rather the particular social classes engaged in political struggle in France survive to fight again in 1830 and 1848 whereas in Saint-Domingue, the conclusion of the revolution sees the end of both the planters and the slaves. If the former is destroyed in a more literal sense through bloodshed and

[7] David Scott comments on the centrality of the concept of revolution in James' thought, arguing that the "theory-problem" that James takes up in *The Black Jacobins* relates less to the question of universal emancipation than that of universal revolution. He writes that for James, the context of eighteenth-century France was less useful for "thinking about the universality of rights than for thinking about the universality of *revolution.*" Accordingly, the questions that Scott poses relate to the role of revlution in broader universal histories: "How are we to understand the incitement to, and the uses of, universal history, in The Black Jacobins? How—through what narrative and tropological devices—does James construct Haiti as a theory-problem? … In short, what is the question (or complex of questions) in The Black Jacobins to which a story of the Haitian Revolution written as universal history is deemed to constitute an answer? (120).

immigration, the slaves, as a class, cease to be as a result of their own choice to enact universal emancipation.

If the French and Haitian revolutions had evolved in tandem from 1789 up until the proclamation of abolition in 1794 but nonetheless produce vastly different results for their respective countries, their divergence cannot be explained merely by gesturing towards the differing pre-revolutionary social contexts. Rather, *The Black Jacobins* does posit a break, a kind of historical rupture between the logic of the two revolutions. However, its presentation appears somewhat oblique, elided by James' narratival strategies. After relating the scene of emancipation in the National Assembly, the text pivots back towards Saint-Domingue, examining the political consequences within the colony. For James, the moment that the news of emancipation reaches Saint-Domingue represents the moment that the allegiance of Toussaint, and with him his black army, shifts definitively to the French Republic: "Toussaint got the news of the decree sometime in May. The fate of the French in San Domingo was hanging by a thread, but now that the decree of Sonthonax was ratified in France, he did not hesitate a moment but at once told Laveaux that he was willing to join him" (143). Toussaint then proceeds to rout his erstwhile allies Biassou, Jean François, and the Spanish. In the following chapters "The Rise of Toussaint" and "The Mulattoes Try and Fail," James chronicles Toussaint's brilliant campaigns against all his opponents. Not only does he hold off the British and Spanish forces besieging the colony, he outmaneuvers his mulatto rivals, Rigaud and Beauvais, and secures the loyalty of the both the former slaves and the republican governor, Laveaux. But Toussaint's success is not merely a result of his strategic brilliance; James dwells at length on his use of republican and enlightenment rhetoric to secure the loyalty of his followers and of rival leaders. The rapidity of his victories is such that narrative must keep pace, and readers find at the end of chapter seven that it is now 1796, two years since emancipation has been declared.

The narrative's pivot towards Saint-Domingue in chapters six and seven elides, temporally, important events in France that will ultimately lead to the divergence of the two revolutions. In chapter eight, the narrative again returns to the metropole, where ominous events were taking place: "The political situation had shifted in France since the abolition of slavery without a debate, and the supporters of Negro liberty had good cause to be nervous" (177). The fall of the Robespierre and the French Jacobins in July 1794 signaled the return of the counter-revolution; even if the monarchy would remain out of the picture until 1814 the bourgeoisie would retrench their position at the top of the new social hierarchy, and with their rise came renewed efforts by the colonial planters to retake their former property (the ex-slaves) and positions of authority in the colonies. The conservative Directory cared more about maintaining French control of the colonies than about ideals of liberty and equality. By 1797, James writes, "the revolution in France was dead … the fighting enthusiasm of the old days had been broken by defeat and disappointment" (191). Meanwhile, lead by the royalist Vincent-Marie Viénot de Vaublanc, the planters succeeded in having the commissioners in Saint-Domingue, notably Sonthonax, recalled to France.

If the fall of the Jacobins in France marked the moment of divergence of the two revolutions, it was the decision to recall Sonthonax that crystallized that division for both Toussaint and the Directory:

> Whatever the reasons for his dismissal of Sonthonax, the fact itself was of enormous significance. Henceforth the French Government suspected Toussaint of a design to make the colony independent, and Toussaint feared the intention of the French to restore slavery. But the Directory might not continue in power, and no one knew what its successors would do. It is from this time that Toussaint, driven by events, envisaged the necessity of holding on to power even at the cost of defying France. (195)

For the Directory, the exigencies of maintaining French geopolitical power overrode the importance of maintaining revolutionary ideals of liberty, whereas for Toussaint and the ex-slaves, liberty was far more than an abstract political concept.[8]

For James, it is Toussaint's November 5th letter to the Directory that serves as the decisive marker of the historical break between the French and Haitian revolutions. In the letter Toussaint, who was unaware of the coup of 18 Fructidor the month prior, decries the political maneuvering of the planters and their royalist allies and assures the Directory of his undying loyalty to France. Yet, at the same time, he makes it clear that his loyalty is not to the government itself, but rather to a more abstract understanding of republican France as a political formation transcending the actual structure of the government. Toussaint makes clear in his letter that abolition of slavery in Saint-Domingue was definitive, and that its re-imposition would be impossible:

> France will not revoke her principles, she will not withdraw from us the greatest of her benefits. She will protect us against all our enemies; she will not permit her sublime morality to be perverted, those principles which do her most honour to be destroyed, her most beautiful achievement to be degraded, and her Decree of 16 Pluviôse which so honours humanity to be revoked. *But if, to re-establish slavery in San Domingo, this was done, then I declare to you it would be to attempt the impossible: we have known how to*

[8] Laurent Dubois, in *Avengers of the New World: the Story of the Haitian Revolution* (2005), writes that the Directory's decision to send Gabriel, comte d'Hédouville, a general in the revolutionary army with no colonial experiences, to Saint-Domingue as commissioner further exacerbated tensions between the revolutionary French government and Toussaint: "In his writings Louverture expressed hope for reconciliation and for unified Republican support of emancipation. But his actions suggest that he was increasingly wary of the French governments and of the fragility of its commitment to freedom. He began to make sure that liberty could be protected, even against France itself" (219).

> *face dangers to obtain our liberty, we shall know how to brave death to maintain it.* (196-7)[9]

Here Toussaint draws two determinate political distinctions: the first, between the nation of France, which would not violate its principles, and the government, which risked falling under the sway of pro-slavery royalists like Vaublanc, and the second, between France and the people of Saint-Domingue, with whom Toussaint reinforces his affiliation through the use of the plural singular "we."

This letter is both a turning point within the context of the narrative of the Haitian revolution, and in a broader historical context, one of the great political texts to have been produced, all the more so given Toussaint's background as a self-educated slave:

> Pericles on Democracy, Paine on the Rights of Man, the Declaration of Independence, the Communist Manifesto, these are some of the political documents which, whatever the wisdom or weakness of their analysis, have moved men and will always move them, for the writers, some of them in spite of themselves, strike chords and awaken aspirations that sleep in the hearts of the majority in every age. (197)

Toussaint's insistence on his people's determination to guard their liberty and determine their own fate clearly inspires James, who sees in this letter perhaps the earliest text in the black anticolonial tradition. If, as he argues in the afterword, the Haitian revolution had a unique character that distinguished it culturally from both Europe and Africa, Toussaint's November 5th letter serves as its foundational text, and perhaps further still, the foundational text of a broader West Indian or Caribbean civilization.

[9] Quoted in *The Black Jacobins*, Toussaint's emphasis.

Interpreting the Haitian revolution not simply as an antislavery or anticolonial revolt but instead as an event signaling a civilizational shift in the Caribbean marks it, in terms of its extent and import, as perhaps more important and far reaching than the French Revolution. In the following paragraph, he once again describes Toussaint and his followers as the vanguard of eighteenth-century radical politics:

> Soldier and administrator above all, yet his declaration is a masterpiece of prose excelled by no other writer of the revolution. Leader of a backward and ignorant mass, he was yet in the forefront of the great historical movement of his time. The blacks were taking part in the destruction of European feudalism begun by the French Revolution, and liberty and equality, the slogans of the revolution, meant far more to them than to any Frenchman. That was why, in the hour of danger Toussaint, uninstructed as he was, could find the language and accent of Diderot, Rousseau, and Raynal, of Mirabeau, Robespierre, and Danton. (198)

For James, not only does the Haitian Revolution play a part in the creation of European modernism, it does so in a way that, in instances such as this, actually goes beyond the contributions of French and European actors by pushing the promise of universal emancipation to its most radical end.[10]

[10] In his essay "Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution: A Reassessment of C. L. R. James' Interpretation," Alex Dupuy pushes back against the narrative of Louverture as an uncompromising militant for the ideal of universal emancipation. He argues that neither Louverture or Dessalines "defended the fundamental interests of the former slaves beyond the fact that they opposed the reimposition of the system of slavery. Both Louverture and Dessalines represented the aspirations of a newly emerging black propertied class; both wanted to maintain power through military dictatorships; both wanted to preserve the system established by the French of plantation production for export by forcefully coercing the former slaves to become a proletarian labor force on the plantations; both used their control of the state to promote the growth of a landed bourgeoisie by redistributing confiscated lands to functionaries and military officers; and both opposed the formation of an independent and landed peasantry" (114).

The transatlantic outcomes of Toussaint's politics were more than just intellectual or ideological. Quoting the British military historian John William Fortescue's *A History of the British Army* (1899), James argues that Toussaint's successful defense of the island from the invading British took sufficient military pressure off revolutionary France that it was able to survive the incessant assaults of its European neighbors. Although some historians had asserted that it was the tropical conditions, and notably yellow fever that defeated the British, James insists that the brilliance of Toussaint and his army cannot be understated:

> San Domingo was not the first place where European invaders had met fever. It was the decree of abolition, the bravery of the blacks, and the ability of their leaders that had done it. The great gesture of the French working people towards the black slaves, against their own white ruling class, had helped to save their revolution from reactionary Europe. Held by Toussaint and his raw levies, singing the *Marseillaise* and the *Ca Ira*, Britain, the most powerful country in Europe, could not attack the revolution in France. 'The secret of England's impotence for the first six years of the war may be said to lie in the two fatal words, St Domingo.' (214)

Again James insists on the decisive effect of the solidarity between the French and Haitian revolutionary classes; the French proletariat pushes the revolutionary government of France to abolish slavery, and, in return, it is the valiant actions of the former slaves that defeats the British and safeguards the French republic from all but its internal enemies.

Ironically, it would be the internal enemies of the French Republic, the allies and sympathizers of Napoleon, who would destroy the revolution and the ideals of universal rights it sought, albeit unsuccessfully, to defend. The Haitian revolutionaries would eventually defeat the armies of Napoleon, but in doing so could only safeguard their own revolution. Despite the

reversal of the abolition of slavery and the First Consul's armed invasion of the colony in 1802, James nonetheless reaffirms the solidarity of the Haitian and French people, regardless of the actions of their leaders, in his final chapter:

> There the ex-slaves of the San Domingo Revolution established their affinity with the population of revolutionary France. Between 1789 and Waterloo in 1815 the people of France staggered Europe and the world with the colossal scope of their achievements in war and in peace. No one had previously conceived that so much power was hidden in a people. (356)[11]

In Europe, the French people had shown themselves capable of destroying the millennia-old institutions of monarchy and feudalism and defeating the combined armies of Europe in six successive wars. The political structures that arose in the wake of the revolution set the stage for the rise of bourgeois political hegemony that transformed the continent and the world. But James insists that the Haitian revolution deserves equal consideration. "We see the same in San Domingo. The population had been transformed. No one could have guessed the power that was born in them when Boukman gave the signal for revolt on that stormy August night in 1791" (356). This transformation goes beyond a simple affirmation of the personhood of the ex-slaves. The National Assembly's abolition of slavery in 1794 merely acknowledged what the slaves had already accomplished, that is, their collective decision to reject bondage and to choose their own way forward. As Scott has argued, the Haitian Revolution, by destroying the *ancien régime* in

[11] Although these lines, as well as those of the following quotation, do figure among those added into the text in 1963, they merely reinforce the point James makes in the original edition, where he remarks that the more commonly known events of the French revolution were "anticipated and excelled by the blacks and Mulattoes of the island of San Domingo … liberty was far more concrete for the former slaves than the elusive forms of political democracy in France" (1938, 294).

Saint-Domingue, inaugurated a Caribbean civilizational movement that continues into the present day.

The narratives of revolution that James develops in *Toussaint Louverture*, *A History of Negro Revolt*, and most importantly, *The Black Jacobins*, mark a turning point in Caribbean literature, one I argue inaugurates an era of distinctly Caribbean spatiohistorical thought. As I have previously argued, what makes James' contribution so decisive is that he articulates a conception of Caribbean space as not only distinct from Europe but as a crucial to the course of a global history of modernity. In a particularly striking passage in the chapter describing the colony under Toussaint's rule, he writes that

> Hilaire Belloc, writing of the French Revolution, claimed that this instinctive capacity of the masses for revolutionary organization was something peculiarly French. It was an error. At the same time as the French, the half-savage slaves of San Domingo were showing themselves subject to the same historical laws as the advanced workers of revolutionary Paris; and over a century later the Russian masses were to prove once more that this innate power will display itself in all populations when deeply stirred and given a clear perspective by a strong and trusted leadership (243)

Whereas Caribbean writers from previous generations saw the Caribbean as an inconsequential if culturally distinct sphere, James argues that the history of the region, from the economic impact of the plantation system to the world-historical consequences of the Haitian Revolution, occupies a preeminent place in the Marxist historical narrative his broader oeuvre establishes. James' texts build a case as to why his readers should recognize Caribbean modernity as coexistent with that of Europe and constituent of a broader global or universal modernity consistent with Marxist historiography. This strategy, which at its root involves valorizing the local history of the

Caribbean within a broader narrative of global development and change, typifies what I identify as the first wave of universality in the Caribbean spatiohistorical imagination. In the subsequent chapter, I will consider the expression of this universalizing approach in relation to the first great literary movement in the French-speaking Caribbean, Negritude. I do so through an examination of one of the movements foundational figures, Léonard Sainville, who, despite his substantial production, has yet to receive sustained critical attention.

Chapter Two

Negritude's Problem With History: Léonard Sainville and the Narratives of Anticolonialism

Popular and critical understandings of Negritude have evolved significantly in the more than eight decades since the first publication of *L'Étudiant Noir* in 1935, the short-lived journal that marked the debut of the literary and intellectual movement. Originally constituting a novel convergence of avant-garde poetry and anticolonial politics, Negritude has, over time, come to represent a kind of prehistory of contemporary postcolonial thought and literature, a historical and historicized movement whose legacy is subject to near constant debate. As such it becomes all the more imperative that we look critically at both how the history of Negritude has been written and what role the concept of history itself played in its development. Although a full accounting of this first problem far exceeds the scope of the present essay, my purpose will be to shed light on one of its hitherto marginal figures, the historian and novelist Léonard Sainville, whose work will help to address the development of the concept of history within the intellectual framework of Negritude. Reintegrating Sainville into the Negritude canon offers a means of countering the often reductive narratives invoked to describe the movement while simultaneously reconsidering its conceptual bases. Approached from this perspective, Sainville's work displays a sensibility to concepts of culture and history that, while central to the initial elaboration of Negritude's poetic and political aims, went underdeveloped in the work of its better-known figures such as Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Léon Damas.

The title of this chapter refers to a set of conceptual problems that I will address: first, Negritude's internal problem with history, that is, the reduction of the movement within literary historical accounts to the works of its most notable writers; second, the undertheorization of the concept of history within the works of the movement's canonical thinkers; and third, Negritude's problem with the French discipline of history as it was practiced in the colonial and anticolonial periods. I argue that these problems can be addressed by revisiting the works of Sainville, whose historiographic project both situates Negritude within the context of the sociohistorical processes that engendered its call for Pan-African solidarity and enunciates a prescient challenge to the disciplinary conventions of European colonial historians. Sainville's overarching project, advancing new forms of academic and literary historical knowledge adapted to the needs of the decolonializing world, challenges both the aims of French colonial history and the political-poetical projects of his Negritude peers. In the first instance, Sainville confronts an academic discipline wholly uninterested in indigenous African and Caribbean sociocultural history and against which he struggles throughout his career. In the second, he proposes an alternative to those within the Negritude movement for whom history serves solely as an instrument for the advancement of a cultural and political agenda. Whereas better-known figures such as Césaire see Pan-African cultural production as a means to restore a sense of historical continuity to Africa and its diaspora, Sainville understands interdisciplinary research as a precondition to the establishment of a thoroughgoing sense of Pan-African culture.

I begin by considering some of the recent scholarship that has taken up the task of reassessing the formation of the literary history of Negritude as well as the conceptual role of history within the movement itself. After providing a brief overview of the life and works of Sainville, I demonstrate how notions of history, although imprecise in the writings of the Negritude canon, inform both the political and literary projects they engage, particularly that of

building Pan-African solidarity. This analysis leads to a paradoxical conclusion: Negritude seems to advocate for a renewed sense of continuity in black history while it simultaneously positions itself as marking a definitive break with the literary and historical past. In the following section, I consider Sainville's historical essays and in particular how he develops the themes of Pan-Africanism, historical continuity, and historical rupture into a coherent intellectual project. I argue that his positions prefigure those taken by later authors, historians, and theorists such as Édouard Glissant or Michel-Rolph Trouillot. I then proceed with a spatiotemporal analysis of Sainville's best-known novel, *Dominique, nègre esclave*. In this novel, Sainville uses the problems of Antillean historiography as a point of departure for one of the first novelistic depictions of the figure of the *nègre marron*. Not only does it work to revive the memory of the slaves' struggle for freedom during the colonial period, it marks the beginning of a decades-long project of developing a literary geography of the Antillean past. Finally, I consider Sainville's understanding of the relationship between history, memory, and literature and conclude with an argument for his reintegration into the Negritude canon, emphasizing how Sainville's thought contributes to contemporary debates on the legacy of anticolonial writing in the postcolonial present.

A growing number of scholars have already begun the work of reevaluating the history, development, and theoretical implications of Negritude. For example, in *Negritude Women* Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting retraces the forgotten female literary history of the movement. As she demonstrates, authors such as Suzanne Césaire and the sisters Jeanne Nardal and Paulette Nardal, despite their pivotal roles in the development of concepts such as black internationalism during the interwar years, have been largely ignored in favor of a male-centered literary genealogy of Negritude. In *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars*, Gary Wilder charts the group's emergence from the

Pan-Africanist and anticolonial organizations active in prewar metropolitan France, arguing that they simultaneously engaged in rationalist critique of colonial policy while developing a modernist poetics that offered an inherent critique of the ostensibly rational underpinnings of French imperial society. In *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World*, Wilder pivots his attention to the decolonial era, demonstrating how Aimé Césaire and Senghor saw the postwar world as a historic juncture in which the reclamation of black history could lead to the formation of hitherto unimagined futures. Nick Nesbitt's *Caribbean Critique: Antillean Critical Theory from Toussaint to Glissant* likewise posits that Césaire's decolonial project developed conceptually out of a distinctly Caribbean critical tradition dating back to the early stages of the Haitian Revolution. Reiland Rabaka argues persuasively in *The Negritude Movement: W. E. B. Du Bois, Leon Damas, Aime Cesaire, Leopold Senghor, Frantz Fanon, and the Evolution of an Insurgent Idea* that traditional representations of the movement fail to take into consideration the pivotal influence of continental Afro-American literature and theory on the founding figures of Negritude. Although this list is by no means exhaustive, it is exemplary of new directions in the writing of Negritude's history that do not limit themselves to the works of its best-known figures or the consideration of predominantly European intellectual influences such as surrealism or Marxism. As scholarship expands the field of inquiry beyond the works of the three poets seen as incarnating the movement, the first two facets of Negritude's problem with history have received much-needed critical attention; however, the final aspect of the problem, that of developing a historiographic mode proper to the movement, has yet to be addressed.

Despite his association with the widely read and studied authors of Negritude, the writings of Léonard Sainville have been understudied by scholars. Born in 1910 in Martinique, Sainville moved to Paris in 1933 where he met and collaborated with the famous figures of the

Negritude movement, including Aimé Césaire, Paulette Nardal, Léopolde Sédar Senghor, and Léon Damas. After finishing his license, he began specializing in history of slavery in the Caribbean, earning, in 1938 a diplôme d'études supérieures and eventually, a doctorat d'Etat in 1970. Just seven years later he passed away, leaving behind two published novels, *Dominique, nègre esclave*, in 1951, and *Au fond du bourg*, in 1963; two historical books, his 1950 Victor Schoelcher and his aforementioned 1970 thesis; his *Anthologie de la littérature négro-africaine*, published in 1968; a collection of essays that appeared in *Présence Africaine*; and at least four unpublished or unfinished novel manuscripts. Despite Sainville's participation in the seminal moment of Negritude's conception and the wealth of published materials he left behind, no scholar has yet addressed his work directly. Little else concerning his biography can be gleaned from the secondary sources of Caribbean literary history, as no scholar has yet written a thoroughgoing biography or monograph on his work. This lacuna is all the more curious given Sainville's position as a foundational, if marginal, figure within the Negritude movement. Reconsidering his oeuvre offers contemporary scholars the possibility of examining the beginnings of the interrelation of literature and history in black francophone thought, an interrelation central to the initial formulation of Negritude and, later, *antillanité* and *créolité*. Sainville's work supplements that of his better-known colleagues, who address the issue of history belatedly, if at all. Before examining Sainville's conception of history in detail, however, we should consider the concept's role in more commonly known understandings of the movement that developed from the work of Césaire, Senghor, Damas, and Jean-Paul Sartre. Each of these writers enunciates a different but not unrelated explanation of the role within Negritude of the historical past's legacy.

The Historical Underpinnings of Negritude

Ironically, the author who played the largest role in defining commonplace understandings of Negritude was himself not a part of the movement. In his 1948 preface to Senghor's *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française*, titled "Orphée noir" ("Black Orpheus"), Sartre lays the foundations for a psychoanalytic and Marxist interpretive model of Negritude. Although scholars of the movement have already provided in-depth critiques of Sartre's essay, a consideration of how it positions Negritude in relation to Marxist concepts of universal history will be necessary, given the degree to which it frames critical approaches to the work of Césaire and Senghor. Sartre argues that Negritude is an essentially poetic movement, an offshoot and continuation of surrealism that offers a means of rehabilitating black subjectivity through an exploration of the tortured psyche of the colonial subject. Sartre writes that historical experience provides the basis for Pan-Africanism in Negritude aesthetics and, specifically, the historical trauma of slavery:

> C'est pendant les siècles de l'esclavage que le noir a bu la coupe d'amertume jusqu'à la lie; et l'esclavage est un fait passé que nos auteurs ni leurs pères n'ont connu directement. Mais c'est aussi un énorme cauchemar dont même les plus jeunes d'entre eux ne savent pas s'ils sont bien réveillés. D'un bout à l'autre de la terre, les noirs, séparés par les langues, la politique et l'histoire de leurs colonisateurs, ont en commun une mémoire collective … Ainsi lorsque le noir se retourne sur son expérience fondamentale, celle-ci se révèle tout à coup à deux dimensions : elle est à la fois la saisie intuitive de la condition humaine et à la fois la mémoire encore fraîche d'un passé historique. (xxxvi-xxxvii)

For Sartre, the exploration of this psychological experience of this traumatic form of memory is what will allow black poets to lead their race onto the scene of what he calls *l'Histoire universelle*: "étrange et décisif virage : la race s'est transmuée en historicité, le Présent noir

explose et se temporalise, la Negritude s'insère avec son Passé et son Avenir dans l'Histoire Universelle, ce n'est plus un état ni même une attitude existentielle, c'est un Devenir" (xxxix). For Sartre, the past represents the point of departure for a poetic project whose result is the entry into history of the black race, however the project itself is destined to disappear. As Souleymane Bachir Diagne writes, Sartre believed that "the protest expressed by these self-appointed spokes-persons would eventually be but a moment fated to dissipate in the sunlight of the real struggles for liberation led by the only true actor with history on its side: the proletariat" (41). In short, Sartre's understanding of the role of history in Negritude derives more from conventional Marxist ideology than from the work of its authors, and he is more concerned with the role of the movement in universal history than with the conception of the past within the movement itself.

This understanding of shared historical experience as a basis for both Pan-Africanism and Negritude, minus the insistence on a teleology of class struggle that will ultimately lead to the disappearance of the movement, can likewise be read in the words of the movement's best-known authors. In his presentation "L'homme de culture et ses responsabilités," given at the Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists in 1959, Césaire begins his argument by positing that in the moment of decolonization in which the congress occurs, the legacy of colonialism, shared by particular countries and by the world more broadly, confers certain responsibilities on black writers and artists from both Africa and the Caribbean: not only to hasten the process of decolonization but to bring about the best forms of decolonization. This entails speeding "le mûrissement de la prise de conscience populaire" through cultural production that can "exprime et donne forme" (24-5) to the national sentiments latent in the working classes. For Césaire, writing is an inherently decolonial act in that it disrupts a colonial cultural model wherein the colonizer alone creates culture that the colonial subject consumes. For Césaire, art and literature have the power to restore "l'initiative historique" to colonized peoples and, furthermore, can

"réaffirme ou réinvente la continuité historique rompue par l'intrusion colonial" For Césaire, Wilder notes, "art was a privileged medium of true decolonization and decolonization a creative act through which black self-determination could bring forth a new era of human history" (182). Although Césaire's presentation makes clear the importance that history, and more specifically the overcoming of historical discontinuity, holds in his work, it nonetheless consistently appears as a subordinate concept, either as an instrument in the construction of a political project or as latent, inherited experience to be subsumed in the process of an act of cultural creation destined to bring about definitive historical change.

Near the end of his career, Césaire reflects on the intellectual and literary legacy of Negritude in the *Discours sur la négritude*, an address given at Florida International University in 1987. Whereas his 1959 discourse situates the movement within a teleology of anticolonial and anticapitalist struggle, Césaire's later text can be read as a kind of retrospective account of the intentions and accomplishments of the movement, a historicization intended to resituate Negritude within both its original context and that of postcolonial studies. Again, Césaire's vision of Negritude gives history an instrumental role: to actualize arts and expression in the present and offer an alternative to the dominant Western cultural model. This text, along with the *Discours sur le colonialisme*, represents the most explicitly analytical texts of an author whose work Mary Gallagher describes as being remarkable for its "limited theoretical tenor" (37). Césaire argues that Negritude was never intended to serve as a definitional ideology of ethnicity or race but rather to make reference to "une somme d'expériences vécues qui ont fini par définir et caractériser une des formes de l'humaine destinée telle que l'histoire l'a faite : c'est une des formes historiques de la condition faite à l'homme" (81). Césaire makes the distinction that Negritude is neither a biologically determined racial identity nor a purely intellectual position, but rather a response to the sociohistorical processes of slavery, colonialism, and oppression that

predominantly impacted those peoples of African extraction: "La Negritude, à mes yeux … C'est une manière de vivre l'histoire dans l'histoire: l'histoire d'une communauté dont l'expérience apparaît à vrai dire singulière avec ses déportations de populations, ses transferts de hommes d'un continent à l'autre, les souvenirs de croyances lointaines, ses débris de cultures assassinées" (82). Here, the community that Césaire refers to represents both the peoples of Africa and the African diaspora, communities whose existence is predicated on the fragmentation of the historical communities whose members were victims of the slave trade. As such, his Pan-Africanism is based not on skin color but on shared historical trauma. For Césaire along with his contemporaries, writing represented the means of confronting and overcoming the traumatisms of the past, strengthening the bonds of solidarity created by that trauma, and bringing that past into a productive conjunction with the present.

Césaire's *Discours sur la Negritude* can be read as a kind of retrospective account of the intentions and accomplishments of the movement, a historicization intended to situate Negritude both within its original context and that of the then-developing field of postcolonial studies. Furthermore, Césaire's vision of Negritude gives history a central role: to actualize arts and expression in the present, the black artist must come to terms with both the legacy of past oppression and the heritage of African culture that offered an alternative to the dominant western cultural model.[1]

[1] The growing influence of African art and cultural heritage in the early twentieth century was by no means limited to the work of black artists and authors. The pivotal influence of African art (frequently conceived of as primitivism) on European modernism, and in particular art, has received substantial critical attention. See, for example: Foster, Hal, *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007); Frascina, Francis, Charles Harrison, and Gill Perry eds., *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Gikandi, Simon, "Picasso, Africa, and the Schemata of Difference," *Modernism/modernity* 10, no. 3 (September 2003): 455-38.

Senghor, in his writings on Negritude, largely concurs. In a letter written in 1960, he invokes the cultural legacy of a black African civilization writ large: "La Negritude est le patrimoine culturel, les valeurs et surtout l'esprit de la civilisation négro-africaine … Pour être vraiment nous-mêmes, il nous fallait incarner la culture négro-africaine dans les réalités du xx^{e} siècle" (Kesteloot, 106). In his early writings, Senghor praises those authors whose writings valorize that cultural heritage while simultaneously incorporating elements of European thought. For example, in his article in *L'Étudiant Noir*, entitled "L'Humanisme et nous: René Maran" he praises the Martinican author of *Batouala* (1921) whom he sees as implementing both "la raison occidentale" and "l'âme nègre" towards the advancement of a distinctly black humanism. He writes that for Maran, "L'Afrique est … la découverte de forces neuves, et cependant pressenties. Le génie de la brousse, à travers les générations d'exilés l'a marqué de son tatouage" (1935, 4). Senghor's language invokes a kind of essentialist rhetoric that differs from Césaire's insistence on sociohistorical process for which he has been extensively criticized.[2] However, recent scholarship has challenged these conclusions; for example, Diagne insists that a "theory of

[2] The charges of essentialism that Senghor's critics have levelled against him stem from his appreciation (and appropriation) of European Africanist discourse, notably from the work of Leo Frobenius, Arthur Comte de Gobineau, and others. He argued that differences between African and European cultures stem from unique physiological and psychological traits that black peoples possess. This has led many contemporary critics, who nonetheless admire him, to castigate his work. For example, Rabaka writes that "Senghorian Negritude connects with and in some senses becomes an imperialist agent for colonial policy, colonial anthropology, and colonial ethnology. It, perhaps, unwittingly distorts the primacy of political and economic problems in the colonial world and serves as a colonial decoy, redirecting African's attention away from the political economy of their neocolonial conditions, to endless (and often mindless) comparisons with European, and particularly French culture. What's worse is that these comparisons and cultural problems are themselves grossly simplified … so as to reduce African culture to folklore mysticism, exoticism and, almost exclusively black popular culture" (203-4). For in-depth analyses of Senghor's interpretation of Negritude see, among others, Abiola Irele, *The African Experience in Literature and Ideology* (London: Heinemann, 1981); Janet G. Vaillant, *Black French, and African: A Life of Léopold Sédar Senghor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), Hervé Bourges, *Léopold Sédar Senghor: Lumière Noir* (Paris: Megnès, 2006); Pape Moussa Samba, *Léopold Sédar Senghor: Philosophe de la culture* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011).

fluid cultural combinations is very present in Senghor's work; it surfaces here and there from beneath a generally essentialist discourse, resulting in a more nuanced racialism or perhaps even de-racializing his thought" (195-6). Diagne's work demonstrates to what degree the legacy of African cultural history, and the philosophy it elaborates, informs Senghor's conception of Negritude and its relation to the past.

But for Césaire, Senghor, and Damas, Negritude was not merely the valorization of black cultural heritage; it also represents a historical break. Although they cite authors such as René Maran and Étienne Léro as predecessors, they see their movement as a distinctly new phase of black writing. For Damas, writing in the introduction to his 1947 anthology *Poètes d'expression française, 1900–1945*, the exigencies of the present demand a change in style and approach:

> C'est qu'aujourd'hui, il ne s'agit plus d'être consciencieux, de s'appliquer à ne pas violer les règles ; de jouer au nombre de pieds qui se comptent, de travailler à des sonnets impeccables … Le temps du refoulement et des inhibitions a fait places à un autre âge : celui où l'homme colonisé prend conscience de ses droits et de ses devoirs d'écrivain, de romancier ou de conteur, d'essayiste ou de poète. (10)

Damas's language emphasizes the need to break from the conventions of French and, more broadly, European poetics and instead create a "poésie nouvelle qui laisse à soi-même crever de sa belle mort, la poésie de couleur locale, la poésie créole faite de mignardises" (10). Not only does this new poetry decry the sociopolitical problems of the present day, it employs new forms of expression better adapted to the task of developing a black political and literary consciousness. As such, Negritude represents, in its earlies formulations, both a historical break and a historical continuity; at the same time that it distances itself from prior poets who merely copied French literary forms, it valorizes and reintegrates a sense of history conceived of as an African cultural legacy.

This seeming paradox, this question of whether Negritude constitutes a historical break or a historical continuity (and furthermore, how that continuity should be understood), is often acknowledged, if left unexplored by contemporary scholars and writers. For example, in *Lettres noirs: Des Ténèbres à la lumière,* Alain Mabankou writes that Negritude has a history and a genealogy that it nonetheless renounces:

> La littérature coloniale française a accouché d'une littérature dite 'nègre', celle-là qui allait revendiquer plus tard une parole interdite ou confisquée par l'Occident, permise parfois sous tutelle ou sous le couvert d'une certaine aliénation culturelle, jusqu'à la franche rupture née de la 'Negritude', ce courant qui, dans l'entre-deux-guerres, exaltait la fierté d'être noir et l'héritage des civilisations africaines … Cette continuité est celle du temps (27)

This paradox exemplifies René Depestre's assertion that Negritude was "un groupe idéologiquement très hétérogène" (138–39). It would be inadvisable, if not impossible, to attempt to posit a single vision of history common to all the writers who participated in the movement. However, by drawing out the common threads from a wide range of these authors, including those, like Sainville, who have yet to be studied, we can begin the work of creating an understanding of how debates over the role of the historical past shaped the development of Negritude as a literary and political discourse. Sainville offers a particularly salient example in that, as a novelist, historian, and political activist, his oeuvre engages all three of these concepts in both fictional and nonfictional form. Unlike his Negritude peers, however, Sainville consistently challenges the assumption of a common historical legacy shared by all black peoples and argues for the value of historical knowledge that is an end in and of itself and not merely a nebulous concept playing a subordinate role within a forward-looking political and poetic project.

Sainville's Historiography of Decolonization

From his very earliest publication, an article in *L'Étudiant noir* published in 1935, entitled "Un Livre sur la Martinique," Sainville interrogates the notion of a historical past shared by African and Caribbean peoples and recognizes fundamental cultural differences between them: "Les Antilles ont une population formée pour une énorme proportion d'éléments africains, pour une petite proportion d'éléments européens. Et cette population n'est ni africaine, ni bien moins française ... Notre peuple est un peuple noir, bien différent des autres peuples noirs" (5). Although he acknowledges that the historical processes of slavery and colonialism impacted contemporary societies on both sides of the Atlantic, he argues against an oversimplistic vision of Pan-Africanism commonly (and erroneously) associated with Negritude. Sainville will maintain and develop this argument over the course of his career as an historian; in his 1977 essay "Les Fondements negro-africains de la culture dans les Caraïbes et la lutte pour leur sauvegarde" he argues that the assumption that Caribbean culture was nothing more than an offshoot of African cultures needed to be reassessed. In language prescient of contemporary debates, he writes:

> Les peuples antillais qu'ont forges quatre siècles d'histoire vécue à travers la diaspora et l'esclavage, puis la colonisation classique et un assimilationnisme actif, formés au demeurant de souches diverses venues de toutes les parties de l'Afrique qui donnent sur la façade atlantique, constituent maintenant une sorte d'entité qu'on ne peut tout simplement aligner sur les continents d'origine. Ils sont une création d'une histoire relativement récente dans la mesure où on ne les compare pas à d'autres peuples qui plongent leurs racines dans un passe multimillénaire. (1977, 150)

This line of reasoning leads him to conclude that the cessation of the slave trade, or more specifically the mass forced migration of slaves from African nations, marked the beginnings of a distinctly Caribbean cultural formation. For Sainville, forms of Pan-Africanism that serve only a political ideology of decolonization cannot provide a sufficient basis for sounding the relationship between Caribbean culture and its African antecedents.

In the work of Césaire, Senghor, and Sartre, Pan-Africanism assumes a historical and cultural legacy shared by contemporary Africans and members of the diaspora. In contrast, Sainville holds that the kind of intellectual work required to determine the validity of such an assumption had, in 1977, yet to be accomplished: “L'unité de la culture négro-africaine que nous souhaitons passionnément et pour laquelle nous sommes réunis en ce moment, cette unité est encore à faire. Elle existe bien plus dans notre volonté que dans la réalité” (1959, 42). Sainville understands Pan-Africanism not simply as racial solidarity, but as a common cultural and intellectual project that had yet to be sufficiently developed. Although the literary work of the Negritude poets helped build solidarity among black peoples and make the case for decolonization, a thoroughgoing form of Pan-Africanism would need to be based on serious historical research that remained incomplete. He writes that

> La question n’a pas encore fait l’objet d’une étude fondamentale ni même de réflexions approfondies débouchant sur des publications … Constatons aussi qu'elle requiert une approche pluridisciplinaire et que non seulement l'historien, le sociologue et le linguiste doivent pouvoir comparer leurs analyses, mais qu'encore le psychologue, l'anthropologue et même le statisticien sont naturellement invites à préciser ou corriger certaines déductions.”("Fondements" 129)

The project that he proposes is to carefully examine the salient traits of Caribbean cultures, and here his interests extend beyond the Antilles to the greater Caribbean region, including both

North and South American plantation cultures, and determine the provenance and evolution of those elements. Although the extent of such a project far exceeds the scope of his essay, he does provide initial analyses of elements of Caribbean music, narrative traditions, and spirituality. Long before the rise of interdisciplinary studies and at a moment when historical research was still largely restricted to the study of archival texts, Sainville advocates for an approach towards this historical question that anticipates the work of more contemporary Caribbean scholars and authors such as Édouard Glissant, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant.

Unlike his colleagues who propose the assimilation of a nebulous vision of the past into the poetic consciousness of the present as a means of expressing black modernity and energizing the political project of decolonization, Sainville holds that black history should not be generalized, that four centuries of struggle against imperialism and slavery cannot be collapsed into the present. Even though Sainville manifestly agrees with the political and cultural aims of Negritude, he consistently argues that they cannot be accomplished without first engaging more profoundly with the legacy of the past:

> Il n'est et n'a jamais été question pour un homme qui regarde vers un avenir plus équitable, vers le présent qui est injuste et spoliateur, de cultiver sans discernement le passé même quand celui-ci est riche d'éléments de valeur, et moins évidemment encore quand il charrie des notions périmées ou malfaisantes pour la majorité des hommes. ("Fondements" 152).

Here, it is the notion of discernment, and the necessary attention that it entails, that will permit black humanism to accomplish the goals it sets for itself, that is, the incarnation of centuries of black historical experience in the realities of the present.

If Sainville would seem to take a position radically different from those of his Negritude peers with regards to the validity of a Pan-Africanist approach, we should also recognize that he

does not reject it outright, but rather argues that it must be supported by in-depth research into the cultural history of both African and diasporic black peoples. Despite his insistence on the cultural specificity of the Caribbean, in his 1975 article "L'Enseignement et la recherche en histoire: experiences, méthodes, perspectives" he also calls for renewed examination of the history of African civilizations:

> L'histoire africaine est pour ainsi dire encore à naître, quant à son authenticité et originalité … malgré les initiatives déjà nombreuses et répétées tendant à faire valoir des schémas qui ne sont pas sans valeur et des synthèses qui ont plus que du mérite ; malgré les rencontres d'historiens qui, çà et là, ont tenté depuis plus de dix ans de jeter les fondements d'une véritable science de l'histoire relative au continent africain et à ses prolongements. (221)

In this essay, Sainville advocates for what we can recognize as a historiographical break analogous to that of his more poetically-inclined colleagues. Specifically, he castigates a Western historiographical tradition that distorted and minimized the endogenous histories of African civilizations in order to promote and justify European imperialism. African history had been

> constamment falsifiée, délibérément obscurcie ou tout simplement niée, puisqu'elle s'est trouvée entre les mains de ceux qui avaient conquis … A côté d'une discipline authentiquement nègre, faite surtout de traditions orales et ignorant presque entièrement le document écrit, s'est imposée, avec la conquête de la quasi-totalité de l'Afrique, une histoire coloniale qui, sous son visage scolaire ou populaire, n'était que la chronique d'une longue geste européenne où sont exaltés les hauts faits d'une épopée qui n'était en fait qu'une vaste entreprise de rapines débouchant sur le génocide. (221).

The structure of Sainville's argument testifies to a fundamental understanding of history as a discourse conditioned by the relationships of power that characterize the context of its

enunciation. If this new, authentic form of African history has not yet been adequately developed, it is because the political, cultural, and intellectual dominance of Western forms of knowledge had only just begun to be challenged.

The problem with Western history, as Sainville understands it, is that while purporting to convey the truth of the historical record based entirely on Western and Arabic documentary sources, it overlooks the authentic testimony that art, oral tradition, and sociological research offer. By focusing exclusively on the actions and imperatives of European colonial agents, it fails to account for the realities of the daily life of the peoples subordinated within the colonial system. This rejection of authentically African sources by Western historians corresponds to the process of negation that Michel-Rolph Trouillot would analyze in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. For Trouillot as for Foucault before him, the context of the writing of history itself matters as much as that of the past. He writes that "what history is changes with time and place or, better said, history reveals itself only through the production of specific narratives. What matters most are the process and conditions of production of such narratives. Only a focus on that process can uncover the ways in which the two sides of historicity intertwine in a particular context. Only through that overlap can we discover the differential exercise of power that makes some narratives possible and silences others."(Trouillot 25) Sainville's intervention focuses on precisely the question of process: both how earlier colonial histories of Africa had been written and how subsequent historical research can overcome its deficiencies and give voice to the silences it imposed. He sees decolonization and the changing nature of global power relations as an opportunity for a radical break with colonial and Eurocentric models of history and the moment to vehiculate a new era of historical research capable of transcending the limits of its predecessor.

This argument, remarkably prescient for 1975, holds that popular culture and collective memory participate in the construction of historical narratives to the same degree as works of academic history.

> L'Histoire, c'est la mémoire des peuples. C'est la démarche par laquelle l'humanité se pense et se voit comme une force qui avance et qui est en perpétuelle transformation. Même quand elle n'est pas conçue et n'existe pas sous la forme narrative, écrite ou orale, descriptive ou doctrinale, d'aspect pratique ou s'élaborant sous forme de théories, elle n'en est pas moins présente, puisqu'elle est le déroulement même des activités humaines s'exprimant sous toutes leurs formes. (“L’Enseignement” 222)

This is the same approach he employs in his essay on the cultural sources of the contemporary Caribbean: examine and classify diverse cultural manifestations, consider their combinations and evolutions, and draw conclusion in order to reconstruct a vision of the past.

Sainville’s conception of history breaks from the traditional linear model and suggests the kind of multiplicity that Glissant theorizes explicitly just six years later in the *Discours antillais* (1981). Like Glissant, he decries the Western historiographical tradition’s method of conceiving of history as a chronological sequence of major events such as wars, disasters, and revolutions: “l'histoire, telle qu'elle a été et est exaltée par les penseurs occidentaux, est avant tout de caractère événementiel et donne la priorité aux faits saillants ou extraordinaires qui ont créé des traumatismes dans la conscience humaine.” (“L’Enseignement” 224). Here, his language anticipates that of Glissant, who writes that the structuring of French colonial (and specifically Martinican) history into periods punctuated by events aligns itself with metropolitan French history in order to promote an assimilationist rhetoric of similitude. The ostensible continuity of that history obtains by limiting its scope to those events that relate to metropolitan interests: “La succession des gouverneurs, l’évidente simplicité des conflits de classe, les épisodes,

minutieusement étudiés par nos 'historiens,' de nos révoltes sans cesse avortées."(*Discours antillais* 157) Underneath this apparent and continuous history of the Caribbean lies another, real and discontinuous (what Glissant calls transversal history), that cannot be synthesized into a linear form. Sainville, like Glissant, believes that history cannot be expressed in a univocal manner, and that "on rédige des traités d'histoire dits manuels d'histoire politique ou sociale, ou administrative, ou diplomatique, ou philosophique, ou religieuse, ou linguistique, ou technique, etc., qui ne sont que les différentes parties d'un grand ensemble où tout se mêle, s'enchevêtre et constitue ce qu'on appelle le passé."("L'Enseignement" 222–23) History best conveys knowledge of the past as a multidisciplinary assemblage conscious of its multiplicity.

Not only does Sainville affirm the intrinsic historical value of sources such as cultural manifestations or oral traditions but he holds that Western history's assumption of the veracity of written records and the dubiousness of oral culture does not stem from a legitimate rationalist or objective standpoint, but is rather proof of the opposite, of the corrupting influence of ideology ("L'Enseignement" 231). Although he recognizes that histories based exclusively on documentary sources do offer historical truth, they do not guarantee it, and that much of the truth of the past will remain inaccessible without recuperating other forms of historical testimony. It is in this respect that the study of continental and diasporic African histories contributes to the anti-colonial struggle: by proposing new narratives, derived from hitherto-neglected sources, that valorize the history and civilizations of black peoples. At the time of the essay's composition, the majority of former colonial possessions in Africa and the Caribbean had already achieved political independence, a fact that Sainville hails as inaugurating a new era of black history. But he also recognizes that the anticolonial struggle is far from complete: "Nous sommes entièrement sortis de l'ère de la colonisation. Mais à celle-ci s'est substituée une variante qui s'appelle le néo-colonialisme. Les Etats africains doivent encore souffrir d'une insupportable dépendance

économique qui les marque d'une réelle impuissance" ("L'Enseignement" 234). Historical research, by challenging the ideological and discursive strategies of imperialism, reveals "ce qu'est réellement l'homme noir et non pas la caricature qu'une vision du monde et des intérêts étrangers à l'Afrique ont présentée de cet homme noir ("L'Enseignement" 234).

Sainville's Negritude: Between History and Literature

But Sainville's interests were by no means limited to academic research. Just as diverse forms of cultural production constitute a potential wellspring for a reconceptualized form of history, literature, both written and oral, represents a means to mitigate the sociocultural ramifications of the historical amnesia imposed by colonial history and neocolonial economic realities. Sainville understood his work as a historian, novelist, and literary critic as part of the cultural and political struggle for decolonialization and writes of this interrelation in his 1959 essay "Le Roman et ses responsibilités." Like his Negritude colleagues, he practiced and advocated for a *littérature engagée* that aimed to both reform the European reading public and inform colonized peoples of their history and value. Whereas his more famous associates focused mainly on poetry and theater, Sainville's great interest lay in the novel, a form he saw as necessarily responding to the tensions and contradictions of society. Black novelists should "œuvrer en toute clarté et conscience à la construction d'un monde culturel, expression élaborée de la pensée et de la sensibilité de peuples, hier encore aliénés"(38) and that above all, "la vérité doit être notre seul devoir" (39).

It is here that Sainville's dual vocation as historian and novelist intersect; through fiction, his work examines and displays the historical truth of Caribbean peoples who bore the yoke of slavery and colonialism. Whereas his Negritude peers understand history as a cultural legacy that finds expression within a project of cultural creation focused on the present and future of the

decolonial moment, Sainville sees no need to detemporalize the past. He explains that the political and aesthetic task of the black novelist is to

> écrire pour le peuple, des livres qui lui disent quelle a été son histoire passée, quels sont les liens qui maintenant l'attachent à d'autres peuples frères, quelles sont ses relations avec l'humanité. Elle est de décrire ses souffrances et de lui faire connaitre quels sont les héros qui se sont dévoués pour elle; elle est de chanter son travail, ses efforts et ses vertus; elle est de lui indiquer quelles sont les voies qui peuvent conduire vers un avenir lumineux." (44)

In other words, Sainville sees narrative as a means to remediate the loss of a sense of communal history, collective memory, and historical continuity. It is toward precisely these goals that his first novel, *Dominique, nègre esclave*, works: to develop a geographically grounded sense of a Caribbean culture distinct from that of its antecedents to reframe and reimagine the revolutionary efforts of Caribbean peoples, and particularly the Maroon slave during the nineteenth century. The novel tells the story of its eponymous hero, a Martinican-born slave who spends his life struggling to find freedom in a time and place dominated by the plantation system, and concludes with the 1848 revolution and abolition in the French Antilles. Sainville employs the space of the novel as a heterotopia that allows for the comingling of the cultural and political imperatives of the moment of its composition with an accurate and detailed depiction of the historical epoch. The choice of a social-realist style allows him to interweave accounts of real, historically grounded events with the personal and private life of his hero. In the subsequent section, I consider *Dominique, nègre esclave* and how this early work constitutes a novel development in the field of not simply Martinican literature, but Caribbean literature more broadly.

Out of the Archive: *Dominique, nègre esclave*

At the heart of Sainville's literary enterprise lies a desire renegotiate the relationship between the historical time of colonialism and slavery and the geographic context in which it is embedded. *Dominique, nègre esclave* represents one of the first literary works in prose to undertake the project of developing a geographically-grounded sense of a Caribbean culture distinct from that of its antecedents. The novel tells the story of its eponymous hero, a Martinican-born slave who spends his life struggling to find freedom in a time and place dominated by the plantation system. Sainville employs the space of the novel as a heterotopia that allows for the comingling of historical time with the cultural and political imperatives of the moment of its composition. The choice of a social realist style allows him to interweave accounts of real, historically-grounded events with the personal and private life of his hero as well as those of ancillary characters. While similar to that of nineteenth century French authors such as Balzac or Stendhal, Sainville's use of realism necessarily adopts chronotopological features specific to the Caribbean setting that went unexplored in the nineteenth century. The novel constitutes a narrative transposition of that history from the confines of the historical archive into both the real and imagined spaces of the Caribbean and an early effort to recast the image of the maroon from that of a fearsome renegade to that of a hero.

Sainville's intention to restitute the historical truth of antislavery resistance through the combined media of historical research and fictional narrative becomes evident in the preface to his first novel. The inspiration for the plot develops out of a real historical incident, the trial of two renegade slaves executed for the murder of a third:

> Dans la Correspondance générale (lettres des gouverneurs coloniaux et de hauts fonctionnaires de l'Administration coloniale au Département, rapports d'inspecteurs, comptes rendus et procès-verbaux, dépêches ministérielles, etc.), confiée à la garde du ministre des Colonies ou des Archives Nationales, et où se trouve consignée une grande

> partie de l'histoire de la colonisation, le chercheur peut lire ce qui suit, dans le tome consacré à la Guadeloupe pour le premier semestre de l'année 1837. (9)

The actual historical text that Sainville quotes, the proceedings of the trial and its outcome, is notable only in that the unsuccessful argument of the defense is that the savage conduct of the two murderers was the "conséquence logique" of the immorality of slavery itself. From this relatively obscure moment in the juridical history of Guadeloupe, Sainville creates a narrative of resistance that itself appears as the logical consequence of the plantation system.

Sainville is evidently unsatisfied with the vision of history proposed by the archival text. What it fails to account for, the lived experience, the *espaces vécus* of the actors themselves and the legitimacy of antislavery resistance itself, Sainville aims to supplement through the intervention of oral and written tradition. Herein lies "la genèse de ce roman, elle m'a conduit au récit de la vie de Dominique, récit tel que les données fournies par la documentation historique et les traditions écrites ou orales, pouvaient le faire imaginer" (11) . As such, Sainville's novel represents an example of the historical vision he elaborates in his essays: one that takes in to account not only the historical documents preserved by Western authorities but also those sources and traditions discredited by the historiographic ideology of colonialism. The result is a reconstruction of the lived experience of the past that conforms to Glissant's notion of transversal history that, regardless of its use of sources unconventional in Western historiography, can more accurately and completely represent the reality of that experience:

> Si le personnage central est une fiction, il n'en est pas moins représentatif d'une condition, et sa psychologie que je me suis efforcé de rendre authentique, n'est que le reflet de celle de l'homme noir antillais en lutte contre le régime qui l'opprimait, il y a un siècle et comme elle m'est apparue à travers les textes. Authentique également, le cadre où se meut l'action, et pas un instant, les nécessitées de la création romanesque ne

viennent bousculer la réalité intrinsèque des principaux faits à travers lesquels se déroule l'intrigue. (11)

This declaration of the inherent truth-value of his novel testifies to the didactic and political aims of the author, whose text will speak to both the cruel realities of the plantation system and the continuity between nineteenth-century antislavery resistance and twentieth-century anticolonial and anticapitalist resistance.

Dominique, Sainville's central character, embodies an idealized vision of the indomitable spirit of resistance, and the general structure of the novel is organized around his life. His name itself is doubly important within the context of Sainville's ideological and spatial enterprise: the Gallicized form of the Latin Dominicus, the name became popular in reference to Saint Dominic de Guzmán, after whom both the islands of Dominica and Saint-Domingue were named. Both of these geographical referents are highly significant. Like the island of Dominica, Dominique's life, which features multiple "pérégrinations à travers les deux terres sœurs de l'archipel des Caraïbes" (24), lies between Martinique and Guadeloupe. Furthermore, Dominique is born in 1803, the year that black revolutionaries in Saint-Domingue, the pre-independence name of the island that became Haiti, decisively defeated Napoleon's armies at the Battle of Vertières and assured the foundation of the first free black republic. As such, his name also presages his long, brutal, and ultimately successful battle to attain freedom.

The novel's structure can be understood as comprising four principle phases, each of which takes place in a distinct setting. The first (chapters 1-3) begins *in medias res* by describing a whipping scene in which Dominique openly defies the colonist Donzelot, who has him imprisoned in a cell on the plantation. Sainville takes this moment of immobility in the plot to recount Dominique's childhood and adolescence in an extended analepsis before returning to the narrative present to detail his escape and flight to a community of maroons living in the nearby

hills. The next phase (chapters 4-7) relates his arrival and introduction to the renegade camp, his brief sojourn there, its eventual dispersal by the armed forces of the colonial order, and the trial of its leader (the same trail foreshadowed in the avant-propos). Chapters 7-10 follow Dominique as he escapes from his new master and leads a group of his comrades across the Caribbean Sea to Antigua, a British colony where slavery had been progressively abolished between 1834 and 1838. Although his life among the free blacks of Antigua appears happy, he falls prey to the machinations of a rival who arranges for him to be deported back to Guadeloupe at the behest of French colonial officials who secured the return of five hundred escaped slaves from their British counterparts. However, a hurricane destroys the ship carrying him to Guadeloupe and he instead shipwrecks on the coast of Martinique, where he is taken prisoner by the local authorities. The final major phase (chapters 11-13) details his life at the plantation of Jacques Marinois, a comparatively humane owner who treats his slaves with a rare degree of compassion and respect. But Marinois, facing bankruptcy, cedes his plantation to a new owner whose cruelty drives the slaves to begin a campaign of sabotage and poisoning for which Dominique is framed. Despite being extensively tortured, Dominique refuses to inculpate himself, and the court sentences him to ten years of hard labor. In the concluding chapter, the 1848 revolution begins, and Dominique escapes his chains definitively. The events of the plot in each of the four sections occur in three major chronotopes, as well as several minor ones. In the paragraphs that follow, I will examine these three major chronotopes: the plantation, the maroon camp, and the sea.

Dominique, nègre esclave contains one of the first, if not the first, novelistic depiction of life on an Antillean plantation and largely prefigures its future representations in works by subsequent authors. The plantation chronotope, which dominates the first and fourth phases of the novel, is spatiotemporally characterized by cycle and closure. Plantation time repeats itself with little variation, based on the rhythms of work: for example, planting, harvesting, shifts in

various workshops, periods of rest. Events, themselves recurring, such as birth, death and punishments, punctate these recurring cycles. The exigencies of the plantation economy strictly regulate the daily lives of slaves such as Dominique, who, from the age of ten was obliged to follow the rhythm of work: "de cinq heures du matin à six heures du soir, il se trouvait en permanence dans les cannes, soit à ramasser la paille, et à la mettre en paquets, soit à transporter les bottes au cabrouet voisin" (22). When, in the fourth phase, Dominique arrives at Morne-des-Chiens, the author guides us through the schedule of his first day.

> "De six heures à huit heures, le coutelas fit merveille ... vers huit heures ... tous les travailleurs s'arrêtèrent, comme actionnés par une méchanique ... nouveau son de flûte et les Noirs rangeant précipitamment leurs, retournèrent avec hâte à leurs occupations ... A midi, retentit au loin la cloche de l'habitation. Dominique terminait sa première demi-journée de travail" (197-8).

In these passages, the mechanical nature of time on the plantation becomes salient. The slaves respond like clockwork to the aural cues that mark the cadence of life and work.[3] Characters must evade the strict rhythm of work in order to develop or change. Indeed, the major events of the first phase largely occur in flashback; likewise in the fourth phase, important encounters occur in a nearby saloon, rather on the plantation itself.

Much like time, the space of the plantation appears highly regulated along the same lines as the hierarchical divisions of power that determined each inhabitant's place. Glissant write in *Poétique de la relation* that the plantation displays "une organisation socialement pyramidale,

[3] This mechanistic depiction of the plantation calls to mind Antonio Benitez-Rojo's description of the plantation as an "extraordinary machine" that "repeats itself continuously .. Its prototypes were born in the Near East, just after the time of the Crusades, and moved toward the West … the plantation machines turned out mercantile capitalism, industrial capitalism … African underdevelopment … Caribbean population … imperialism, wars, colonial blocs, rebellions, repressions, sugar islands, runaway slave settlements, air and naval bases, revolutions of all sorts, and even a "free associated state" next to an unfree socialist state." (8-9).

confinée dans un lieu clos, fonctionnant apparemment en autarcie" (*Poétique de la relation* 78). The spatial structure of the plantation is equally rigid: "chaque Plantation est désignée par des limites dont il est strictement interdit de sortir ... Chapelle ou église, atelier de distribution de vivres ou plus tard boutique d'alimentation, hospice ou hôpital : tout s'y traite en cercle fermé"(*Poétique de la relation* 78). Mary Gallagher's work on the representation of the plantation in literature, in which she cites examples from Saint-John Perse, Raphaël Confiant, and Joseph Zobel demonstrates that its characterization as closed space pervades Caribbean literature (147). The plantation space that most epitomizes this characteristic closure, however, is that of the cachot, the minuscule prison cell where disobedient slaves were kept as a form of discipline. It is in precisely one of such cells where Dominique spends the majority of the first phase of the novel. So dominant is the closed nature of plantation space that the principal narrative event that can occurs in it is that of the escape.

The second major chronotope that features in *Dominique, nègre esclave* is that of the maroon camp, which dominates the second phase. Within both the literary context of the novel and the historical context of plantation slavery, the maroon camp functions as what Foucault called heterotopia: a place in which the governing rules and mores of society are inversed or negated. In a society whose foremost organizational principle was racially-determined servitude or freedom, the maroon camp was an exception, occasionally tolerated by colonial authorities, in which non-whites could be their own masters. Yet at the same time, the social structure of the maroon camp includes many of the same features of the plantation and could hardly be described as a utopia. Sainville describes it as a "république authoritaire" ruled by a merciless chief named Azaïs whose role resembles that of the plantation's "gereur" or manager who sits atop the social hierarchy. Like the pyramidal social structure of the plantation, this hierarchy comprises an intermediary level of "commandeurs" who answer directly to Azaïs. Sainville acknowledges this

resemblance directly, writing that "À l'échelle des marrons vivaient et prospérait les intérêts ; les sentiments, les vices, les vertus, qui formaient le complexe psychologique et sociale de la grande société de laquelle ils s'étaient en mis en marge ; mais il y manquait l'esclavage et l'avilissement" (58). Later on in the same chapter, Sainville repeats this assertion: "La vie, au camp des Nègres marron, était, nous l'avons déjà dit, celle d'un microcosme qui reflétait les tendances, les passions et, parfois, les oppositions d'intérêt de la grande société" (81). What these two passages demonstrate is Sainville's desire to anchor his fictional invention of the camp within the sociological realities of the historical period while simultaneously presenting to his readership a space where black freedom could prosper in an era when bondage was the rule.

As such, exceptionality becomes the most prominent feature of the maroon camp as chronotope. With regards to the inscription of time and space within the functioning and development of the narrative, the camp again appears as an exception that both mirrors and inverses the rules of the plantation. Unlike the plantation, where time follows set rhythms of work, major narrative events can occur, and characters can develop. For example, it is here that Dominique first becomes a "commandeur," learns to play the mandolin, and encounters Leontine, his primary romantic interest. However, the exceptionality of the time of the camp becomes even more pronounced when considered in relation to historical time, that is the representations of the historical past preserved in both oral and textual sources. Sainville has no historical documentation on which to base his depiction of the camp; if, as Foucault argues, the archive serves as repository of the continual accumulation of time, it cannot account for those spaces that fall outside the scope of its sources, the records of the colonial authorities. Here, he turns to the possibilities afforded by literary invention to recreate the social order of a place that stands in exception to the historical record. As such, the camp reproduces, but with a wholly different valence, the spatial closure of the plantation.

The final major chronotope featured in the novel is that of the sea, and by extension, the coast and the port town, which dominate the third phase of the novel. Even more so than the maroon camp, the sea comes to represent the possibility of freedom and affords Dominique the agency to pursue his life as he sees fit. After the destruction of the maroon camp by colonial forces, Dominique is sold to a new owner, and on the way to the new plantation he perceives the ocean: "la mer bleue, la mer violette, s'étalait, large, changeante, infinie. On y voyait de nombreuses voiles, toutes blanches. Cette vision l'enivrait. Monter sur une de ces embarcations ! Ah, qu'il mettrait volontiers l'océan entre lui et cette terre maudite !" (118).[4] The sea becomes a geographic symbol of freedom and the possibility of escape from the living hell of the plantation. The approximately six months that Dominique spends on the new plantation, subject to the rigor of plantation time, pass in the space of but eight pages before he is ready to escape again. This time Dominique takes to the sea with sixty of his comrades. In the moment of their success, the sea again takes on the symbolic meaning of freedom: "En avant mes enfants! Mettons les canots à la mer ! N'oubliez pas les fusils ! À nous la Liberté ! ... Devant eux s'étendait la mer, infinie et bruyante, la brise du large emplissait les cœurs de confiance et d'espoir. Ils s'élancèrent vers l'inconnu" (126). In the next chapter, he has arrived in the fictional town of Sanderson on the British island of Antigua.

[4] This passage bears a striking resemblance to one from *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* (1845), in which Douglass looks upon boats in the Chesapeake bay and decries his bondage: "Those beautiful vessels, robed in purest white, so delightful to the eye of freemen, were to me so many shrouded ghosts, to terrify and torment me with thoughts of my wretched condition … The sight of these always affected me powerfully." For both Douglass and Sainville, the boat represents movement, liberty, and a stark contrast with the infernal state of slavery: "O that I were free! O, that I were on one of your gallant decks, and under your protecting wing! … The glad ship is gone; she hides in the dim distance. I am left in the hottest hell of unending slavery" (64-5). Although the paucity of archival documents prevents any conclusive determination of whether or not Sainville read Douglass, his autobiography had been translated into French as early as 1848.

Here, Dominique finds the freedom he seeks and the possibility of building the simple life that he desires. In a remarkable passage situated at the very beginning of the chapter, Sainville describes his hero's newfound liberty in experiential terms:

> L'indépendance sous le ciel d'Antigues n'était pas celle de la forêt guadeloupéenne. Le ciel d'Antigues était plus serein et plus lumineux. L'indépendance, sous le ciel d'Antigues prenait ses ébats dans les vagues qui déferlaient sur le rivage. Elle allait, paisible et flâneuse, par les chemins et par les routes ; elle s'arrêtait sur le bord des champs, se reposait à l'ombre des raisiniers. Elle humait avec délices l'air froid du matin qu'imbibait la rosée ; elle avait des élans d'enthousiasme et de joie juvénile pour admirer naïvement les contours bleutés des monts dans l'ivresse du réveil matinal ou la paix profonde des soirs tièdes. Elle s'attardait sur la place du village et observait avec ironie ou dans une grande indifférence, mais sans peur, le châtelain et la châtelaine ... Jamais elle ne se cachait. Jamais elle ne se montrait les dents. La liberté, sous le ciel d'Antigues, avait une autre saveur. Elle était faite à la fois de quiétude et de dépaysement. (128)

The figure of liberty, which can be read as a kind of stand-in for the main character, explores this new territory that, while possessing the same geographical features, such as coasts, mountains, and fields, as Guadeloupe, takes on a wholly new valence. Dominique's life, which hitherto "n'avait été qu'un combat, une longue défaite épuisante" (25), takes a new turn in Antigua, where, free to pursue his own interests, he quickly builds a peaceful and fulfilling life. Rather than return to plantation work, he finds employment "dans le port. Il ne le quittait guère, comme attiré par la mer, sa bienfaitrice" (128). Such is Dominique's appreciation for the sea that he becomes a sailor in order to remain close to what in his mind becomes the source of his liberty.

If in *Dominique*, the sea represents the possibility of freedom and movement, it does not represent any sort of stability. His relatively happy existence in Antigua does not last; the British

government expels Dominique and forces him to return to the French Antilles. Although destined for Guadeloupe, chance has it that the boat he travels on encounters a hurricane and he is shipwrecked instead on Martinique. Sold to the highest bidder at a slave auction, he spends several more years in bondage before definitively escaping the bonds of slavery. In the final chapter, entitled simply "1848" we find Dominique sentenced to ten years imprisonment and hard labor for crimes he refused to confess. Aged by hardship, he appears a broken man whose sole pleasures are the possibility of seeing his family through the bars of the jail window and occasionally reading a French newspaper: in sum, "c'est un vaincu" (292).

Yet, in the pages that follow, it becomes clear that the narrator's declaration is premature. When reports of the 1848 revolution in Paris reach Saint-Pierre, Dominique and his comrades begin again to hope for their eventual liberation:

> Depuis des jours, des rumeurs bizarres, sans fondement, obscures et contradictoires, ont couru le pays. On dit que l'esclavage sera aboli ... On raconte que sur les habitations le travail se relâche, que les esclaves font désormais ce qu'ils veulent. On dit encore qu'one été vus des hommes de couleur et des Blancs qui s'embrassent, qu'il y a eu des banquets où voisinaient Mulâtres, Blancs, Noirs, fraternellement réunis. Que se passe-t-il ? (292)

Sainville's account of the days leading up to the May revolution, however brief, differ significantly from the officially-sanctioned version as promoted by Third Republic historians.[5] The action reaches its climax when Dominique's chain gang encounters the crowds that descended on the Saint-Pierre prison demanding the release of a man arrested for playing the tambourine: "Une immense clameur se fit soudain entendre. La chaîne s'arrêta. Les gardiens, intrigués, relâchèrent leur surveillance. Par-delà de la place Bertin, ils apercevaient la prison.

[5] For a discussion of the historiographic problems of the 1848 revolution, see chapter four.

Une foule énorme y stationnait, vociférent" (294).[6] In the ensuing confusion, Dominique escapes and joins the revolutionary masses, crying "La Révolution commence. Vive la liberté" :

> Il la suivit partout. Avec elle, il remonta vers les Mornes du Prêcheur. Avec elle, il revint le soir dans la ville. Les révoltes l'avaient débarrassé des durs anneaux de fer. Le soir, il donna l'assaut à la maison où complotait la contre-révolution. Il suivit l'incendie, il parcourut les rues où régnait la terreur. Libre, farouche, il applaudit la révolution victorieuse et la liberté proclamée. (295)

And so concludes Sainville's novel, with the literary representation of the 1848 revolution in Martinique that forced the colonial authorities to abolish slavery and declare general amnesty for the revolutionary masses. Despite his immense strength, intelligence, and willpower, it is ultimately the solidarity of the slave community that provides Dominique his definitive liberty.

Reading *Dominique* through the prism of Sainville's critical and historical work marks it as an early exemplar of what I term, in my first chapter, the Caribbean spatiohistorical imagination. The novel effectively transposes a history hitherto largely confined to the colonial archive into the lived spaces of the Caribbean, and in the process, provides one of the first fictional depictions of the spatiohistorical contexts of that history. Unlike subsequent French Caribbean authors such as those of the *Creolité* movement, whose novels develop a tightly-focused sense of place as locality (and take place almost exclusively in Martinique), Sainville's spatiohistorical imagination roams the Caribbean basin, from Martinique to Guadeloupe, Antigua, and back again. Its seemingly conventional narrative structure (which may also account for its relative lack of success) belies the complexity and differentiation displayed by Sainville's chronotopic invention and his critical and ideological commitments. His stylistic choices, based

[6] This incident, which precipitated the insurrection and the ensuing revolution of 1848 is well attested in the historical record. See, for example, Pago, Gilbert. *1848, Chronique de l'abolition de l'esclavage en Martinique*. Fort-de-France: Desnel, 2006.

on a desire to write for a popular audience both in colony and metropole, reflect a desire to uncover, like Balzac before him, the hidden meaning of the historical past.

In final analysis, we can interpret both Sainville's fiction and historical work as making a case for a reconceptualization of the discipline of history that both challenges and develops the historiographical assumptions that lie at the heart of the intellectual underpinnings of Negritude. His essays expand on the dual themes of historical continuity and rupture that characterize Negritude's vision of the past and develop an understanding of Pan-Africanism that goes beyond simple racial solidarity and historical generalizations. Like Césaire and Senghor, Sainville seeks to reestablish a sense of historical continuity that will serve to combat the racist legacy of colonial histories, reconnect contemporary black societies to their pasts, and fight for the dignity and freedom of black peoples. At the same time, his work marks a clear rupture with that of preceding historians, who assumed uncritically the objectivity and veracity of forms of historical narrative based solely on documentary sources. Sainville's contributions to the field of historiography deserve to be put into conversation with his Western contemporaries such as Foucault and Hayden White, whose work led historians to reconceptualize the ways their discipline participated in the creation of knowledge.

Negritude has been seen as a strictly poetic, and at times political, movement to be contrasted with the more theoretically robust field of postcolonial studies. Sainville's intellectual and literary oeuvre qualifies this notion in that it strives to construct an anticolonial historiography that is well ahead of its time. My purpose is not to suggest that better-known Negritude authors should be read through Sainville's historiographical lens but rather to recognize that the movement comprised a well-developed theory of history and its relation to the anticolonial struggle. Furthermore, Sainville's work offers a new approach to the legacy of Negritude in the postcolonial era. It provides a counterpoint to the conventional understanding of

the movement as a strictly poetical-political effort to transcend and overcome the oppressive conditions of imperialism. As a movement, Negritude has been understood through this lens, and with the disappointments of the postcolonial era, it often appears as outdated or obsolete. Yet the prescience of Sainville's historiographic intervention blurs the distinction between the thought of the anticolonial period and that of the theorists of the postcolonial and suggests that the critiques of history offered by Glissant and Trouillot do not follow necessarily from the failure of postcolonial history to follow the trajectory laid out for it by narratives of anticolonial overcoming. Like the authors and historians that follow him, Sainville worked tirelessly to recuperate the silences of the colonial past and take stock of the centuries of racially motivated injustice perpetrated against black peoples. It is my hope that this essay will, in like kind, serve to resuscitate the memory of Negritude's forgotten historian.

Part Two

Emplacing History: from the Discontinuities of Time to the Poetics of Place

Preface

The Pre-Postcolonial Impasse

> Sur les terres, au hasard d'un coteau, à l'à-pic d'une colline, aux abords d'un fleuve, on découvre les signes incontestables du passé. L'imagination y réunit les hommes et le temps … La mer, elle, ne garde rien qu'elle nous restituerait ensuite. Elle engloutit chaque trace, sans le moindre souci de nos histoires
>
> Daniel Maragnès, "La Boussole et la mer"

The year is 1981. Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Guyane, nominally *départements d'outre mer* fully integrated into the fifth French republic, stagnate politically, economically, and socially. The political independence achieved by neighboring Caribbean islands such as Saint Lucia, Trinidad, or Jamaica never arrived, leaving them in a state of continued dependence on the *mère-partie*. A group of Antillean intellectuals, among them Daniel Maragnès, Edouard Glissant, and Vincent Placoly, publish a collection of essays entitled *Les Antilles dans l'impasse?*, a title whose question mark little belies its obvious answer. If 1981 marks a moment in which the perceived failure of Antillean anticolonialism comes to a head, the situation dates back to at least the 1960s, if not to the passage of the 1946 *La loi de départementalisation* that, spearheaded by Aimé Césaire, that cemented the Antilles as part of the French nation. This period, characterized by spatiohistorical dilemma, a seemingly inconsistent historical trajectory, and geopolitical inertia, saw the *mise en cause* of the universalizing historiography of the anticolonial movement and the Pan-Africanist poetics and politics of the negritude movement. A new generation of writers turn away from the future-oriented teleology of anticolonial

historiography and reinvest their spatiohistorical imagination not in the global space of world revolution but in the temporal topographies of their native islands. The epigraph of this preface succinctly illustrates this perspective: the Caribbean past is inscribed in the contours of the *mornes* and the *anses*, legible, if not in any linear fashion. The sea, which for Sainville (and Fredrick Douglass before him) represents the possibility of freedom and movement, now points back to the oblivion of the middle passage, the decisive historical break separating the Antillean from the African past.

As the first part of this study demonstrates, Caribbean authors, commencing even before the rise of the négritude movement, have made concerted efforts to recuperate, or indeed construct, a distinctly Caribbean sense of history. For writers such as James and Sainville, the imperative to reconstitute the Caribbean past formed an important component of the political struggle for decolonization and black liberation that subsequent generations of authors, such as Vincent Placoly, Patrick Chamoiseau, or Edouard Glissant would continue. Although all are invested in the elaboration of a distinctly literary form of history, the specific narratological processes of the spatiohistorical imagination, or what Bakhtin called the chronotope, display a remarkable evolution over the course of decades. This new generation of authors begin to develop new literary approaches and reconsider the spatiohistorical and suppositions that had hitherto dominated the field. Specifically, their novels testify to a fundamental shift in the conception of space-time; if, as I have argued, C. R. L. James and Léonard Sainville advocate for an engagement with local and regional history in order to situate the Caribbean within universal intellectual and cultural networks, then this new generation seeks to elaborate a means by which sources emanating from the wider world combine and develop within Caribbean space, resulting in unique spatiohistorical formations.

In the two chapters that comprise part two of this study, I argue that this turn towards the local space of the Caribbean archipelago and this new pessimism as to the possibility of restoring a sense of consistency to Caribbean history marks a shift away from the universalizing spatiotemporal vision of the anticolonial period. Furthermore, although the authors of this moment (and particularly Glissant) have frequently been assimilated into the postcolonial canon, I insist that to do so occults the particularist perspective that most clearly distinguished these writers, in the particular time-space of the French Antilles in the 1960s-80s, from their predecessors.[1] Placoly, known for his polemic writing and unwavering militancy for Antillean political and cultural independence, clearly adopts a particularist stance. The case of Glissant, who, as I have already noted, has been largely adopted into the postcolonial canon, will require a more nuanced perspective. Although the field of postcolonial studies has subsequently worked to universalize the concepts of *relation* and *créolité*, rendering them more or less synonymous with its central concept of hybridity, their genesis was indelibly Caribbean, and initially served to explain the uniqueness of the of Caribbean as a site of cultural formation. Recently, however, Sam Coombes, in *Edouard Glissant: A Poetics of Resistance* (2018) and John E. Drabinski, in *Glissant and the Middle Passage: Philosophy, Beginning, Abyss*, (2019) both write of the centrality of the Caribbean context to the philosophical engagement of Glissant's work.[2]

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[1] Celia Britton's *Édouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance* (1999) represents a paradigmatic example of the argument for Glissant's inclusion in the postcolonial canon. For Britton, the thematic similarity of the work of exemplary postcolonial theorists such as Spivak, Bhabha, and Said and that of Glissant indicates their affinity: "Such major themes of postcolonial theory as the reappropriation of history, writing and orality, hybridity, subalternity, the problematizing of identity, and the colonial construction of the Other are central to [Glissant's] work, in addition to the sustained analysis of the problem of language" (5). As I will demonstrate in more detail in chapter three, however, Britton's argument for Glissant's inclusion in the postcolonial canon bases itself on a rhetoric of particularity.

[2] For Drabinski, the sum of the particular historical experience of the Caribbean and its inhabitants provides the prism through which Glissant approaches fundamental questions in philosophy. Specifically, The New World context "urgently infuses philosophical reflection with questions of race, marginality, and the metaphysical and epistemological effects of the global

This occultation of Caribbean particularism in favor of a universalizing, postcolonial paradigm of cultural hybridity begins in earnest in the early 2000s along with efforts to bring together the fields of francophone and postcolonial studies. Adelai Murdoch's *Creole Identity in the French Caribbean Novel* (2001), which argues that that the Antillean writers who approach questions of identity through the concept of creolization deploy an essentially and typically postcolonial approach, provides another early example of efforts to assimilate an originally Caribbean particularist concept into the postcolonial lexicon. Murdoch's argument, which freely deploys established postcolonial terms such as "hybridity," "subjectivity," "otherness," "disjuncture" and "difference," holds that while "the doubleness of the creole figure is one facet of the sociocultural phenomenon of Caribbean modernity, creolization as a process is by no means restricted to the Caribbean region" (3). This rhetorical movement, from a concept of creolization as regionally specific (*antillanité*) to a universally-applicable theory of cultural hybridization (*créolité*), exemplifies in my view a postcolonial rereading of the particularist period that I understand as distinctly not postcolonial.[3] Indeed, the near-disappearance of the term *antillanité*, which has come to be understood as an underdeveloped ancestor of *creolité* or

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entanglements of empire. Glissant's careful and radical re-articulation of the Caribbean context puts such effects at the center of thinking. If thinking is always generated in relation to place, then the Caribbean context, defined as it is by the experiences of race, marginality, and empire, contends with such issues in philosophy's foundational experiences and structures: language, world, and history" (2-3). Coombes seems to concur, noting that "The Caribbean context, then, is from a philosophical as well as literary point of view both a home base for Glissant and a starting point for reflecting on the future of global society in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries" (47)

[3] In *Le discours antillais,* Glissant argues against a generalized, universalizing model of cultural hybridization, at least in the Caribbean context. He insists on the difference between, on one hand "le déplacement (par exile ou dispersion) d'un peuple qui se continue ailleurs" and on the other, "le transbord (la traite) d'une population qui ailleurs *se change en autre chose*" (40). The specific history of Antillean peoples, in his view, serves to refute ethnographic models of cultural change or evolution that operate according to "soi-disant universel" (41) principles. These passages indicate that the specific cultural processes at work in the Caribbean, would *not* apply to other diasporic populations like, for example, the south Asian diaspora in Europe or the Americas.

créolisation, from critical discourses on Antillean cultural production emblematizes the shift in interpretative priorities in the last three decades.[4] I argue that properly attending to the particularist period in Antillean though will necessitate a critical reinvestment in the concept of *antillanité* that recognizes its sufficiency and appropriateness to the intellectual and literary context of the Antillies in the 1960s-1980s.[5]

Rather than understand *antillanité* as a precursor superseded by a more theoretically robust (and thus postcolonial) theory of creolization operative at the global scale, I advocate for a renewed engagement with the concept on its own terms, that is, as a spatiohistorical cultural model defined by a set of specific characteristics. As Lydie Moudileno writes,

> Avant tout, l'antillanité s'est conçue par opposition à la négritude, se posant comme refus de ce que Glissant appelle 'l'Universel généralisant.' Au lieu d'une ressemblance purement raciale, Glissant propose avec l'antillanité d'interroger un 'paysage' physique et humain 'antillais,' voire 'américain,' témoignant de processus spécifiques—et différents de l'Histoire de l'Afrique—d'acculturation et de reconstruction. (113-4)

In this view, *antillanité* represents a particularist response to a universalizing identitarian movement that employed blackness as its operative term. *Antillanité* pivots toward the geographical and historical embeddedness of the Antillean experience and argues for the radical particularity of the Caribbean as region with unique qualities that differentiate it from both its

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[4] A particularly telling example of the effacement of *antillanité* in favor of a more universalizing perspective appears in the "glossaire" page of the website edouardglissant.fr, a site run by Loïc Céry, director of the *Institut du Tout-Monde*. Well-known Glissantian terms such as *créolisation, divers* or *opacité* have entries that explain their place in Glissants *pensée archipélique*. *Antillanité* does not appear although, tellingly, *mondialité* does. (http://www.edouardglissant.fr/glossaire.html)

[5] In this approach, I follow the example of Lydie Moudileno, who in her 1997 *L'Écrivain antillais au miroir de sa littérature*, advocates re-situating " la comparaison des discours de la créolité et de l'antillanité dans une perspective synchronique" and opposes the tendency to "considérer la créolité comme dépassement dialectique de l'antillanité. (115)

antecedent African cultures and other diasporic communities. In *Le Discours antillais*, Glissant provides an inventory of these features:

> cultures issues du système des Plantations; civilisation insulaire …; peuplement pyramidal avec une origine africaine ou hindoue à la base, européen au sommet; langues de compromis; phénomène culturel général de créolisation; vocation de rencontre et de synthèse; persistance du fait africain, cultures de la canne, du maïs et du piment; lieu de combinaisons des rythmes; peuples de l'oralité. (729)

Glissant describes this set of social, cultural, and spatiohistorical characteristics as the "realité" from which *antillanité* emerges. Of particular note here is the inclusion of the phenomenon of creolization, not as the synthesis of these processes but as *merely one of many constituents of the Caribbean reality*.

I call this turn away from the universalism of global history towards the temporalities of the local exemplified in the term *antillanité* spatiohistorical particularism. This idea will require some precision. Specifically, particularism, as I employ the term, should not be equated uncritically with *nationalism*, ethnic or otherwise, despite certain overlaps that I will discuss in what follows. I maintain that none of the writers I associate with spatiohistorical particularism would conform to the "volkish popular cultural nationalism" (15) that Paul Gilroy critiques in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993).[6] None advocate for what

[6] Gilroy spends much of the introduction to *The Black Atlantic* arguing that the field of cultural studies would do well to divest itself, or at least reconsider, its relation to nationalism and essentialist ideas about culture and identity. Following postmodern thought, he suspects that the nation-state as a geopolitical entity had already lost its preeminence, and consequently, the only viable form of nationalism would be ethnic nationalism, a position he rejects categorically. Gilroy consistently portrays particularism (which he does not carefully distinguish from nationalism) as either the impetus of cultural imperialism: "European particularisms are still being translated into absolute, universal standards for human achievement, norms, and aspirations" (7-8) or as a misguided response to that cultural imperialism on the part of the resisting colonized. As is likely already apparent, I will argue against this position.

Ernesto Laclau has called "self-aparthied" (*Emancipation(s)*, 32), or the willful exclusion of "impure" cultural practices or expression on the basis that it does not conform to an essentialist notion of what a particular culture or race is or is not. Nor do any of them accept the predetermined racial or cultural categories that Peter Hallward calls "the specified."[7] Spatiohistorical particularism eschews the ontological for the epistemological and the aesthetic. Spatiohistorical particularism, at its most fundamental level, holds that local geographies serve as a repository for knowledge of the past, and that the experience of historical place offers a more direct means of contact with the past than does the academic discipline of history, regardless of its ideological orientation. The purpose of particularist fiction is to translate that experiential knowledge into words, into narratives capable of conveying a sense of history attuned to the particularities of place.

My understanding of spatiohistorical particularism comes into productive conversation with Peter Hallward's concept of the *specific*, which he develops, alongside its pair, the *singular*, in his 2001 study *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing Between the Singular and the Specific*. Although his concern is primarily with the problem of identity formation, writing that "the words singular and specific designate two abstract poles of distinction, i.e. two fundamentally divergent conceptions of individuation and differentiation" (xii), their translation into the contexts of geography and history will require only some modification. My understanding of particularism relates most closely to Hallward's notion of the specific, in that both operate according to a logic

[7] For Hallward, the specified "can only define the realm of the essence or essentialist, where the demarcation of an individual (subject, object or culture) follows from its accordance with recognised classifications. The specified, as the participle suggests, extends only to the realm of the passive or the objectified (40). The specified also represents the kind of cultural and racial categorization performed colonialism and imperialism, and the translation of those categories into juridical, medical, or political, contexts, among others. For Hallward, the transition from the *specified* to the *specific* is a process of subjectivization, one that can proceed via both particularizing or universalizing approaches.

of differentiation and relation: "Counter-colonial writing assumes a world of constituent antagonisms and sharply demarcated interests; it is militant and partisan by definition. Its fundamental terms - engagement, position, mobilisation - are necessarily *specific* or relational rather than singular in their orientation" (xii). As we will see, my three primary interlocutors in this section, Maragnès, Glissant, and Placoly, all develop specific and particularist conceptions of Caribbean space-time that cannot be easily reconciled with either anti- or postcolonial universalism.

Hallward's understanding of the specific posits a Fanonian process of subjectivation in which the active refusal of assigned identitary categories leads to the realization of difference and agency; the process of despecification (that is, the transition from *the specified* to the *specific*) produces the specific subject: "The specific subject is always specific precisely to the relations that it de-specifies. The subject is nothing other than the conversion of specified relationships into specific relations - the conversion of determination into relational indetermination" (50). The meaning of "relations" in this context differs somewhat from its common meaning in postcolonial theory in that it is not merely generative of happy hybrid cultural formations (à la late-career Glissant) but resolutely oppositional:

> The relational subject is inevitably partial, inevitably partisan, 'necessarily for one side or the other, in the thick of the battle…' We might say that an individual becomes a subject to the degree that he or she is able to *take* (rather than inherit or adopt) *sides*, in the most active and deliberate sense. Despecification, subjectivation, and the taking of sides are aspects of one and the same process. (Hallward 50, quoting Foucault).

What defines spatiohistorical particularism is just such a taking of sides: both taking the Caribbean as a site of cultural genesis distinct from the European side of the Atlantic and the taking of Caribbean history, through the elaboration of a distinct form of Caribbean

historiography, from the historical discourse of Republican France. While undoubtedly influenced by and sympathetic with Marxian historical analysis, the writers I feature in this section all insist on the primacy of the local experience of space-time over abstract and universal analytical categories. Furthermore, I will argue that this pairing of counter-colonial historiography and attention to culturally-encoded local geographies leads both Glissant and Placoly to turn reject linear models of time. Whereas their predecessors created diachronic historical narratives that served to demonstrate the key role of Caribbean history in the development of the modernist present, these authors display an understanding of historical narrative, both avowedly fictional and factual, as discontinuous and fragmented. In particular, they are hostile to the kind of historical research that James and Sainville saw as essential and turn away from the universalizing rhetoric of Pan-Africanism and towards the geographic and cultural specificity of their native Martinique. Before considering their fiction however, the specificities of Antillean time-space of this period deserve some elucidation. As such, I turn to the work of Daniel Maragnès, a philosopher, teacher, and intellectual well-known in the archipelago but rarely read outside it.

The Particular Predicament of the Antilles

For Antillean intellectuals in the decades following departmentalization, the need to develop and sustain both local culture and history appeared unambiguous. Colonialism had persisted, and continued, albeit through different means, to exploit and oppress the people of the Antilles. As Guadeloupean philosopher Daniel Maragnès argues, the Antillean impasse in 1981 results directly from the persistence of what he terms the "rapport colonial" between the Antilles and France, a rapport that cannot be understood in the absence of a historical perspective. In his contribution to *Les Antilles dans l'impasse?, an* essay entitled "Contre La Mort lente," Maragnès

argues that departmentalization had both consolidated colonial domination and occulted its persistence, at least in the metropole, resulting in the disappearance of the colonial question: "à force de parler de sa mort très prochain, le colonialisme a presque réussi, en Occident, à se faire oublier … Les Antilles sont peu à peu devenues, au plan de l'Histoire, des îles invisibles" (55). If earlier forms of colonialism relied on the perceptible difference (aided, in no small part, by the obvious visual distinctions of race) between colonizer and colonized, the new form of assimilationist colonialism operated by ostensibly negating that difference. By positing the essential similitude of the formerly binary social arrangement, the process of assimilation undertaken post-1946 contradictorily entrenching that difference:

> L'assimilation est le moteur du système idéologique de la société coloniale aux Antilles. Par elle; se modifiant le regard et la conscience des êtres, le nom des choses. Mais elle ne saurait se réaliser. Son travail est efficace dans la mesure même où elle demeure une promesse jamais tenue. Contradictoire dans son concept – car elle affirme à la fois l'identité des Antilles et de la France, dans le même temps qu'elle proclame leur différence – elle doit rester le centre d'un enjeu permanent. Ainsi, pour se maintenir, le rapport colonial doit-il perpétuellement faire mine de se nier. (59)

Continually positing its own self-effacement, the *rapport colonial* defers the question of autonomy or independence indefinitely leading to political, economic, and social impasse.

For Maragnès, the process of assimilation, what he terms "la mort lente," operates within the French state bureaucracy and is legible in the operation of the educational system and the paternalist social security system, leading to the erosion of local civil society. Faced with this pressure to assimilate, the colonized subject "est pris du désir non d'être simplement autre que ce qu'il est, mais d'être l'Autre" (70). Faced with the homogenizing, de-specifying initiative of the French state, the problem of (counter-) colonial history comes to the fore. In what follows, I

argue that Maragnès' essay encapsulates the principles of a particularist spatiohistorical perspective on history shared by Placoly and early-career Glissant.[8] He begins by affirming the centrality of historical representation to the broader context of counter-colonial thought:

> Depuis que la réflexion anticolonialiste a commencé son approfondissement, la question historique est sans doute devenue la question centrale, la plus difficile à approcher et à traiter. Une lutte de libération nationale ne peut faire, à l'évidence, l'économie de la compréhension du parcours historique. Or, cette compréhension ne peut se cantonner à être un apprentissage des faits historiques, une éducation et une information des faits passés qui serait 'utiles' pour saisir, par exemple, la violence des masses ou la répartition de la propriété terrienne.

Immediately, we can observe that, for Maragnès, the struggle against colonialism works towards the formation of a state, a nationalist liberation that implies a political distinction anathema to assimilationist aims of the *rapport colonial*. Furthermore, the kind of historical knowledge that he posits as necessary goes beyond content or facts. Rather, he emphasises the historiographic and narratological facets of historical narratives, that is, the how and why of the story being told.

The overarching concern that Maragnès expresses relates to the relationship of this new historical perspective to the discursive context established by colonialism and a historical discourse whose purpose had, since the mid-19th century at the earliest, served to legitimate the continued possession of the Antilles by metropolitan France. The elaboration of a new historical discourse for the Antilles requires a radical break from European historical traditions, an undertaking that positions itself as more far-reaching than the kind of revisionism practiced by

[8] I use the term "counter-colonial" in this section to avoid confusion with anticolonial thought preceding the wave of political decolonization that occurred in the 1960s.

James or Sainville.[9] Resuscitating the facts of the forgotten history of the Caribbean is not enough:

> De sorte que la production d'une contre-histoire, d'un nouveau discours historique ne peut commencer à s'attacher à un butinage érudit, visant à remplacer une date par une autre, ou à faire émerger des séquences historiques laissées dans l'oubli. Il s'agirait plutôt de hisser cette contre-histoire à être une *histoire contre l'Etat colonial*, dont le travail propédeutique serait d'interroger l'enjeu fixé par le discours historique dominant: soit l'histoire comme garante et organisatrice d'un certain rapport au monde, comme entrave à la constitution de l'Etat national antillais

This "histoire contre l'Etat colonial" would serve to lay the conceptual groundwork for a renewed counter-colonial struggle. Crucially, by re-orienting the Antillean "rapport au monde" away from the assimilationist mode in which French society is superposed onto the *départements d'outre mer*, this historical model could render possible the establishment of a geopolitical entity particular to the Antilles.

If, as I sustain in chapter two, the negritude movement represented an unlikely alliance of poetics and politics that rested on a nebulous pan-Africanist vision of a shared historical experience, what Maragnès proposes is to instead ally politics and history. It is not enough to concentrate anticolonial malaise in the lyrical voice of a singular poetic representative capable of

[9] Maragnès provides a very specific example of the revisionist approach and why he considers it unsatisfactory: He quotes Jacques Fredj, wrote of the difficulty of formalizing Antillean history: "l'histoire demeurait inachevée parce qu'elle restait à intégrer dans un système historique qui lui demeurait largement étranger et ne pouvait donc rendre compte de la spécificité antillaise parce que l'intégration dans une histoire nationale passait par la réduction de l'histoire martiniquaise à une histoire fragmentaire, et aussi parce que la conscience historique martiniquaise, en l'absence du grand totalisateur qu'est l'Etat, ne pouvait se constituer" (71). This paradox, wherein the lack of a Nation precludes historical consciousness, which in turn precludes the possibility of establishing a national consciousness, risks establishing a Hegelian conception of the relationship between state and history and condemning the Antilles to an unending state of prehistory.

translating protest into political action; rather, a new counter-colonial politics must proceed from the sustained analysis of popular resistance:

> La réconciliation de la réflexion politique et du discours historique, la construction de l'*Histoire contre l'Etat colonial*, dans le scrupuleux respect de la vérité historique, est un rempart indispensable contre la déconstruction systématique du temps qui mène à la liquidation du sens historique des gestes de travail et des luttes, et qui nous conduit des faux débats aux anathèmes, des anathèmes au silence, du silence à l'obéissance. (78)

Here, politics and history become mutually self-supporting: counter-colonial politics prevents the destruction of form of historical time necessary to understand the dynamics of the class struggle in the Antilles. This reconfiguration of the literary-political alliance transfers the historical initiative from the privileged and poetic "homme de culture" to the people, whose collective (and often spontaneous) resistance represents, for Maragnès, the proper object of counter-colonial history.

This line of argumentation leads, perhaps unsurprisingly, to a sustained critique of Césaire, and specifically, both his politics and poetics. For Maragnès, the way in which the prominent proponents of negritude, including Césaire, Senghor, and René Menil, position themselves as "spokesmen" for the people they represent, results in an elitism that risks complicity with the assimilationist aims of the French state. He reads in their political activity a reliance on the role of the poet as generative of a *logos* capable of re-forming the world. "La carrière politique d'Aimé Césaire," he writes, "repose sur cette *confusion* du poétique et du politique, qui n'est pas l'heureuse alliance du talent littéraire et du choix politique, mais une fusion intime du poétique et du politique: une conception élitaire du pouvoir politique" (79-80). Although he remarks that even the most radical of critics do not question the Césaire's literary genius, his confusion of the roles of poetic and political spokesman necessitates the "*le silence*

politique des masses antillaises (80). The way that Maragnès frames this charge of elitism also relates to a certain mode of understanding historical change as the result of the actions of "great men" who "make history." In essence, he portrays Césaire as not unlike Toussaint at the end of the *Black Jacobins*: preoccupied by his own priorities, he has lost touch with the people he claimed to represent.

For Maragnès, Placoly, and to a certain extent Glissant, the changes that came in the wake of Césaire's poetical-political project fell short of the mark. Departmentalization had resulted in continued colonial domination and assimilation, and in the second half of the century, poetry lost its status as the privileged mode of literary expression. Despite the distinct sense of pessimism expressed by these writers, they nonetheless understood this temporal juncture as one in which new ideas in theory and literature were developing rapidly. Maragnès writes that this new period began "son essor autour des années 1960s" (83). His periodization could include the 1958 publication of Glissant's *La Lézarde*, a book that, as I will argue in the subsequent chapter, commences the elaboration of a mythic geography of Martinique that sets the stage not only for Glissant's later fiction but also novels like Chamoiseau's *Texaco.* For Maragnès, this new period emerges in relation to the recomposition of Antillean politics and the widening recognition of the region's spatiohistorical impasse. What becomes clear in his essay is an unwavering belief in a recent epochal change, in a vision of Antillean literary history in which Pan-Africanism, Negritude, and the inevitability of world revolution no longer obtain. In the place of militant lyricism of Césaire and Senghor, the novel, liberated from the constraints of realism, takes on the task of sounding the relationship of the Antillian subjectivity, history, and geography.

In chapter three, I examine the development of particularist thought in the early works of Glissant, both in his published essays and in his first novel, *La Lézarde*. The Caribbean counter-historiography that Glissant creates breaks with that of his Marxist predecessors most

significantly in that it interprets the middle passage and the historical trauma of slavery as marking a decisive rupture between the Antillean people and the past.[10] That this rupture also represents one of the matrices of Caribbean civilization necessitates a model of historical time more complex than that of traditional European notions of linearity and telos. In contrast to the line, Glissant proposes the plane as a geometric model of Caribbean time-space, a dense field of intersecting histories that, though it cannot be neatly divided into periods, can be discerned through attention to local topographies. As Beverley Ormerod writes, in Glissant's vision of literature, "landscape is the key to the hidden past, the physical repository of lost ancestral tracks and once vital folkways" (440). I then propose a reading of *La Lézarde* that will draw out how the imbrication of space and time in its *trame narrative* reflects this sense of a dense, interconnected mesh of histories legible in the mythic geographies of Glissant's heterotopic Martinique.

In chapter four, I consider Vincent Placoly's novel *Frères Volcans* and how it redressess the inadequacy of the historical record, and in particular, the "forgetting" of the 1848 antislavery revolution in Martinique. The first section of this chapter will consider the 1848 revolution and its subsequent erasure from the Caribbean historical conscience. Like the Haitian Revolution

[10] This idea, that the epistemological, ethical, and political ontological position of the black subject, especially in the context of the diaspora in the Americas, cannot be understood with accounting for slavery and the middle passage as a "world-historical transformation," lies at the heart of the current of thought that has come to be known as afro-pessimism. Although a thoroughgoing analysis of the relation between Caribbean particularism and current afro-pessimist theory lies outside the scope of this preface, Jared Sexton encapsulates this theoretical convergence when he writes that the legacies of the middle passage lie at the heart of the afro-pessimist enterprise: "That history and that destruction— both of which, it bears repeating, are ongoing—are very much at the center of our thinking, as are the questions regarding how one might inhabit that history and that destruction. There is an *ars vita* here, maybe the truest one, because it emerges from within a global catastrophe so total that the creation or production of a black poetry, a black art, a stylization of the black body, a black sense of place cannot but be invented wholesale, which is to say made or devised without recourse to a reliable memory or tradition, a law or language or land, a body or kinship or community" (18).

before it, the events of 1848 did not align with the political and historical narratives that historians of the Second and Third French Republics generated in order to portray itself as a source and champion of universal human rights.[11] Once having established an understanding of the events of the revolution itself and their subsequent portrayal in historical discourse, I turn, in the second section, to Placoly's novel. Like Sainville's *Dominique, nègre esclave,* Placoly begins his text with an *avant-propos* that situates the origin of the narrative in the historical archive, or more specifically, its inadequacies. And like Sainville, he adopts a period-appropriate form: the diary. However, he does not hesitate to deviate from the conventions of the genre. Although the journal usually displays a strong sense of linear chronology, Placoly disrupts this linearity and seeks to bring the present and the past together within the novel's chronotopes.

[11] In chapter four, I offer readings of several republican histories of the French Caribbean and their attempts to associate French republicanism with universal emancipation.

Chapter Three

Topographies of Time: Spatiotemporal Narrative in Glissant's Early Fiction

In the latter decades of the twentieth century, Edouard Glissant has come to be recognized as one of the foremost philosophers and writers of the Caribbean and the preeminent postcolonial voice from the Francophone world. His monumental oeuvre, which encompasses theory and every major literary genre, led to the emergence of new currents in Antillean writing and developed concepts such as creolization that would be instrumental to French Caribbean literature from the 198os onward. His writing works out of a strong sense of the historical past that his predecessors explored, but unlike Sainville and James, Glissant's treatment of history reveals a distinct pessimism with regards to the possibility of recuperating the kind of historical consistency that the discipline of academic history works to develop. If the problem of Caribbean non-history receives explicit formulation in theoretical works such as *Le Discours Antillais* and *Poétique de la Relation*, his fictional works engage with history through the conceptual intermediary of space. What results is a spatiohistorical complexity that, to postcolonial critics, would seem to mark a rupture with the binary modes of thought that they associate with both colonial and anticolonial discursive practices.[1] I contend, quite reasonably, that non-adherence to a binary schema of cultural difference does not necessarily mark a text as inherently

[1] Generally, postcolonial readings of anticolonial texts identify, implicitly or explicitly, a logic of cultural or racial differentiation premised on the binary division of the colonizer and colonized, a legacy of European colonial thought that anticolonial discourse worked to counter. Homi Bhabha (whose theoretical contributions I discuss more fully in the preface to part three) suggests that the shift towards a postcolonial *Weltanschauung* involves "a movement away from a world conceived in binary terms, away from a notion of the people's aspirations sketched in simple black and white" (21), and towards a more complex conception of cultural difference that permits more than just the two terms of the earlier binary.

postcolonial; in simpler terms, complexity alone does not imply postcoloniality.[2] In this chapter, I intend to go back to the source, to reexamine the Caribbean origins of Glissant's fiction and theory, and to argue for the recognition and appreciation of Glissant's thought in a framework that is explicitly non-postcolonial.

For early-career Glissant, the location, and furthermore, the *locality* of a work of fiction plays an active and essential role. The importance of space as a critical concept is evident in his work from its earliest stages to its most mature forms. In *Soleil de la conscience* (1956), his first book-length essay, he indicates the critical role of geography in both his work and in the anticolonial struggle:

> L'exotisme est bien mort, à partir du moment où la géographie cesse d'être absolue (c'est-à-dire, ici, limitée à elle-même) pour commencer d'être solidaire de son histoire qui est celle de l'homme. La confrontation des paysages confirme celle des cultures, des sensibilités: non pas comme exaltation d'un Inconnu, mais comme manière enfin de se débarrasser de son écorce pour connaître sa projection dans une autre lumière, l'ombre de ce que l'on sera. (69)

[2] Chris Bongie, in his 1998 *Islands and Exiles*, goes further than simply implying that Glissant's work prior to the mid 1980's "shift" in thought from the particularist to the universal represents a more simplistic phase, and characterizes certain aspects of his thought as outright "errors" : "Glissant's work is, from start to finish, committed to any number of ideological errors made in the name of structuring resistance; these errors stem, for instance, from a questionable … belief in the reality of such things as national identity and cultural alienation, as well as, in his portrayal of Martinique and the average Martiniquan, a reliance upon such dubious tropes as 'the dying island' and the 'happy zombie'—to say nothing of his enthusiastic allegiance to the ethnographically and ethnocentrically problematic ideas of French theorists like Deleuze and Guattari." These errors are principally located in the *Discours*" (143). Bongie's assumption that belief, for instance, in the idea of national identity constitutes an ideological error is, in my view, symptomatic of an outdated postcolonial perspective that can no longer be taken for granted. This argument is one that Bongie himself tempers and modifies in *Friends and Enemies* (2008) recognizing that Glissant's postmodern turn constitutes a "'guilty' recantation of the once trenchant political commitments that constituted one half of his lifelong, modernist project" (330).

For Glissant, the first step in this process is the refiguration of the geographies of his native Martinique: for too long have its spaces, reduced to sunny beaches and impenetrable mountains, served as the backdrop for exoticist, colonial fictions (whether in "historical" or novelistic form) modeled on and responding to European interests. New forms of expression will require grappling with geography as an active participant in sociohistorical processes; writers must acknowledge space as much more than décor. As he writes in the *Discours antillais,*

> Le rapport à la terre, rapport d'autant plus menacé que la terre de la communauté est aliénée, devient tellement fondamental du discours, que le paysage dans l'œuvre cesse d'être décor ou confident pour s'inscrire comme constituant de l'être. Décrire le paysage ne suffira pas. L'individu, la communauté, le pays sont indissociables dans l'épisode constitutif de leur histoire. Le paysage est un personnage de cette histoire. (199).

As such, space goes beyond providing a setting for the action of the plot or a means of anchoring the text in a reproduction of the real world. Rather, he understands it as an active participant in both history and narrative. The readings I subsequently propose seek to valorize and elucidate this crucial aspect of Glissant's philosophy of space and history.

In this chapter, I focus on two interrelated topics: first, the development of Glissant's particularist historiography of the Antilles, and second, his first published novel, *La Lézarde*, and specifically the spatial configurations through which the novel's ideological and narratological projects develop.[3] I hold that my concept of spatiohistorical particularism aligns with Glissant's understanding of the interrelation between culture, history, and geography, in that both insist on an explicit rejection of cultural nationalism and homogenizing, universalizing generalizations; as

[3] The precise nature of the novel's ideological import has been much debated between those who see it as reflective of an early-career, optimistic and nationalistic Glissant and those who read in it a profound skepticism towards the project of constructing Martinican nationhood. A more expansive discussion of this debate can be found at the beginning of my analysis of the novel.

Glissant writes in *Le discours antillais*, "Il faut rejeter ici deux attitudes extrêmes: le 'nationalisme culturel' qui se satisfait de ses propres options et méconnaît le plus souvent l'aspect fondamental … [et] l'internationalisme a priori, qui ignore souvent les analyses 'concrètes' d'une situation donnée et substitue des formules à des exposés" (101). This fundamental glissantian skepticism towards universalisms will be crucial to my response to much of the scholarship on *La Lézarde.* Although several scholars, including Richard D. E. Burton and Chris Bongie, have written of the mythic geographies that Glissant constructs, they adhere to an interpretation of Glissant's novelistic spaces as structured by binary relations, an interpretation that I suspect derives from the assumption of the novel's "anticolonial" (and thus binary) politics. I argue that Glissant's first novel is both "post-anticolonial" and decidedly "non-postcolonial," in that it its temporal trajectory tends toward the past, it rejects universalism, and invests much of its discursive force in the description and determination of local space.

I argue that the novel is structured by an overarching spatial metaphor, that of the titular river, which provides an interpretative lens through which the reader comes to understand not only the relation of geography of history but also the function of narrative. The Lézarde, which takes on the function of a heterotopia, becomes a mirror in which Glissant constructs a mythic geography of Martinique that sets the stage for subsequent narratives. In *La Cohée du Lamentin* (2005), Glissant recognizes the centrality of the river to conception of *La Lézarde*, and later, *Tout-Monde* (1993): "ma première histoire déjà, qui naïvement faisait récit, *La Lézarde*, prend corps à partir de la source de la rivière … traverse dans les terrains à culture, s'achève dans le delta, en réalité un fatras de champs d'herbe-para distendus dans la mangrove" (91). I will begin my analysis with an examination of the most prominent geographic spaces that the novel presents: the mountain, city, plain, sea, and river. Careful consideration of these spaces, and particularly that of the river, will reveal how Glissant's fictional geographies are not faithful

depictions of a geosocial reality, but rather a mirror image, a mythic recreation that indicates further instances of conceptual mirroring that elucidate the roles of time and language in the text. Before examining the narratological role of topography in *La Lézarde* and the ways in which it gives form to history, the question of Glissant's Caribbean historiography must be addressed.

Glissant's Counter-Historiography of the Caribbean

Glissant develops his vision of Caribbean history over the course of several collections of essays published in a period from 1956 to 1981, beginning with *Soleil de la Conscience.* His most thoroughgoing and forceful articulation of the problems of the Caribbean historical consciousness appears in *Le Discours antillais.* For Glissant, the concepts of space and time in the Caribbean context form a complex and differentiated configuration defined by the experience of rupture. From a geographical standpoint, the region appears riven by internal political, linguistic, and economic barriers that persist as the legacy of the colonial system, and a corresponding rupture in historical relations prevents the instigation of a sense of Caribbean historical continuity. Instead, an exterior vision of history, one in which the archipelago represents a peripheral theater for the advancement of Western society and culture was imposed on the region's historical consciousness. This vision suppressed events, such as the Haitian revolution, that could have served as a point of departure for the collective memory. He proposes that the elaboration of a Caribbean counter-history necessitates an epistemological shift: Glissant's alternative temporal model breaks from the linearity of the Western historical chronotope and proposes a denser, transversal conception of the Caribbean past that accounts for the "subterranean" nature of the region's history.[4]

[4] Sarah Gröning writes in her essay "Philosophies historiopoétique transatlantiques" that Glissant's historiopoetics share much with the philosophy of history developed by Paul Ricoeur

Glissant begins by arguing that conceiving of a coherent history and literature of the archipelago necessitates a coming to terms with the "historical rupture" represented by the middle passage and that inaugurated era of modern Caribbean history. The passages are well-known:

> Les Antilles sont le lieu d'une histoire faite de ruptures et dont le commencement est un arrachement brutal, la traite. Notre conscience historique ne pouvait 'sédimenter,' si on peut ainsi dire, de manière progressive et continue, comme chez les peuples qui ont engendré une philosophie souvent totalitaire de l'histoire … mais s'agrégeait sous les auspices du choc, de la contradiction, de la négation douloureuse et de l'explosion. Ce discontinu dans le continu, et l'impossibilité pour la conscience collective de faire le tour, caractérise ce que j'appelle une non-histoire. (*Discours antillais* 130–31)

Antillean history thus begins with the erasure of previous histories: those of the Arawak, Taíno and Carib peoples who inhabited the Caribbean before the arrival of Europeans, as well as those of the enslaved Africans who repopulated the islands after this first genocide. This initial rupture in historical consciousness, in which the nationalisms and cultural affiliations of the peoples who had inhabited and came to inhabit the Caribbean were obliterated by colonialism and slavery, prevents the development of a sense of historical continuity. Unlike the histories of Western nations, which emerged alongside concepts of nationalism and a sense of rootedness, the

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in *Temps et récit* (1983), particulaly with regard to the former's notion of a "vision prophétique du passé" capable of restoring a sufficient sense of historical consciousness. As Gröning argues, for Glissant, this is the privileged territory of creative writing: "les écrivains sont les seuls capables de révéler les divergences entre passé subi, passé mémorisé et présent à travers leur écriture et à pouvoir ainsi 'méditer un nouveau rapport entre histoire et littérature.' Ils en créent une historiopoésie qui ne cherche pas à contredire ou à effacer l'histoire écrite et établie, mais qui veut tout simplement susciter d'autres modes de la connaissance" (69).

Caribbean experience displays no tendency toward a what Glissant calls a totalitarian sense of history that legitimates itself through reference to a unique origin and a process of filiation.[5]

The sociohistorical processes of colonialism, aided by the incessant domination of the Antilles by Western powers, imposed its vision of society and historiography on Antillean culture. In their 1989 manifesto *Eloge de la Créolité,* Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, and Jean Bernabé write of the legacy of this foreign way of thinking:

> "nous sommes fondamentalement frappés par l'extériorité. […] Nous avons vu le monde à travers le filtre des valeurs occidentales, et notre fondement s'est 'exorcisé' par la vision française que nous avons dû accepter. Condition terrible que celle de percevoir son architecture intérieure, son monde, les instants de ses jours, ses valeurs propres, avec le regard de l'autre". (14)

Although their text does not directly confront the question of history, the epistemological and psychological exteriority that they describe applies neatly to the process of conceiving and representing the past. This imposition of a foreign way of thinking results in not simply rupture within the course of Caribbean history itself, but also in the conceptual means to understand that history. The problem of Caribbean history does not result from a lack of documentary evidence,

[5] In *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1973), Hayden White asserts that it was only in the decade preceding his book that thinkers such as Sartre, Lévi-Strausse, and Foucault and begun to call into question the value of a Western historical consciousness, writing that it "may be little more than a theoretical basis for the ideological position from which Western civilization views its relationship not only to cultures and civilizations preceding it but also to those contemporary with it in time and contiguous with it in space. In short, it is possible to view historical consciousness as a specifically Western prejudice by which the presumed superiority of modern, industrial society can be retroactively substantiated" (2). White's notion of Western historical consciousness correlates with the idea of a particularism that has universalized itself, seeking a totalitarian conception of space-time. Furthermore, this notion corresponds quite clearly to Glissant's"philosophies de l'Un," which I discuss later in this section.

artifacts, or from a misunderstanding of *what happened* during the colonial period, but from a rupture within the epistemological bases on which a sufficient history could be constructed.

As such, the collective conscience of Antillean peoples did not formulate a cohesive narrative of the past. The development of what Glissant calls non-history results from the imposition of an exterior vision of the past that suppressed or even erased events from the collective memory in order to assimilate local specificity into a universalizing historiography.[6] As such, non-history lacks continuity and appears as a composed of ruptures, breaks, and fractures. The result is a sense of history that lacks temporal depth:

> Notre histoire nous frappe avec une soudaineté qui étourdit. L'émergence de cette unité diffractée (de cette conjonction inaperçue d'histoires) qui constitue les Antilles en ce moment nous surprend, avant même que nous ayons médité cette conjonction. C'est-à-dire aussi que notre histoire est présence à la limite du supportable, présence que nous

[6] Glissant is not the only scholar to consider the lacunae that disrupt the temporal consistency of the Caribbean historical experience. In *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History,* Michel-Rolph Trouillot examines both the problems unique to Caribbean historiography and their implications for wider practice of writing history itself. He argues that power, in political, ideological, and academic forms, plays a determinate effect on knowledge of past events and their symbolic resonances in the present. Throughout his book, he analyzes concrete examples of how both academic and vernacular histories create historical narrative through the purposeful omission and repression of elements of the historical record. Historians distinguish the sociohistorical process, or the concrete sets of places, actions, and agents that interact in the spatiotemporal continuum, from the knowledge or narratives generated in order to understand that process. Trouillot identifies two prevailing schools of thought within the profession: the "positivist" approach, that "emphasized the distinction between the historical world and what we say or write about it" and the "constructivist" approach, which has "stressed the overlap between the historical process and narratives about that process" (4). Trouillot treats the overlap between sociohistorical process and the generation of knowledge about that process not as an ambiguity or accident that theory should correct but as a process in and of itself, conditioned by historical context and also subject to the influence of power. Both physical control of a territory and discursive power, that is, the ability to choose and shape the popularized narratives of history, represent means to express this influence. Dominated by the exterior, French vision of its own history, we should understand the Antillean historical consciousness (or lack thereof) in its relation to the dynamics of power.

> devons relier sans transition au trame complexe de notre passé. Le passé, notre passé subi, qui n'est pas encore histoire pour nous, est pourtant là (ici) qui nous lancine. (*Discours antillais* 132)

The experience of Antillean history occurs without warning and without reference to a coherent sense of the past. History is something to be subjected to and tormented by before it can be understood. Although Glissant's initial formulation of the problem of history is couched in terms of a kind of neurosis within the collective consciousness, it should not be understood as merely psychological in nature.

For Glissant and other scholars of the Caribbean, the problem of non-history, or the inability of the collective Antillean conscience to perceive the past as a coherent narrative does not result from a lack of documentation or artifacts, but from a lack of communal memory. As Nick Nesbitt writes in *Voicing Memory: History and Subjectivity in French Caribbean Literature* (2003), recent world history is "definitively marked by the recurrent obliteration of communal memory. This obliteration occurred in a strong sense via the repeated perpetration of racial and ethnic genocide. It has also transpired as a weakening of historical sensibility accompanying the postmodern prepackaging and estrangement of experience" (2). In Nesbitt's formulation, the obliteration of memory results from both the sociohistorical process (racial and ethnic genocide) and an epistemological shift in historical thinking concurrent with the rise of global capitalism, mass media, and postmodern thought. However, even if this phenomenon is widespread throughout the globe, he recognizes that the Caribbean is a

> region in which for four centuries the problem of memory has been experienced in acute form, as if in distillation. The disappearance of communal memory so typical of recent history … was in fact prefigured in the Americas in the complementary events of the

> Middle Passage and the Plantation … The plantation system drove memory underground, where it hid in its least-visible, subterranean forms. (3)

The cataclysms of the colonial period created lacunae in the communal historical experience that persist in the contemporary moment, and it is exactly this lack of continuity that Antillean authors, since even before the rise of the Negritude movement, have worked to redress through the intermediary of fiction. But before moving on to consider the correspondence of historical and literary narratives, we must parse the relationship between history and communal memory.[7]

Both Nesbitt and Michel-Rolph Trouillot recognize that the problems associated with knowing the past, either as history or memory, comprise both epistemological and archival aspects. It is not only a question of what happened in the past, but how those events, agents, and contexts are known and remembered.[8] Trouillot insists, however, that history and memory

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[7] Although I do affirm that history and memory are not synonymous concepts, care should be taken in their differentiation such that former does not come to represent a more sophisticated, conceptually sufficient analogue of the latter. In *History and Memory* (1977) [1992], Jacques Le Goff proposes a distinction along such lines, writing that "in the historical study of historical memory, we must accord a special importance to the differences between societies whose memory is essentially oral and those whose memory is essentially written, and to the phases of the passage from orality to writing—what Jack Goody calls 'the domestication of primitive thought'" (54) Le Goff then outlines the phases of that passage, implying a movement towards a written, and thus more developed form of historical knowledge. Although Le Goff does not equate oral knowledge with memory and written knowledge with history, he does contend that "memory is the raw material of history … it is the living source from which historians draw … The historian must be there to render an account of these memories and of what is forgotten, to transform them into something that can be conceived, to make them knowable. To privilege memory excessively is to sink into the unconquerable flow of time" (*xi-xii*). The danger of such an approach is that it explicitly positions the kind of oral, communal memory described by Nesbitt as a crude or impure form of unknowable historical knowledge, unrefined material for the discipline of History to process into knowable narrative. Despite the obvious eurocentricity of this position, it nonetheless corresponds in many ways with Glissant's historiography, all the more reason why we should not understand the latter's historical writings as gospel truth.

[8] More recently, in *Caribbean Critique,* Nesbitt examines the role in Glissant's historiography of the "non-event," that is, the lack of decisive, paradigm changing events enacted by Antilleans: "Glissant describes the Antillean world as a monotonous universe of alienation and subjection to French hegemony on every level – discursive, linguistic, cultural, political, economic – one that is no doubt occasionally punctuated by rare, explosive events (1802, 1848, 1971) that hold out

cannot be conflated, that the common perception of history as reminiscence on a collective level is misleading: "The model itself is well known: history is to a collectivity as remembrance is to an individual, the more or less conscious retrieval of past experiences stored in memory. Its numerous variations aside, we can call it, for short, the storage model of memory-history" (14). He argues that memory, which is inherently limited to what is subjectively experienced, cannot produce coherent narratives, because an individual comes to know important events in life (such as birth or adoption) through revelation, and not through direct experience. The model posits that the past is fixed and that memory retrieves its content, however Trouillot counters that the past cannot be understood as self-sufficient; the past can only exist in relation to the moment of its retrieval and is, as such, a position within the present.

This "storage model" of memory-history becomes increasingly untenable when transposed from individual to collective memory. Like the case of individual recollection, the problem originates at the beginning of the narrative; just as people do not remember directly the circumstances of their births, the moment at which a community coalesces to the point at which it begins cannot self-define:

> But when does the life of a collectivity start? At what point do we set the beginning of the past to be retrieved? How do we decide —and how does the collectivity decide—which events to include and which to exclude? The storage model assumes not only the past to be remembered but the collective subject that does the remembering. The problem with

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the empty promise to shatter the world in two. This potential is quickly and apparently inevitably reabsorbed as the echoes of these events dissipates into the Antillean hills and forests" (154-5). Unlike Haiti, where Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines unilateral declaration of universal emancipation and victory against the forces of Napoleon marked the emergence of the Haitian nation-state, no such event offers itself to the Martinican and Guadeloupean subject as a point of departure; moments such as Delgrès' 1802 revolt or the 1848 revolution failed to crystallize in the (non-existent) Antillean historical consciousness.

this dual assumption is that the constructed past itself is constitutive of the collectivity. (16)

The question becomes all the more pertinent given the specificities of Antillean non-history. For example, Glissant identifies the slave ship, the physical space of the Middle Passage as a matrix or womb of the Antillean experience. Yet he simultaneously points to the Middle Passage and the plantation system as the first of many ruptures in the collective historical consciousness. That is to say that the possibility of a coherent historical narrative fails at the very point of its conception so long as that point is conceived of as a past event to be recalled. Neither the individual nor the collective subject can remember events not directly witnessed, but the real problem, as Trouillot insists, lies in the assumption of historical narrative as a necessarily linear chronotope. The collective subjects or subjectivities "who supposedly remember did not exist as such at the time of the events they claim to remember, as their constitution as subjects goes hand in hand with the continuous creation of the past. As such; they do not succeed such a past: they are its contemporaries"(16). The ultimate failure of the storage model of collective memory thus derives from its inability to recognize the past, or pastness, as a set of narratives produced within and in constant reference to the present. It is with this premise that a thoroughgoing examination of the particularist spatiohistorical imagination must begin: with the recognition that the genesis of historical origins always occurs at the moment of their inscription.

The construction within the present of knowledge concerning a collective past serves to legitimate a community and grows out of what Glissant, in *Poétique de la relation* (1990), calls the Western obsession with filiation or "les philosophies de l'Un" (59); that is, understandings of time as unilinear and moving forwards from a clearly defined point of origin towards singular telos of the world and human civilization. Herein lies what Glissant sees as the "fantasme" (*Discours antillais* 132) of Western History: that the chain of filiation it seeks to establish,

linking at its origins Greek civilization to contemporary nation-states, reveals itself not to exist in the past per se but to have been created retroactively in historical discourse. He argues that these philosophies preclude the problem of remembering the origin by recreating or repeating it in a chain of filiation:

> Quand une 'création du monde' est répétée (certifiée) dans une filiation, celle-ci en découle avec rigueur, c'est-à-dire légitimité, par cela même qu'elle dessine à rebours le trajet de la communauté, de son présent à cet acte de la Création. Cette vue n'est pas au principe de tous les mythes occidentaux, mais c'est celle qui a prévalue, déterminant le devenir de ces cultures. (*Poétique de la relation* 59)

The conception of Western thought as a lineage stretching back to the Hebraic and Greek myths was a retroactive creation, a discourse that served to invent an origin and assure the continuity of Western communal "memory."[9] By situating the cultural point of origin not at a beginning, but at a kind of transformational midpoint, Western historiography avoids the problem of remembering an origin that the collective was not there to witness through an act of conceptual doubling: the true origin, that is, the postulate that the origin emerges naturally at a specific moment in the past obscures the process of the creation of the historical narrative in the present.

[9] The two examples that Glissant puts forward are that of Christ and Darwin. Christ, while breaking with the Hebraic community and tradition to inaugurate that of Christianity, nonetheless maintains the chain of filiation that allows Christian tradition to trace its origin back to the birth of monotheism and the Hebraic creation myth. Darwin's theory of evolution functions (mythically) in much the same way: the appearance of a new species represents the creation of something new that nonetheless remains linked through a chain of descendance to the rest of the living world. Despite their seeming opposition, Christianity and Darwinism "se rapportent à un même esprit d'universalité — à l'encontre de l'exclusive de la communauté ou de l'hétéroclite de la nature. L'une et l'autre se réalisent au bout d'une lignée, sont et deviennent propagation d'un Savoir" (*Poétique de la relation* 64). This "Savoir," this knowledge couched in universal terms, then bestows the justification or the legitimacy for the collective historical narrative that pervades Western thought by anchoring it in a discourse of empirical objectivity.

Within the context of Caribbean history, such an operation is not possible. To synthesize the work of Glissant and Trouillot, we should not understand Caribbean collective memory as history or a failed attempt to memorialize that history. Neither individual nor collective memory can serve as a basis for coherent narratives of the past because neither can take into account the origin of its subjective position; the origin of any particular subjectivity, plural or otherwise, necessarily predates any knowledge it generates. It would be necessary to first posit the preexistence of a coherent Caribbean collective subjectivity before any sufficient notion of collective memory could develop. Moreover, given that the establishment of collective subjectivity in the West participated in the institution of cultural nationalisms destined to justify imperialism, exclusionary politics, and ultimately genocide, the appeal of such an approach to remediating the historical rupture appears dubious. Instead, the gaps must be filled in, either through revelation posterior to the coming into consciousness of that memory, or, crucially, through inventive possibilities of fiction. Authors and historians can only generate knowledge and narratives of the past in the present, and this pastness constructed in the present then provides the legitimacy to the society engaging in that creation of knowledge. However, although Caribbean particularist writers, much like their Western counterparts, explore the past as a means of confronting the problems of the present, the region's historical consciousness cannot follow the same path due to two interrelated reasons: the fundamental imbalance of power between Antillean societies and the West, which has largely imposed its vision of history, and impossibility of conceiving of the origin of Antillean culture, the Middle Passage, as anything but a rupture in and of itself. If the possibility of reestablishing a coherent historical consciousness remains, if the temporal axis cannot be reestablished with a full sense of continuity, what then can the act of interrogating the past hope to accomplish? If the West models its conceptions of the spatiotemporal like a graph with the synchronic and diachronic

serving as the x- and y- axes, respectively, the only point at which time and space intersect is the moment of the present. What the work of Trouillot and Glissant implies, then, is that this graphic model of the continuum cannot serve to plot the Caribbean spatiotemporal experience.

New Geometries of Caribbean History

When Glissant argues that impossibility of performing such an operation in the Caribbean context results in non-history, he does not suggest that a region or people has no history. Specifically, he holds that

> un peuple soit confronté au trouble de cette conscience dont il pressent qu'elle lui est 'nécessaire,' mais qu'il est incapable de 'faire émerger' ou de 'faire passer dans le quotidien': parce que les données immédiates de ce quotidien ne s'inscrivent pas pour lui dans un continuum, c'est-à-dire que son rapport à l'entour (ce que nous appellerions sa nature) est dans une relation discontinue avec l'accumulation de ses expériences (ce que nous appellerions sa culture. (*Discours antillais* 130)

Glissant's formulation clearly states the disconnect between the facts of Antillean history and the social consciousness of the Antillean subject, but does so in a way that engages with not only with concepts of history, but also space. He explains that this is possible because those facts do not appear legible in neither the nature nor the culture of that subject. The problem does not appear as one uniquely situated along a temporal axis (the accumulation of experience, or culture), but as one that has a direct impact on the subject's relationship with the surrounding world, its environment or nature.

Glissant cannot accept Antillean history as a unified, contextualized set of occurrences but more accurately as the conjunction of different histories, a diffracted unity marred by erasure and forgetting. Antillean history resists the kind of ideological unification practiced by Western

historiography that produces a totalitarian History. Despite the seemingly problematic nature of this historical configuration, Glissant nonetheless identifies its unique structure as one that obviates the ideological blinders of Western historiography:

> nos histoires diversifiées dans la Caraïbe produisent aujourd'hui un autre dévoilement: celui de leur convergence souterraine. Ce faisant elle nous enseigne une dimension insoupçonnée, parce que trop évident, de l'agir humain: la *transversalité.* L'irruption à elle-même de l'histoire Antillaise (des histoires de nos peuples, convergentes) nous débarrasse de la vision linéaire et hiérarchisée d'*une* Histoire qui courait son seul fil … La profondeur n'était pas le seul abysse d'une névrose mais avant tout le lieu de cheminements multipliés. (*Discours antillais* 134)

In this crucial passage, Glissant's analysis of the Caribbean historical consciousness pivots from detailing the neurosis caused by its incoherence to exploring the alternate structure that results from the ruptures that characterize it, and in doing so, reveals a hidden strength. Western historiography is predicated on the hypothesis that time as a strictly linear concept, linking a mythical origin to the present via a constructed narrative of filiation. These narratives served clear purposes: they function as ideological tools to construct identity, build nation states, and justify territorial claims. Although Glissant's historiography follows different a temporal model, it does work towards many of the same goals as those of the West, particularly with regards to questions of identity and territory, of culture and its spatial context. In contrast, Glissant proposes a conception of history based on a different form of spatial configuration. In place of a unilinear history that can proceed in only one direction, he advances the idea of transversal histories, an ensemble of intersecting lines which, although connected, cannot be subsumed into singular thread.

Transversal history offers a means to radically reexamine the assumptions of Western historiography, and Glissant gives us a concrete example in his discussion of periodization in the Caribbean context. He begins by lamenting the tendency of historians of Martinique to structure their accounts according to a system of periodization based on that of France: the succession of European wars and French political upheavals. This is exactly the kind of exterior vision of the Caribbean that Maragnès critiques in "Contre La Mort lente" and that Chamoiseau, Confiant, and Bernabé address in the *Eloge de la Créolité,* one that fails to see the Antilles as more than a peripheral theater of French history. In its place, Glissant proposes a different way of conceiving of the different phases of Martinican history: one in which the sections follow the internal logic of the island's changing social relations. In résumé, the phases he proposes are: "La Traite, le peuplement originel (1640-1685) … L'univers servile (1685-1840) … Le système des Plantations (1800-1930) … L'apparition de l'élite, les bourgs (1865-1902) … La victoire de la betterave (1902-1950) … L'assimilation (1950-1965)" (*Discours antillais* 156). Immediately, several notable features present themselves. First, the content of each phase relates quite directly to the social situation in Martinique in between moments of change. Second, despite a tight focus on the situation in Martinique, events outside the region largely account for those changes: for example, the rise of beet sugar production in France led to declining profits from the plantation system and its eventual dissolution. Finally, many of the phases overlap, or in the case of the third and fourth entirely contain other phases.

Immediately after presenting his "periodization," Glissant challenges the word itself, arguing that no of periodization can avoid determinant exterior influences. Below the apparent continuity of official history lies a real discontinuity:

> le continu apparent, c'est la périodisation de l'histoire de France, la succession des gouverneurs, l'évidente simplicité des conflits de classes, les épisodes, minutieusement

> étudiés par nos 'historiens,' de nos révoltes sans cesse avortées. Le discontinu réel tient en ceci qu'à chacune des articulations des périodes que nous avons délimitées, l'élément décisif du changement n'est pas sécrété par la situation, mais décrété de l'extérieur, en fonction d'une autre histoire. (*Discours antillais* 157)

Glissant's skepticism with regards to the possibility of establishing a periodization based on interior vision leads him to suggest an alternative term to refer to phases of history, the "pan." The term does not translate easily into English; although the most literal translations would be "part," "side," or "section," the word connotes a sense of flatness like the English "panel," to which it is etymologically related. Both derive from the Latin "pannus," meaning a piece of cloth.

The Western understanding of linear history conceives time as a unitary thread moving inexorably into the present, and the idea of cutting that thread into neatly differentiated sections or periods appears uncomplicated. Historians may disagree on the precise moment when they divide one period from another, but the overarching schema of a timeline still holds. If the spatio-geometric model of Western history is that of the thread or the line, then that of transversal history is the cloth or the plane. Composed of a multiplicity of individual threads that intersect to form a weave of varying densities and patterns, transversal histories create textile-like sections of history that overlap and encompass each other. Histories of different regions can coincide without one subsuming or assimilating the other. Transversal history, by nature of its imbrication, reveals through contrast the structural ruptures inherent in Western historiography: both temporally, through the division of periods, and spatially, through the partitioning of geographically-defined national or regional histories. It is a spatialized form of history that, instead of seeking temporal depth through an interrogation of an irrecoverable origin, extends itself outwards toward the world and toward those histories with which it intersects.

We should not, however, see transversal history as a panacea for the woes of the neo- or postcolonial world. Nor does it represent superior or more advanced form of historical thinking. Conversely, it results directly from the historical rupture that it in turn reveals:

> Le pan d'histoire est subi, la période suppose un projet global vers lequel la communauté s'efforce, quand même son histoire la 'fait' autant qu'elle œuvre dans son histoire. La notion de 'pan' d'histoire est donc opératoire et méthodologique. Le pan ne redevient période pour l'observateur qu'au moment où la communauté recompose pour elle-même un projet par quoi elle réintègre son passé historique. Pour nous, reconquérir le sens de notre histoire, c'est connaître le discontinu réel pour ne plus le subir passivement. (*Discours antillais* 157)

Reformulating understandings of history to better account for the experiences of societies like those in Martinique and Guadeloupe does nothing to redress the injustices of the colonial legacy nor does it simply repair the lack of historical continuity. It does, however, suggest a means of escaping the experience of history as neurosis by coming to terms with the spatial and temporal discontinuities that characterize the Caribbean spatiohistorical rupture. The goal of Caribbean history for Glissant is to restore a sense of temporal and spatial consistency without recourse to the unlinearity, universalism, and totalitarianism of Western historiography.

La Lézarde's Mythic Geographies

Glissants first novel *La Lézarde* (1958) represents a turning point in Caribbean literature in French in that it is the first novel to develop a sustained interrogation of Caribbean space and its relationship to history. This remarkable and enigmatic novel cemented Glissant's reputation as a major new author and earned him the prestigious Prix Renaudot. Critics have long recognized the fundamental role of space and spatial configurations in the novel; for example J.

Michael Dash writes in his seminal study *Edouard Glissant* (1995) that *La Lézarde* and *Le Quatrième Siècle* (1964) "are linked not only by characters but by an elaboration of ideas of landscape and history that first emerged in his early poetics. They represent a remapping of hill and plain, forest and sea, as well as an effort to establish new continuities between normally opposed areas of Martiniquan experience" (15). In doing so, I will likewise argue that Glissant's turn towards the specific and symbolic geographies of Martinique inaugurates the turn toward particularism in Caribbean fiction that subsequent authors, such as Chamoiseau, Maximin, and Placoly will continue to develop.

Considered within the context of his larger fictional oeuvre, *La Lézarde* appears to be something of an outlier in that its narrative structure is far more conventional than those of his subsequent novels. Furthermore, the novel has been interpreted in variable and incompatible ways. Chris Bongie, Michael Dash, and Beverly Omerod all read the novel as fundamentally optimistic and politically engaged, indicating an ideological continuity with anticolonial writers while simultaneously marking a stylistic departure.[10] In contrast, Lydie Moudileno, H. Adelei Murdoch, and Nick Nesbitt argue that the anticolonial "victory" near the end of the novel belies a deeper sense of foreboding and an ultimately pessimistic outlook as to the possible future for a newly-departmentalized Martinique.[11] The novel is set in 1945, the year that saw the end of World War II and the allied blockade of Vichy-controlled Martinique, which had been forcibly isolated from the rest of the world since 1939. The plot follows the story of a group of young political activists in the Martinican town of Lambrianne (A thinly veiled analogue of Le

[10] Bongie, Chris. *Islands and Exiles*, 144; Dash, Michael. "Writing the Body: Edouard Glissant's Poetics of Re-membering." In *L'Héritage de Caliban*. Ed. Maryse Condé, 80; Ormerod, Beverly. *An Introduction to the French Caribbean Novel*, 38.
[11] Moudileno, Lydie. "Relire La Lézarde: Victoire et mélancolie de la départementalisation." *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3, 390; H. Adlai Murdoch, *Creole Identity in the French Caribbean Novel*, 25; Nesbitt, Nick. *Caribbean Critique : Antillean Critical Theory From Toussaint to Glissant*, 134.

Lamentin) who, in anticipation of the legislative elections that saw Aimé Césaire elected as Martinique's representative to the French Assemblée Nationale, decide to assassinate a colonial agent named Garin. As they are too well-known in town to accomplish the murder themselves, they charge a young man, Raphaël Targin, or Thaël, who has recently arrived from the mountains, with carrying out the task. The narrative follows Thaël as he, for the first time, leaves his mountain home and explores the spaces of his native island. Unlike Glissant's later fiction, the narrator, an unnamed member of the group, recounts the events of the tale in a strictly linear fashion without the use of either analepsis or prolepsis. Despite its tight focus on this specific moment of Martinican history, the novel meditates constantly on the relationship of the historical past, myth and legend, and the political present. Crucially, it does so through the development of spatial metaphor and highly complex symbolic geographies that resist easy classification.

The inventory of Martinican spaces that Glissant develops can be summarized with relative brevity: In addition to the mountains where the narrative begins, Thaël will discover the chronotopes of the city, the plain, the sea, and most importantly, the river. Conventional readings of the spaces of *La Lézarde* focus almost exclusively on the mountain and plain, establishing a binary opposition between them. For example, Richard D. E. Burton writes that "The polarity of lowland/plainsfolk/ bondage and highland/hill-folk/freedom—one of the fundamental socio-topical structures of West Indian life—provides the essential binary opposition of Glissant's vision of Martinican history" (304).[12] Chris Bongie largely concurs, stating that "The hills serve as the site par excellence of authentic resistence and *grand marronnage*, while the plains symbolize submission and the compromised … identity that was to emerge on the plantations and then later be refined in the degraded urban setting" (152). I contend that this tendency to

[12] Although Burton expressly excludes direct analysis of *La Lézarde* from his article, he writes more broadly of the fictional geographies in Glissant's fiction, geographies I understand to have been established primarily in *La Lézarde.*

reduce the myriad of spaces in the novel and their complexity to this binary pair derives from an interpretation of *La Lézarde* as representative of Glissant's "nationalist" period and typically postcolonial practice of reading anticolonial or nationalist fiction as structured by the binary relationship between bondage and liberation. In the spatial analysis that follows, I will demonstrate the incompatibility of this binary reading with the actual discursive articulation of novel's spatial diversity.

Readers discover each of these spaces as they follow the course of Thaël's odyssey. Following the order of this progression, I begin with the first of these spaces, the mountains. Fittingly, as for Glissant the space of the mountain engenders expression, language, and narrative: "la montagne depuis toujours et presque partout dans le monde est un des bords, un débord, du Verbe, le lieu d'une révélation ou d'un ressouvenir de parole" (2005, 92). For the author, the mountain is the place in which his narrative œuvre begins; for his main character, Thaël, the mountain is both a home and, as we will see, a place of revelation. In the first chapter, Thaël "quitta sa maison" (11) and begins a journey that will lead him up and down the course of the river. The route he will follow is entirely unknown to him; as the narrator tells us, "il aperçut bientôt, dais du pont d'eau, la masse du prunier qui, à cette place, marque … la limite extrême du connu" (11-12). Apart from his mountain home, Thaël knows nothing of his island and the other spaces it constitutes. The narrator explains that choosing to live in the mountains inevitably results in this kind of geographic isolation: "être Montagnard dans ces pays de toute montagne qu'allèche toujours et de partout la tentation de la mer, suppose une suprême vocation du refus" (12). As such, Thaël's decision to leave his home and descend towards the ocean indicates a decision to abandon this isolation and discover the spaces of the island.

Dash reads this quality of isolation as the determinate attribute of the mountains, which he argues are "consistently associated in his work with blind negation, the defiant cry" (1995,

35-6). Like in *Dominique, nègre esclave,* the mountains evoke the figure of the maroon, or the "négateur" in Glissant's lexicon, who rejects plantation slavery and who finds refuge in the its inaccessible terrain. But if Glissant presents the mountain as spatially isolated from the rest of Martinique, it nonetheless displays a kind of temporal concentration that we will likewise see in subsequent novels, and in particular, *Le Quatrième Siècle*.[13] The presence of the past is incarnated in Thaël's dogs Sillon and Mandolée, to whom he has given "noms de légende chers à cet homme nourri de contes et de mystères. Les chiens avaient concentré en eux toute la passion d'en haut, ils troublaient seuls la limpidité de la montagne" (12). These dogs represent the unknowability of the past (which clouds the transparency of the mountain as place). Likewise, Thaël seems to have a premonition of future events when, having passed the prune tree marking the limits of his knowledge, he gains a new consciousness that replaces that of the isolated "montagnard": "Or tout se défait en Thaël, à mesure qu'il descend. Il accède à la conscience qui sépare et dénombre. 'Je vous tuerai,' dit-il: éprouvant peut-être la vanité de cette conscience soudain; 'Je vous tuerait!' crie-t-il vers des fantômes qu'il semble reconnaître" (12). The temporal positioning of this passage is particularly striking; not only does the narration itself abandons the past tenses and shifts into the present, but Thaël's cry anticipates his future assassination of the colonial agent Garin. In this liminal moment, past, present, and future come together in the spatial isolation of the mountain.

Glissant's description of the mountain also introduces a set of terms that are not only key to his understanding of time and place but that will, in later works, become well-developed and

[13] By temporal concentration, I refer to the intermingling of scenes and discourse emanating from differentiated moments in the novelistic chronology. *Le Quatrième Siècle* provides a particularly clear example of this: Matthieu goes to the mountains, and specifically Papa Longoué's cabin, where the old man's tales propel his historical imagination back to the eighteenth century and the arrival of the first members of their families, whose chronicle provides the matter of the epic quality to Glissant's novel.

widely-used critical concepts: transparency (or *limpidité* and *clarté*) and opacity (or *ombre* and *obscurité*). In *La Lézarde,* images of light come to represent the immediacy of the present whereas the obscurity of the shadows refers to the mythic and historical past. In an early conversation between Thaël and Mathieu, the latter, often referred to as the group's historian, remarks on this opposition, and his interlocutor implies that his life in the mountains has predisposed him to understand:

> — Détachons-nous, dit-il [Mathieu] enfin, des forces de chaque jour! Ne craignons pas de nous tenir sur le rivage, face au large, et de peser notre histoire. Nous venons de l'autre côté de la mer, rappelle-toi. Cherchons sous la surface, allons au fond!
>
> — Moi je viens de la montagne… Tu la vois, elle est chauve par endroits, et puis soudain plus touffue que la mer de septembre. (29)

Thaël's response draws an intriguing connection between the mountain and the ocean: both can represent the past, and both can appear dense, inscrutable, and unpredictable. These often-unexpected connections, which appear throughout the text, prevent us from interpreting these topographies as sets in binary opposition; rather, this passage provides a prime example of the kind of new continuities that Glissant creates.

However, the first of the new spaces that Thaël discovers is not the sea, but the city. In a moment not unlike the chance encounter on the road that Bakhtin describes, he continues his descent from the mountains and encounters Mathieu, his thematic counterpart and soon to be friend.[14] Together, they follow the colonial road towards the city, the sight of which again results in a temporal concentration:

[14] For Bakhtin, the chronotope of the road represents a particularly important site for the plot of a novel, in that chance encounter brings characters together: "of special importance is the close link between the motif of meeting and the chronotope of the road … and of various types of meeting … In the chronotope of the road, the unity of time and space markers is exhibited with exceptional precision and clarity. (98) Additionally the road provides a site for the elaboration of

> Puis il sourit à la ville. Lambrianne l'attendait … Peut-être les légendes correspondaient-elles à une part inexplorée de l'avenir, et peut-être l'avenir avait-il fondu sur lui, Thaël … Rien dans cette perspective qui ne suggérât la course infinie du futur, à peine barrée du stop de la plaque rouge: *Ralentir*. Les cannes encore jeunes n'entravaient nullement la volée de l'imagination; ni les façades grises là-bas puisque cette ville *était* le futur pour lui. (15)

Again, we see the conjunction of a mythic and obscure past with a presentiment of future as inextricably linked to that past. Furthermore, the pairing of this scene with the previous moment of temporal concentration in the mountains suggests the development of a new spatial relationship between these two sites, a relationship that will be key to understanding the novel's broader spatiotemporal project.

If the text does not hesitate to associate the city with the temporality of the future, its relation to the other spaces of the novel will require some elucidation. The predominant and most stable characteristic of the city is its centrality. The narrator consistently places it between other spaces: between the mountains, plains, and the sea, between the river itself.[15] The city appears as

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social realities when the heterogeneity of a society finds itself brought together: "On the road… the spatial and temporal paths of the most varied people—representatives of all social classes, estates, religions, nationalities, ages—intersect at one spatial and temporal point … The chronotope of the road is both a point of new departures and a place for events to find their denouement. Time, as it were fuses together with space and flows in it (243-4).

[15] In another example of binary thinking, Bongie situates the Glissantian city as an extension of the lowlands, that is, a place of domination and assimilation, and quotes a passage from *Le Quatrième Siècle* in which the narrator describes the city as "la chose innommable qui élève sa voix pour étouffer l'appel des hauts … le vase clos où s'englue et se perd l'histoire de la terre et la connaissance du pays" (221). What Bongie fails to acknowledge in his argument is that this passage comes at the end of a paragraph describing the 1902 destruction of Saint-Pierre, and specifically, in which the pyroclastic flow that decimated the city is explicitly referred by the narrator as "la voix" that "descendit des hauteurs." In other words, the voice that the city attempts to strangle becomes, by analogy, the destructive voice that sweeps the city away; clearly the relationship between the city and the mountain here does not easily conform to a conventional anticolonial colonizer/colonized binary. Bongie suggest that Glissant only

a space in relation to others, but with few defining characteristics of its own: "voici le lieu : l'amas de tôles au centre de cette boucle d'eau. L'immobile aridité au beau mitan de ce cercle où la fécondité passe à jamais" (31). Despite its centrality, the city is often referred to as an empty, sterile hole. When, while descending the course of the Lézarde, Thaël and Garin come across Lambrianne, they cannot but remark on this sense of spatial absence: "Et au milieu de la deuxième boucle, ils découvrent la ville, juchée sur la hauteur médiane et qui laisse la terre d'alentour battre contre ses murs, sans s'émouvoir. Thaël voit cet enclos, cette absence" (124). A page later, Garin exclaims that " Mais ce n'est pas une ville ! C'est un trou!" (125). Finally, Thaël comes to an understanding of the city as lacking any real essential qualities of its own, an amalgam of the country that surrounds it:

> Il n'y a pas de ville, il n'y a que la terre qui a fait des maisons, voilà, et les hommes de la terre qui entre dans les maisons. Tout est vague, mais c'est tant mieux. Tout est confus, mais c'est tant mieux ! Je te comprends maintenant (crie Thaël vers la misérable masse de toits), je te comprends ! J'ai vu tout ce qui t'entoure et qui te fait. (127)

And yet, despite its emptiness and immobility, despite its seeming symbolic sterility, the city nonetheless holds a certain appeal. Thaël remarks in several instances that "cette ville a une charme" (28). The city's position at the center of the novel's geography affords it the status of an important meeting site where both people and places come together. As such, the city functions as a site of spatial relation oriented towards the future, indicating that for Glissant a new openness towards the world (after years of isolation) represents the only way forward in postwar Martinique.[16] While, in this early novel, Glissant had not yet developed the terminology that we

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recognizes the importance of the Martinican town in later novels like *Malemort* or *La Case du commandeur* (156); my analysis shows otherwise.

[16] Glissant and his fellow Martinicans (and notably Césaire) understood the end of the Second World War as a moment of great opportunity and change. From 1940-43, Martinique, as Gary Wilder writes, "was closed off from the rest of the Caribbean by a de facto U.S. naval blockade.

now associate with his work, a retrospective reading allows us to identify the city as a site of creolization: a place in which the constituent spaces of Martinique come together in order to form a new, hybrid topography that points into the future.

But the city, the most human and dynamic of the novel's spaces, does not possess the same temporal depth of the rest of the island. Before the city was built, that space was another of Martinique's dominant topographies, that of the plains. The relatively flat land surrounding Le Lamentin (or Lambrianne) was historically the most extensively cultivated regions of Martinique. The fertile soil of the Lézarde's alluvial plain saw intensive sugarcane cultivation and its proximity to the port of Fort-de-France provided a convenient location for processing the raw canes into sugar for export.[17] Unlike the mountains or the city, which display more complex symbolisms, the plains' meaning, evident and uncomplicated, reflects the immediacy of this history: "Thaël connaissait enfin la plaine, ses éblouissements lourdes, l'inoccupation fertile des

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The colony was governed by the authoritarian Admiral Georges Robert, a Vichy loyalist, who sought to introduce marshal Pétain's National Revolution in the Antilles by replacing black elected officials to the Conseil Général with his own white appointees. Furthermore, thousands of white French sailors were confined to Fort-de-France, fueling racial hostility throughout the city" (23). Although anticolonial activities continued, dissent was rarely tolerated, as evidenced by the regime's shuttering of Césaire's journal *Tropiques* in 1943. Even after the removal of Robert and the end of the blockade in 1943, material and economic conditions failed to improve and, as Armand Nicolas writes, "le rationnement de la nourriture, des vêtements, des chaussures etc… rest[ait] rigoureux" (91).

[17] In the *Atlas des départements français d'outre-mer* volume dedicated to Martinique, produced by the *Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique* and the *Institut de Géographie Nationale*, Guy Laserre writes that by 1934 the "géographie future de la canne" had largely coalesced around 14 mechanized production facilities that had replaced the artisanal production methods in place since the time of Père Labat. Of these factories, the four located on the central plain accounted for 45% of the island's total sugar production. Two (Le Soudon and Larienty) were located in Le Lamentin. By the 1970s, only four factories remained in operation on the entire island, Larienty and Rivière Salée (located at the southern end of the Lamentin plain) among them. Geographically, Le Lamentin offered distinct advantages to large-scale sugar production: not only did the proximity to cane production mitigate the problems posed by the lack of transportation infrastructure, it had a reliable source of fresh water, flat land on which to build buildings, and easy access, via the Lamentin canal, to Fort-de-France Bay. (*Atlas*, planche 22, pp. 2)

jours chauds. Ce qui travail obscurément : la glaise brûlante, les éclairs, et le désir … Ce qui éblouit le plus : l'impalpable, sourde, mortelle ivresse des routes ; le sentiment tout-puissant que voici l'orage s'avancer" (24). For Glissant, the plains incarnate the experience of the present, and particularly, the misery and mortality of the plantation culture that flourished in its fertile fields. In the plains, the legacy of slavery, oppression, and death that the plantation system engendered emerge in their immediacy; unlike the mountains, it lacks temporal depth. Rather the "réalités grises, précises de la plaine" (32) are experienced in visceral, sensorial present.

Like both the city and the sea, the plain is set in opposition to the mountain, but in different terms:

> Thaël avançait dans la direction du Sud ; cette route était l'opposé de celle qu'il avait suivie avec Mathieu, lorsqu'ils s'étaient approchés de Lambrianne. Et c'en était aussi l'exact contraire. Là-bas, l'hésitation, les lacets, le retard complaisant : ombres palmées, silences (lorsqu'on venait des montagnes du Nord, et avant qu'on ne surgît soudain sur la longue allée droite qui porte la ville au bout de sa course) ; et par ici, tout au débouché des maisons, comme jaillie directement de leurs murs rose et jaunes, la plate et infinie distance de goudron, gluée à même le ciel, sas haies ni bas-côtés, sans habitants rivés là. (71)

If the mountains, the space of the maroon and the renegade slave, offer a sense of protective isolation within a temporality of the legendary past, the "plaines de cultures à odeur de sueur et de mort" (120) represent the reality of communal suffering rendered immediate and comprehensible by its exposure to the elements, and in particular, the light of the sun. Within the text, the plains become nearly synonymous with the production of sugarcane and its refinement: "La route est assurément sans mystères, elle conduit droit comme fatalité vers le grand carrefour de l'usine : ce qui fait que toute cette rigidité du goudron est pour saluer le chantier de la mort,

que toute cette platitude du ciel sur l'éclat noir de la route est pour annoncer la dangereuse banalité des bâtiments de la cuisson" (71). As such, to live in the plains is to take part in the common suffering of the Martinican people; confronting the plains becomes synonymous with coming to terms with necessities of the present and the political situation. But for the pre-political Thaël, more invested in his voyage of spatial discovery than in the anticolonial struggle, the plain represents an intermediate step between the mountains and the other great Glissantian space, that of the sea.

Pregnant with meaning, the sea signifies, in Glissant, a complex web of symbolisms that would be difficult to fully untangle here. But what sets the sea apart from other Glissantian spaces is its innate appeal; characters are inevitably drawn to it despite the danger and uncertainty it represents. "C'est la mer. Elle appelle, et se referme sur vous. Elle est amante, mais sournoise. Dévouée, mais attentive trop : elle garde son cœur" (26). Compared with the flatness and immediacy of the plains, only the sea offers depth, both spatial and temporal, like that of the mountains. For Glissant as for Derek Walcott, the sea is history. Dash writes that in Glissant's early poetry, "The light of consciousness is related to the wisdom of the ocean, a repository of patient understanding memory, and the ambiguities of history … In confronting its past, Martinique and the Caribbean can have only one common ancestor, the sea" (47). However, Dash interpret the sea and the mountains as diametrically opposed, representing openness and closedness, respectively, I argue that these two topographies share many key characteristics, and particularly that of temporal concentration.

In *La Lézarde,* the sea surrounds and confines the island: "La mer est pour toujours l'enveloppe et l'à-côté, ce qui est hors de tout et confine, mais qui cerne et précise en même temps" (42). In that it provides a clear delimitation of the land, the sea participates in the

development of a sense of locality, although this is by no means strictly positive influence. Glissant describes the island as caught between

> la déchirante passion des mers … qui de chaque côté tirent ; qui sollicitent le pays, l'accablent ou le caressent, voulant en cette furie le ravir vers le large ou au contraire par ce plaisir et cette caresse l'amuser, l'endormir, afin de le couver moitement, à demeure, sans ouverture … Et le pays est un équilibre entre ces deux forces, une patience entre les rochers noirs et furieux de l'océan (à l'est) et les plages douces et bruissantes de la mer (à l'ouest). (59)

Enigmatic, the sea represents both openesss and closure: on one hand, it is a great physical barrier that separates Martinique from other lands and precludes the possibility of any meaningful return to the "pays rêvé," or the quasi-mythic ancestral homeland of Africa. On the other, the sea nonetheless represents the possibility of an elsewhere; it is from across the sea that the diverse constituent elements of creole culture came together into relation. In *Soleil de la conscience,* he writes that "l'encerclement (of the sea) qui risquait d'entraver l'imagination au contraire l'exacerbe et lui court sus, cavales marines" (22). Finally, in *La Lézarde*, the ocean serves as an endpoint, the furthest extent of Thaël's voyage and the thematic counterpart of the mountains. It is into the ocean that the Lézarde river, the geographic emblem of the entire novel, ends its course.

Already, my discussion of the novelistic spaces in *La Lézarde* demonstrates that binary model of spatial opposition, reduced to the dialectical pair of mountain and plain, fails to account for the complex web of spatial relations the text elaborates. City, plain, sea, and mountain all interact, reflect, and oppose one another. Insisting on any binary, whether it be mountain-plain, mountain-sea, or mountain-city, eliminates other spaces constituent of the geographic totality that Glissant's text presents. Crucially, all of these spaces are linked, thematically and

geographically, by the final space I will analyze: the river that gives the novel its title. Of all the spaces the Glissant, none so succinctly encapsulates his conception of landscapes as character as the Lézarde river. Throughout the text, the river takes on the proportions of human life; born high in the mountains, it grows larger and older as if flows down towards the sea:

> elle descend de belle façon les contreforts du nord, avec ses impatiences ; sa jeunesse bleutée, les tourbillons de son matin. Lorsque paraît le premier soleil, la Lézarde surprise en son détour semble là s'assoupir, guetter l'astre, jouer à la dame, prudente ; puis soudain elle bondit, c'est comme un peuple qui se lève, elle débouche d'angle en angle … et la voilà dans le grand matin, joyeuse et libertine, elle se déshabille et se réchauffe, c'est une fille nue et qui ne se soucie des passants sur la rive, elle baigne dans sa promptitude (éternelle, et l'eau passe sur l'eau), et bientôt, comme femme mûrie dans le plaisir et la satiété, la Lézarde, croupe élargie, ventre de feu sur les froides profondeurs de son lit, comblée, s'attarde et se repaît dans le cri du midi … la Lézarde continue vers le soir et la mer noire, ainsi accomplissant sa mort et sa science ; qu'à six heures, lorsque va tomber le serein, la fine humidité de l'avant-nuit, la Lézarde n'a plus de secrets. (30-1)

This passage draws a clear connection between the Martinican landscape and the lives of its inhabitants: beginning at the break of day as an infant, it progresses from "fille" in the morning, to "femme" at noon, before ending its life in the delta of the Cohée du Lamentin. This metaphor overflows with signification: it anthropomorphizes the river and equates its life to that of the human, reinforces the associations of the mountains with origins and the sea with death, and inscribes the river's course in the mythic temporality of the day-as-life. The river becomes a kind of character and exemplifies the kind of solidarity that Glissant envisions between landscape and inhabitants in *Soleil de la conscience.*

The river likewise represents the thread that links together each of the previous spaces in Glissant's topographies to one another. It brings together obscure origins associated with the mountains and the visceral realities of the plains. The river carries the immobile emptiness of the city towards the infinite expanse of the sea:

> Il y a la mer et il y a la ville, et qu'est-ce qui fait le lien, qu'est-ce qui rattache la ville à la mer ? – La Lézarde ! crie Garin – La Lézarde ! Comment la rattache-t-elle ? … Elle fait un large tour, la Lézarde. Elle ramasse toute la terre autour de la ville, elle comprend que cette ville et cette terre c'est la même nourriture, c'est la même vie, et elle fait sa boucle, pour porter à la mer toute la ville et toute la terre. (128)

Again, both the narrator and the characters consistently depict the river in human terms. Not only does it link together the diverse spaces of the island, it entwines, at the conceptual level, the human and the geographic and as such, comes to represent the comingling of nature and culture.

Herin lies the crux of the mythic operation at work in *La Lézarde.*[18] As Glissant later explains in the *Discours Antillais,* one of the primary functions of myth is to provide a basis for understanding the relationship between people and their environment: "le Mythe déguise en même temps qu'il signifie, éloigne en éclairant, obscurcit en rendant plus intense et plus prenant *cela* qui s'établit dans un temps et un lieu entre des hommes et leur entour. Il en explore l'inconnu-connu" (138). It is precisely this sense of the inconnu-connu that characters such as Mathieu and Thaël struggle to articulate throughout the book: their relationship to their island and its presence within them. As the narrator explains, the Martinican past, understood through the framework of mythology, functions as a mirror within the process of self-discovery:

[18] In Nesbitt's reading of *La Lézarde*, the mythic operation operates historically and not spatially. As I discuss later in the chapter, he argues that the denouement, in which the character of Valérie (an avatar of Martinican nationhood) is mauled by Thaël's dogs, represents the return of the mythic violence of plantation slavery. While I concur with Nesbitt's reading, I argue that the spatial mythologies developed in *La Lézarde* likewise deserve attention.

"Tellement les légendes, miroirs de l'homme qui se cherche, sont ici acceptées, fréquentées, jamais, prônées, combattues ; et par là même rendues fortes, signifiantes, et caduques" (61). Although this passage confirms the importance of the legend within the novel, the final word, "caduque" nonetheless implies that mythological understandings of the past are obsolete, that they need be replaced by a more thoroughgoing sense of history. Again, Glissant expands upon this idea in the *Discours Antillais*: "le lien primordial entre une perception d'histoire et une ambition de littérature s'esquisse dans le Mythe … le Mythe est le premier donné de la conscience historique, encore naïve, et la matière première de l'ouvrage littéraire" (138). *La Lézarde* represents, within Glissant's broader fictional enterprise, this primordial link between the Martinican past that subsequent novels will develop futher. Specifically, *La Lézarde* creates a literary geography of Martinique that distances itself from realist description and instead situates itself in myth.

This distinction will require some demonstration, as at first impressions, the novel does seem to faithfully recreate the geography of Martinique: the island's mountains are indeed situated in the north and the beaches in the south. Although Glissant does not name the island explicitly and uses a pseudonym for the city of Le Lamentin, such procedures appear quite commonly in colonial and anticolonial literature, and his readers would not have had any difficulty recognizing the equivalency. Furthermore, we can point to highly specific geospatial markers that would confirm that the novel takes place in a literary representation of the real Martinique. For example, in the sixth chapter of the third section, the narrator describes a jubilant crowd celebrating the election results in the streets of Lambrianne: "la foule s'ébranla en assez bon ordre. On avait remisé les costumes du Dimanche … Le chant commença lentement mais à peine était-on à la moitié de la rue Schœlcher (anciennement rue Saint-Laurent), la criée était déjà totale" (210). The crowd continues through the rue Bayardin, cuts over to the rue des

Barrières, turns left at the rue de L'Abattoir and returns to the square in front of the town hall. These streets actually exist in Le Lamentin; using a period map of the town (figure 3.1) it is even possible to recreate the route of the procession as it would have occurred. For a reader already familiar with the geography of Le Lamentin, this accurate depiction of the town's layout would be apparent.

But with regards to the Lézarde, the most prominent geographic feature in the text, the same cannot be said. Consider the following passage which also describes the space of the town:

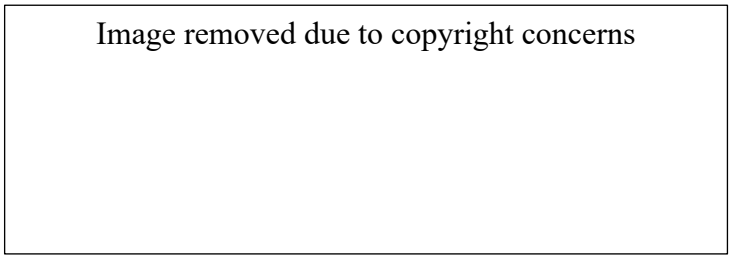


Figure 3.1. Ministère de la Reconstruction et du Logement. *Martinique: Le Lamentin* (Detail). Scale: 1/2000. Institut National de l'Information Géographique et Forestière.

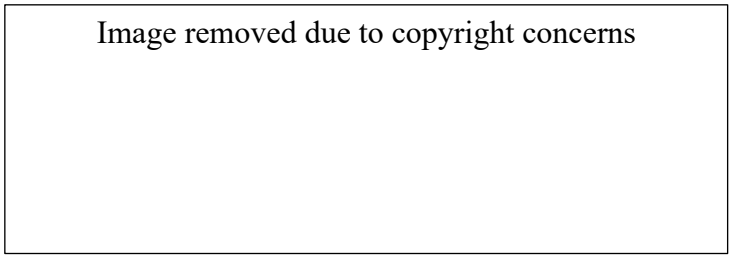


Figure 3.2. Aerial Photograph of Le Lamentin, Martinique, 1947. Institut National de l'Information Géographique et Forestière. *http://remonterletemps.ign.fr/.*

Voici le lieu : un étirement de tôles, qu'avoisine familièrement la terre rouge. Entre la ville et les hauteurs, voici la route, gardée par le terrible fromager. A l'opposé, la plaine inaltérable, jusqu'aux blancheurs du sud. A l'ouest, la boucle tourmentée de la Lézarde : elle veut emprisonner la cité, mais soudain elle se reprend, elle refuse ce gardiennage, et vers l'est, passé les cannes sinistres, elle se perd dans son delta (30).

If we compare this description to an aerial photograph of the area around Le Lamentin, we can observe that the image created by the narrator does not align with the real topography of Martinique. In the description, a large meander in the course of the Lézarde nearly surrounds the town from the western side before the river cuts toward its delta in the east. However, in figure 3.2, the opposite is true: the meander curves around the eastern edge of town and the river flows to the west before emptying into Fort-de-France bay. What the narrator describes is in fact the *mirror image of the river's true course*. Just as, for Glissant, legends function as a mirror for the human subject in the process of self-discovery, so does this mirror image of the Lézarde passes out of the realm of realist representation and form the basis for the novel's mythic geography.

The Spatiohistorical Mirror

This concept of mythic mirroring pervades the text and not only with regards to the novel's geographies. Characters appear as mirror images of one another other, myth and legend reflect history, the poetic echoes the real. The most prominent example of character doubling is that of Thaël and Mathieu. These two young men, despite their similar age and immediate and shared sense of friendship, appear strikingly different. In contrast to Thaël's vitality and optimism, Mathieu is consistently described as weak, sickly, and prone to bouts of depression. Both characters represent, for the other, an aspect of the Martinican experience that they seek to understand. For Mathieu, Thaël incarnates the mythic past that he investigates both through

historical research and his conversations with papa Longoué that Glissant describes in *Le Quatrième siècle.* When the two arrive together in Lambrianne, the narrator explains that for Thaël, Mathieu "résumait par son nom toute la réalité éclose là-bas" (14), and likewise, Mathieu exclaims to Mycéa, his romantic interest and the main protagonist in *La Case du commandeur*, that Thaël "connaît les vieilles legends" and "s'intéresse aux mystères" (22). Whereas Mathieu's mission is one of temporal exploration, Thaël's is to discover, in a spatial sense, his native land.

In several instances, the text positions them as two sides of the same coin; made of the same material but as different (and similar) as day and night. It is Mathieu himself who first expresses this idea: " Thaël est comme son double nocturne, essentiel : un Mathieu de la nuit profonde" (117). Later in the text, Pablo, another member of the group compares the two in strikingly similar terms to the police officer Alphonse Tigamba:

> Différents, et pourtant pareils. Comme le jour et la nuit l'un à côté de l'autre.
>
> —Lequel, le jour ?
>
> — Mathieu. Thaël la nuit. Mathieu qui nous a dirigés, sans même le savoir. Il est allé au fond, il essaie de voir l'ensemble. Nous avons besoin de lui … Nous avons aussi besoin de la nuit. Je veux dire des vérités qu'on ne peut que devenir. Peut être besoin de nous tromper un peu, de méditer nos erreurs. Et il faudrait revenir du côté de Papa Longoué. Tout ce que nous avons oublié. L'Afrique. La mer. Le voyage (196-7).

Pablo's comments go beyond echoing Mathieu's earlier sentiments, as they also suggest a similar mirrored relationship between the uncertain, mythic past embodied by the quimboiseur papa Longoué and the documented but fragmentary historical past that Mathieu studies.

But Mathieu's research into the past, based as it is on archival fragments and twice-told legends, leads him towards a distinct pessimism with regards to the possibility of restituting a coherent sense of history. In the final chapter of the first section of the novel, he describes to a

curious Thaël the nature of his "terrible" work: "Je cherche longtemps, avec patience. Mon domaine est étrange, et si vaste. Je fouille. Mais le plus difficile est de classer les documents, avant d'écrire sur le Registre des Chroniques le texte de cette histoire" (80-1). What renders Mathieu's work so difficult is not the discovery of the source material nor its content, but rather its transformation, through classification and inscription, into the kind of narrative-based, chronologically organized form that the discipline of history demands. Yet he nonetheless sees his work as critical to the present and future of the Martinican people and attempts to explain this importance to Thaël using the river as a metaphor: "nous plongions dans ce bras de la Lézarde ; le courant nous emportait … On ne peut pas nager, il faut se laisser conduire … Le jeu était de braver les sangsues qui grouillaient dans l'herbe … Chaque matin nous revenions, ayant évité les sangsues et la morsure des plantes" (81). Here, Mathieu implies that the past had to be endured, and that the best that the Martinican people could do was avoid the most painful of its effects.

If this initial formulation appears deterministic and overly passive, Mathieu revises it somewhat when Thaël presses him to explain himself in simpler terms. Here he emphasizes the sense of vertigo he experiences when considering the depth and breadth of the past's domain. He explains that

> Confronté alors à ces choses d'hier qui nous ont fait si sûrement, je suis saisi de vertige. L'éclat de l'aube m'enivre, mais nous avons perdu l'éclat !... Il faut remonter si loin, si loin, avant d'entrevoir les premières lumières. L'histoire de notre peuple est à faire (c'est mon travail : je mets à jour les archives de la ville), et ainsi nous nous connaîtrons. Je me découvre parmi tant de papiers, de contes, de cris et de sang ! Car notre histoire n'est pas un lot de faits à l'encan, ni un puits à margelle, un passé coupé de nous (où l'on puise tranquillement). Et quand je dis le premier mot de ce passé, je dis le premier mystère des choses qui en moi palpitent ! (81-2)

Mathieu's insistence on the necessity of creating history anticipates Glissant's discussion of the problems of Caribbean historiography in *Le Discours antillais* and demonstrates, when compared to the previous passage, the difference between the past and history. Whereas the former was an experiential ordeal, the latter is a discourse that has yet to take form, and whose creation is critical to the process of self-discovery. In the final lines of the passage, Mathieu explains that both the past and its formulation into narrative exist already within the psyche of the Martinican subject; their separation results in the condition of "history as neurosis" that Glissant will later describe.

Mathieu's anxiety appears plainly to Thaël, who perceives that "les graphiques, les preuves, les dates ne lui apportent pas encore cet ordre" (82). The methods of "histoire évènementielle" cannot provide Mathieu with the means of developing a satisfactory sense of history and he deems his project a failure. In desperation, he looks to his more spatially-oriented counterpart, Thaël, who will perform the titular "acte" of the second section. The time for present action has arrived, and Mathieu once again resorts to the metaphor of the river in order to explain himself:

> Et tu auras la décision, et la sagesse… Tu es venu pour décider, oui ; tu raccordes le passé bruissant au présent plein d'amertumes … Vous aurez besoin de moi, et de mes brumes. Ah ! nous ferons une seule énorme beauté de tout ce chant d'ignorances, de monotonies. Oui, tout est vague, tout est vague maintenant. Mais voici que nous allons connaître l'acte ! La rivière descend avec une précision nouvelle, c'est la Lézarde, c'est tout fleuve propice, c'est l'eau des criques où un peuple vient s'ébattre. Et ensuite, notre delta ne sera plus sale … un jour la Lézarde sera claire devant la mer. Comme un peuple assuré vient au-devant des autres peuples (82-3)

This passage demonstrates to what extend Glissant intertwines the concepts of time and space, of history and geography: the only way that Mathieu can explain the temporal conundrum of the relation of past and present is to imagine the flows of time in the form of the river. History itself becomes unthinkable without the mediating intervention of space. Furthermore, this conceptual entanglement necessarily operates at the level of language, or more precisely, metaphor. Thaël's response is particularly telling : "En somme, vous êtes un poète" (83). In the mythic space of *La Lézarde*, the roles of the poet and the historian become one and the same, or rather one the mirror of the other.

The narrator muses on this relationship directly in a chapter situated near the center of the novel. Mycéa attends a veillée, or wake, and listens to a storyteller recount a tale that bears an undeniable resemblance to the plot of the novel:

> Deux hommes se détestait ; plus que le sel déteste l'eau … Et voilà que ces deux hommes se rencontrent, et l'un veut tuer l'autre. Mais la mort c'est un arc-en-ciel dans l'orage et celui qui monte sur l'arc-en-ciel arrive au pays du rhum éternel. Et l'un dit à l'autre : tu es mauvais, je vais te tuer, mais continuons la rivière, je veux que tu partes avec la mer, dans l'œil de la mer … et l'autre dit : tu n'as pas peur de moi, allons. Comme ça ils descendirent la rivière, vers la mer sans fin. (103)

A member of the audience interrupts and objects, accusing the storyteller of profaning the wake by telling "des histoires sans foi ni loi" (104). The storyteller's defense is of particular interest: he claims he is not responsible because "l'histoire est connue, qu'on aille débattre avec ceux qui ont vu le pays dans ce temps-là" (104). In other words, the storyteller didn't invent the tale; rather, he is simply recounting an episode in the past. This implies that within the narrative economy of the text, the main plotline, that of Thaël and Garin's descent down the river, is not

entirely novel. Rather, it is itself a retelling of a mythic tale, a narrative from the distant past reflected in the present.

At the end of the chapter, the narrator interrogates the relationship between "histoire" (interpretable both in the sense of "history" and "story) and the "conte." It is not entirely clear if he refers strictly to the tale told by the storyteller in the preceding scene, or whether his remarks likewise apply to the text as a whole:

> Mais ceci n'est pas un conte … tout homme est crée pour dire la vérité de sa terre, et il en est pour la dire avec des mots, il en est pour la dire avec du sang, et d'autres dans la vrai grandeur (qui est de vivre avec la terre, patiemment, et de la conquérir comme une amante) ; et si un homme raconte un peu de sa terre … on ne peut pas dire que c'est là un conte, non, même si cet homme parle de rêves imprécis qui, peu à peu ; s'arrangent avec le réel sombre. (105)

The narrator suggests that to speak the truth of his land, an act not limited to the work of writers, goes beyond storytelling; that this spatial truth marks the act as something more than a "conte." The narrator continues explaining that the dreams of the man who speaks of his land, so long as they emanate from that fertile earth, cannot be dismissed as mere fictions: "si un homme dit qu'il a vu ceci ou cela, nul ne peur le contredire, à la condition que ceci ou cela soit dans la terre, enfoncé au plus profond de son entraille, comme un rêve qui est le miroir du fond de la terre, un rêve avec des racines en vrille dans la terre, et non pas un rêve en fumée" (105). The final sentence in the passage presages Glissant's later use of Deleuze's and Guattari's concept of the rhizome and with his own concept of transversal histories. These passages make it evident that when the narrator speaks of the truth of the earth, he does not refer to the kind of objective, documented facts to which the discipline of history aspires. Rather, this truth reflects the speaker's dreams and the somber realities of the world.

If poetic expression becomes the necessary lens or heterotopia through which the Caribbean subject perceives the legacy of the past within the self, much the same can be said of the relation of that subject to the surrounding world. The misery of the cane worker who rejects the status quo and dreams of new and different harvest "entre dans la vérité de son soleil" (51), a line that recalls the title of his essay *Soleil de la Conscience*, published but two years prior. In this early part of his career, Glissant still dreams of an independent, or at the least autonomous Martinique, free from the shackles of European economic dependency, and as such, understands the awakening of a political and identitary consciousness as the first step towards the discovery of the spatiohistorical configuration of the self, an act as revolutionary as the assassination that Thaël will perform later in the novel. In an early chapter, his narrator writes that this is how

> un peuple revient à son royaume. Et qu'importe de dire déjà: où, et comment ? Ceux qui reviennent le savent bien. Ils connaissent la route, et qu'importe de dire: voilà, ils sont partis de tel endroit, et c'est ici qu'ils furent débarqués ? Le temps viendra de marquer le port, et le débarquement. Ceux qui, pendant des siècles, furent ainsi déportés (et ils ont conquis cette nouvelle nature, ils l'ont peuplée de leurs cris retrouvés), ils diront une grande fois le voyage, oh! ce sera une clameur immense et bonne sur le monde. (51)

In this profoundly ambivalent passage, the narrator questions the necessity of delving into the specifics of the historical past while nonetheless affirming the value of such a "clameur". Furthermore, he situates the telling of the great voyage in an unspecific future. In this we can recognize Glissant's noted aversion to the back-to-Africa ethic of his Negritude predecessors; as he will later theorize more explicitly, the "pays rêvé" of the African origin cannot be reclaimed. Rather, the "royaume" to be returned to is the here and now of Martinique.

Yet Glissant does not disavow the utility of such dreams; rather they are the essence of the intellectual operation of Relation. As he writes in the *Discours antillais,* Negritude was not a

"retour" but a "detour," an ultimately fruitful movement that provided a means for the Caribbean subject to come back to itself and join in the anticolonial struggle:

> La parole poétique de Césaire, l'acte politique de Fanon nous ont mené quelque part, autorisant par détour que nous revenions au seul lieu où nos problèmes nous guettent … il faut revenir au lieu. Le Détour n'est ruse profitable que si le Retour le féconde: non pas retour au rêve d'origine, à l'Un immobile de l'Être, mais retour au point d'intrication, dont on s'était détourné par force. (36)

For Glissant, the literature of Césaire and the revolutionary theory of Fanon are generalizing, that is, they present a vision of politics and expression that gesture toward the broader world, rather than taking into consideration the particular situation of the varied terrains of decolonization (35). The value of Negritude, for Glissant, is that it provided the occasion for the rediscovery of the Caribbean "here" in the "now" of the decolonial moment. As he writes in *La Lézarde,*

> Pour aujourd'hui, ils lèvent la tête, et se comptent. Ils sont une nouvelle part du monde, ils ont glané partout, ils portent le ferment universel. Et si, accoudé à la case, l'homme obscurément se nourrit d'une autre cassave (lointaine) c'est bien afin de retrouver ici (par l'aliment du songe) l'ailleurs qui est le sien, et de trouver en cet ici toute saveur et toute liberté. C'est afin que l'ici lui appartienne tout cru. (51)

Here we see yet another geographic mirroring: the oscillation of the terms "ici" and "ailleurs," Africa and the Caribbean, leads to a rediscovery of the here and now, of the self and its surroundings. Glissant's Martinique thus embodies a constellation of spaces: internally, in the sense that Thaël's voyage of discovery up and down the river reveals to him the extent and interconnection of mountain, sea, plain, and city, and externally, in that the island, through both the Africanist dreams of papa Longoué and the ideological agendas of political and literary figures such as the unnamed Césaire gesture toward the world beyond the sea.

What is necessary, and indeed possible in the liminal moment in which the novel unfurls, is a move beyond slavish nostalgia for a lost hinterland and the refusal of the contemporary situation that characterized, for Glissant, the ethic and aesthetic of the maroon.[19] Near the end of the novel, the group reunites for a final celebration, just before the departure of Thaël and Valérie and just after the death of papa Longoué, the old "nègre de Guinée" (217). Longoué's passing, which coincides with Césaire's electoral victory and the beginning of a new era in Martinican history, marks another moment of temporal convergence, this time explicitly identified by the narrator:

> Mais la seule soudaine animation prouvait qu'il n'était pas parti. Il était plus présent que jamais, il était redescendu des bois où depuis l'an de tuerie et de grand arrivage 1788 sa famille avait tenu. Avec lui, la terre des Ancêtres pénétrait enfin l'âme commune. San les mystères, sans les légendes … On pouvait dire qu'il avait gagné son combat, le vieux guérisseur, le vieux marron (oui, c'était bien là le moment élu où le passé s'accordait enfin avec la qualité originale du présent) ; et on pouvait penser qu'il n'avait jamais été plus vivant qu'à cette minute. (218)

In this moment of popular elation, the text seems to anticipate the emergence of a new national consciousness and the acknowledgement of the diverse, creolized origins of the people. Mathieu declares that with the death of Longoué, "La vieille Afrique s'en va" (220) but that the course of time has created a new people: "Presque tous les peuples du monde qui se sont rencontrés ici. Non pas pour une journée : depuis des siècles. Et voilà, il en est sorti le peuple antillais. Les

[19] In *Caribbean Critique*, Nesbitt writes of Glissant's pessimistic view of the *marronage* as a viable strategy of resistance, noting that "Glissant casts the historical phenomenon of the maroon slave, which might have served as a figure of resistance, as one more example of the futility of all resistance in a topography with no hinterland to support a culture of resistance (especially so when compared to the very different maroon traditions and experiences of countries such as Jamaica, Surinam, or Brazil)" (151).

africains nos pères, les engagés bretons, les coolies hindous, les marchands chinois. Bon, on a voulu nous faire oublier l'Afrique. Et voilà, nous ne l'avons pas oublié" (222). This scene represents the apex of the novel's optimism: the election has been won, a new era inaugurated, and the emergence of an original and vibrant culture confirmed.

But the novel does not end here. The convergence of past and present engendered by Longoué's death comports, as Nesbitt argues, "the eternal, inevitable resurgence of the mythic violence of the colonial order and plantation slavery itself." (932). Glissant concludes his novel with a tragic turn that tempers the optimism of the preceding chapter and indicates that the coming together of past and present in the aftermath of the election may be as temporary as the elation of a hard-fought political victory. The first chapter of the final section mirrors the novel's first lines: "Thaël quitta la ville, et le soleil tombait" (235), putting a point of closure on the symbolic day in which the novel's chronotope elapses. He returns to the mountains with Valérie, elated by his journey: "Le lieu … nous l'avons découvert. Nous pouvons dire qu'il est à nous. Hier, il a eu le sang de nos pères, aujourd'hui il a notre voix" (240). But in the darkness of the intervening night, Thaël fails to see the danger that awaits them: his dogs, emblems of that mythic violence maul and kill Valérie, the "the figure of a pure, militant nationalism" (Nesbitt, 394). This tragic denouement implies that Glissant, even at this early stage in his career, recognized that the new political order, departmentalization and continued assimilation, would not lead to the birth of a new nation or a new people, but rather to the state of successful colonization that he describes in the *Discours Antillais*. As Murdoch argues in *Creole Identity in the French Caribbean Novel*, the novel's end demonstrates that the group of young activists "appear to regress rather than progress and their inability to properly address the complex issues that frame this moment of transition will eventually doom them to an ending that is anything but

a point of resolution" (25). Just as the Lézarde terminates its course with a final meander into its muddy delta, so too does the novel's final turn lead to an ambiguous and obscure message.

What becomes clear is that we cannot conflate the naïve elation of the characters with the author's intentions. Moudileno, who argues that Mathieu's melancholy and physical illness, which coincide with the electoral victory, signals the work's overall pessimism towards the ensuing departmentalization, reminds us that we must "tient compte du décalage entre le contexte spécifique de l'histoire (1945) et le moment de publication du roman (1958). Le Glissant de 1958 n'est plus l'adolescent de dix-sept ans qui militait pour la campagne électorale d'Aimé Césaire en 1945, et qui transparaît sous les traits du jeune narrateur du roman" ("Relire" 397). At the very end of the celebration, as each member of the group disperses, the narrator, who rarely addresses the reader directly, suddenly distances himself from the action and reflects on the temporal distance between the events and his enunciation of them:

> Je suis enfant dans la rue et homme dans le souvenir. Je suis haletant d'avoir chanté, ruisselant, et glacé tout autant. Les mots eux-mêmes m'ont traqué. Oui, je suis double, le temps m'étreint dans cette tenaille, j'entends les échos de la dernière fête, j'entends l'ivresse du temps passé. Ils criaient. Ils criaient tous : 'N'oublie pas, n'oublie pas. Souvenez-vous'" (230).

Here, the narrator's language suggests that his memories haunt and pursue him, that he is caught in a kind of double consciousness, speaking from both the past and present. It is words emanating from the past that trigger the sensorial hallucination of reliving history:

> Comme si les mots pouvaient être une rivière qui descende et qui s'étale et déborde. Comme si … les mots pouvaient conduire leur part de boues, de racines, de limon, jusqu'au delta et à la mer : jusqu'à la précise réalité. Je suis là, je connais ce pays ; et enfant je sais déjà, et homme je sais aujourd'hui à souffrance que le plus imprévu … est

encore à venir. Mais les mots n'achèvent jamais de mourir ; la rivière jamais n'achève de porter les terres vers la mer. (230-1)

Like Mathieu describing his historical research, the narrator resorts to geographic metaphor in order to make sense of the flows of time and language that provide the substance of his melancholic reminiscence. Furthermore, his evocation of an unanticipated suffering points to the deception and disappointment of the post-departmentalization era.

But for Glissant, who does not share his predecessor's view of history as teleological, culminating in a triumphant moment of decolonization or in the victory of the proletariat and the instauration of a classless utopia, the novel could end in no other way. The political struggle of 1945, successful as it was in that moment, appears in retrospect just another example of a string of revolts "sans cesse avorté" (*Discours antillais*, 157). Although *La Lézarde* dwells incessantly on the past and its continued presence within the conscience of the Caribbean subject, it displays skepticism with regards to the possibility of recuperating that past into a coherent and consistent notion of history. Rather, investigations into the past serve better as a means of exploring and discovering the truth of the locality in which it occurred. For Glissant, this poetic appropriation of history must be achieved through a mediation on space itself. Read retrospectively, that is, in light of Glissant's long career and extensive theoretical and narratival elaboration of the concepts of space and time, the foundational nature of *La Lézarde* becomes evident. It serves as a mythic forbearer to his subsequent works which deepen his conceptual interrogations while experimenting with new structures and forms.

La Lézarde's novelistic Progeny

Glissant's subsequent novel, *Le Quatrième siècle*, displays a distinct change in spatiotemporal form. If *La Lézarde* explores a multitude of different spaces within the present of

the narrative, *Le Quatrième siècle* instead focuses on a specific place, papa Longoué's cabin, from which it delves back into the mythic past of Martinique that the previous novel merely references. A text that the author describes, in a personal dedication, as "l'épopée antillaise," (Figure 3.3) it serves to deepen the sense of embedded time that first appears in *La Lézarde.* Set in the years preceding the events of *La Lézarde,* it recounts the numerous visits of Mathieu to the quimboiseur's cabin during which he asks the old man to reveal to him to mysteries of the past:

> L'homme cédait donc à l'enfant et commençait à préparer ses mots, à suivre lui-même son discours, à l'ordonner, à l'étendre -- Dis-moi le passé, papa Longoué ! Qu'est-ce que c'est, le passé ? Pour le coup le quimboiseur ne fut pas dupe de l'apparence. Il comprit très bien que sous cette forme enfantine la question aller l'engager tout à fait. Que cette forme n'était qu'une dernière concession que Matthieu avait voulu lui faire, lors même que le garçon eût pu demander simplement : 'que nous reste-t-il du passé ?', ou : 'Pourquoi faut-il revenir sur le passé ?', ou poser toute autre sorte de question franche, nette, sans détour.

Mathieu, who still believes in the possibility of creating linear history, implores Longoué to tell his tales in order, from the beginning up to the present, and the old man largely acquiesces. He begins his tales in 1788, the year that his and Mathieu's ancestors, the first of the Béluse and Longoué families, arrive on the same slave ship.[20] The text as a whole bounces back and forth between the historical past in which the discontinuous stories of their ancestors occur and present of their retelling, in which Mathieu and Longoué debate the meaning of the past and the possibility of reestablishing a sense of history based on these fugitive memories. It is in *Le*

[20] Interestingly, the name of the slave ship (La Rose-Marie) that transports the ancestors of the Lonoué and the Béluse appears to be the mirror image of the name of Mathieu's mother (Marie-Rose), further crystallizing Glissant's understanding of the slave ship as a matrix of Caribbean civilization.

Quatrième siècle that Glissant begins to elaborate the expansive genealogies and transversal filiations of his characters.

If this second novel displays an increasing degree of narrative fragmentation and discontinuity, in *Malemort* (1975), the narratival consistency of Glissant's fiction break down completely. This text, although firmly anchored in Glissant's fictional world through the evocation of familiar characters such as Mathieu, Longoué, and Lomé, turns away from the novelistic, narratival mode of his previous long works and towards a poetic form of expression in which history, and furthermore, temporal progression, become increasingly difficult to grasp. As he explains in *Le Discours Antillais*, his intention was to "chanter l'histoire: impénétrable imcomprise" (15). The text's linguistic experimentation, which marks a distinct phase in the author's career, represents an attempt to translate into language the experience of history as neurosis that he sees as essential to the French Caribbean experience. As Dash writes, "The central focus of *Malemort* is a particular aspect of 'le reel martiniquais' – the verbal coding through which a collective neurosis manifests itself. To impose a clear, orderly rhetoric on the Martiniquan situation would be to falsify the alienated reality of that culture" (116). In *Malemort*, the pessimism regarding Martinique's future as a French department, present in the finale of *La Lézarde*, pervades the text. The continued assimilation of the Martinican people deprives them of the kind of self-discovery through the mirror of geography that Glissant's first two novels render as possible.

La Case du commandeur (1981), published the same year as *Le Discours Antillais*, marks a return to narrative exploration of the past. Focusing on the character of Mycéa Celat, the first section of the novel traces back her family's genealogy generation by generation towards a mysterious ancestor known as Odono. The central section, "Le Mitan du temps," represents the furthest and most inaccessible extent of the past, perceivable only in a flux of words and

memories that cannot be forced into a sequential order. In the opening pages of this section, Glissant returns to the metaphor of the river, but with an important modification: "voici le moment venu de connaître que nous ne continuerons pas à descendre en mélodie la ravine; qu'arrivés au bord de ce trou du temps nous dévalons plus vite en sautant de roche en roche" (137-8). If the metaphor of the time-river in modern European thought appealed, as Westphal argues, because it represented continuity and unilateral movement towards the future, Glissant shifts his emphasis from the water to the rocks that line the riverbed, and in doing so, instead emphasizes the discontinuity of that movement. The Caribbean novelist (or historian) can descend the river of time only by hopping between isolated episodes and incidents and must inevitably come to terms with an unknowable source. In the third section of the novel, which recounts the life of Mycéa following the events of *La Lézarde,* the narrator reprises a forward-moving linear narrative, while the main character remains mystified by that inaccessible path. After the death of her two sons Patrice and Odono, Mycéa, suffering from an acute case of history as neurosis, is confined to a mental hospital. But in the concluding sequence of the text, she escapes from the hospital along with a local madman and spends the night in titular slave-driver's cabin where, in a particularly salient moment of temporal concentration, she comes to terms with the legacy of the past within herself and experiences the kind of self-discovery that Glissant describes in *La Lézarde*.

Although each of these novels vary considerably in form and in specific approach, they all represent attempts to deal with the problems of time and space as they relate to the political and cultural problems of Martinique. They all share a deep pessimism with regards to the possibility of recuperating a sense of historical continuity as it is envisioned by the western discipline of history. Rather, coming to terms with the past serves to acquaint Caribbean subjects with themselves and their selves and to help them understand the island they inhabit. As such,

Glissant's early work signals a shift in the Caribbean spatiohistorical imagination. Whereas his predecessors such as C. R. L. James, Eric Williams, or Léonard Sainville seek to place the Caribbean at the center of a global sense of history that had hitherto relegated the region to the periphery of Eurocentric narrative of modernity, Glissant's interest in the past does not aspire to the kind of historical totality that motivated Marxist historiography. What emerges from Glissant's early fiction is a strongly-defined sense of locality; the past, specific to the Martinican experience, becomes a means of exploring and understanding that space. Furthermore, this strong sense of locality, encapsulated in his development of the idea of *antillanité*, should not be assimilated into postcolonial discourses of cultural hybridity, but instead be understood as well-developed, particularist alternative to the universalizing models of cultural hybridity proposed by Bhabha and his followers.

One of the great ambiguities of Glissant's broader oeuvre is that in this same moment that his literary production (including his poetry and theater) focuses so tightly on Martinique, his work has subsequently been understood, especially in the anglophone academy, as constituting a distinctly postcolonial theoretical intervention that marks the transition from the anticolonial perspective of Césaire's Negritude to a concept of creolization understood as theory of cultural hybridity. What I have argued so far in this chapter and its preface is that understandings of early Glissant have largely passed over his particularist concept of *antillanité* in favor of the more easily universalizable notion of creolization he develops in his later, post 1981 works. Even if we accept the premise, supported by scholars like Hallward and Bongie, of a mid-career shift in Glissant's priorities and *Weltanschauung*, it would be wholly inaccurate to consider his fiction as nationalistic or chauvinistic because of its preoccupation with Martinique; Glissant is deeply invested in tracing the presence of "ailleurs" in the "ici" of his native island. The form of the spatiohistorical imagination that develops out of his fiction does not situate Caribbean islands on

a global historical stage in the way that his postcolonial interpreters do, at least not in the first decades of his career. His approach, and specifically his focus on the importance of locality became increasingly influential in the 1970s and 80s. The texts of the authors of the Créolité movement, in particular, take up the task that Glissant's early work sets out, notably in novels such as Patrick Chamoiseau's *Chronique de sept misères* (1986), *Texaco* (1992), and *L'esclave vieil homme et le molosse* (1997). In the next chapter I consider another text, whose author, Vincent Placoly, remained apart from that movement. His historical novel *Frères Volcans* displays the same kind of skepticism towards history and investment in locality as Glissant's novels but using wholly different fictional forms.

Chapter Four

Vincent Placoly and the "Histoire Hallucinante" of the 1848 Revolution in Martinique

Vincent Placoly (1946-1992), author, essayist, and uncompromising supporter of Martinican independence remains today little known in the public sphere and rarely studied in the academy. His fiercely independent style, incompatible with either the oft-dogmatic precepts of the *créolité* movement or the universalizing readerly practices of postcolonialism, resulted in a body of work that appears difficult to place within the conventional literary histories of the Antilles. The life of Placoly followed a similar trajectory of that of many prominent Antillean intellectuals. Born in Martinique in 1946, he moved to Paris where he enrolled at the Lycée Louis le Grand. After earning a Licence and a Masters degree at the Sorbonne, he returned to Martinique where he taught in a variety of establishments. Guided by his mentor, René Ménil, he became both an author and political militant, founding in 1972 the Groupe révolution socialiste, a Marxist political party that advocates for Martinican independence. In 1971, he published his first novel *La Vie et la mort de Marcel Gonstran* and two years later his second, *L'Eau de mort guildive*. As such, Placoly's literary and political careers intertwine from the moment they begin, and as Axel Arthéron and Jean-Georges Chali write, "Il convient d'interroger le double engagement littéraire et politique de Vincent Placoly en montrant comment son œuvre se met au service d'une pensée profondément anticolonialiste" (14). The implacability of his marxist politics and his refusal of the "cultural turn" concomitant with the rise of postcolonial and postmodern studies in the 1970s-80s marks his work's fundamental difference from that of his contemporaries. Placoly's fascination with the politics and literature counter-colonialism lead him in the 1980s to a direct and profound engagement with the discipline of history. In addition to *Frères Volcans,* he wrote several plays, including *Dessalines ou la passion de l'indépendance*

(1983), that engage with the Caribbean past. Placoly's historical fiction, filled as it is with concrete names, quotations, and details, testifies to the author's profound engagement with archival records. To the "double engagement" of literature and politics, we should add a third, that of history. As Nicholas Pien writes, "*Frères Volcans* est l'œuvre d'un militant (dans le sens noble du terme, d'un historien et d'un romancier, réunis en une seule et même personne, indissociable, et ne travaillant pas à tour de rôle, mais en même temps, dans la même ligne d'écriture" (138).

As such, his writing participates in the collective effort to construct a literary counter-history capable of uncovering and recognizing an Antillean past that has been consistently neglected, if not ignored, by traditional French history.[1] The republication in 2017 of his third novel, *Frères Volcans* (1983), among his other works, offers both scholars and students of Caribbean literature the opportunity to rediscover Placoly's singular contribution to the history of Caribbean letters. Although Placoly's novel reflects neither the political and poetic aims of either the Negritude or *créolité* movements, it provides a clear example of spatiohistorical particularist fiction, in that it: displays a concerted investment in the recuperation of historical memory at the same time as it suggests the impossibility restoring historical continuity; deploys discontinuous novelistic chronologies that imply the fracturing of unilinear temporalities; and valorizes a form of historical knowledge available only through the experiential engagement with local space. In this chapter, I will consider how *Frères Volcans* responds to the "silencing" of the 1848 revolution in traditional French accounts of the 1848 abolition, and in particular, how the inscription of the passing of time, at the narratological level, constitute a crucial aspect of his

[1] By "traditional French history," I designate the ensemble of practices and principles concerning the discernment of historical truth that developed in post-Enlightenment Europe. Historians such as Voltaire, Edward Gibbon, Hippolyte Taine or Leopold von Ranke insisted on the importance of objective truths, privileged the usage of textual sources, and sought to dissociate the discipline of history from religious or mythic narratives of the past.

political and historiographic position and indicate how avowedly fictional texts can provide narratives of the past that rival the veracity of ostensibly factual histories.

I begin this chapter with a consideration of the historiographic predicament of the 1848 revolution, and in particular, the ways in which metropolitan French historians and politicians worked to divest this historical moment of much of its radical significance.[2] Beginning in the 1970s, Antillean, and later, metropolitan French historians such as Oruno Lara, Edouard de Lépine, Léonard Sainville, Nelly Schmidt or Olivier Grenouillau, among others, began the process of refuting the reductive narratives of the revolution propagated the historians of the Third Republic, who looked to the 1848 abolition as a symbol of the universal values of republicanism. After providing a brief summary of the events of the revolution in Martinique and Guadeloupe, I turn to the accounts of the revolution produced both in the immediate aftermath and in the decades following the events themselves, and specifically, how these texts, despite their claims to historical objectivity, produced narratives that consistently suppress and ignore historical facts recognized by more contemporary historians. I then turn to *Frères Volcans*, examining how novel's narrative chronology reflects then-contemporary ideas concerning the possibility of historical recuperation through the intermediary of fiction. Although in many ways, and particular with regards to his choice of narrator, Placoly's novel breaks with the stylistic and ideological aims of the *créolité* movement, it nonetheless imbricates historical knowledge and local geographies in a way very much in keeping with my concept of spatiohistorical particularism.

[2] As I will show, the example of the historiography of the 1848 revolution provides a salient example of the phenomenon the Michel-Rolph Trouillot called the "silencing of the past," that is, the purposeful omission of certain historical facts from a given history such that the meaning or import of the events themselves better conform to a preestablished narrative.

The History and Historiography of a Forgotten Revolution

There exists a clear consensus, shared by historians of the French republics and their postcolonial counterparts, that the events of 1848, and specifically the end of legally-sanctioned slavery, decisively altered the history of the French Caribbean.[3] However, the same cannot be said of the description of the events themselves or overarching narrative explaining their significance; from the months following May 1848 up into the 1980s, the meaning of the revolution and the narratives crafted have been the subject of controversy. French historians, journalists, and politicians have, beginning in the months following the revolution, characterized the revolution as the fulfillment of republican principles of liberty and equality in order to further a rhetoric of assimilation aimed at maintaining political, economic, and cultural hegemony over the French Caribbean. This historiographic vision, as Olivier Grenouilleau explains, led to an oversimplification of the history of abolition in the French Caribbean: "la complexité du phénomène a été peu à peu gommée: par l'érection d'un culte des grands hommes censés résumer à eux seuls cette histoire, comme Victor Schœlcher en France" (11).[4] In response, Caribbean historians and novelists, beginning with Oruno Lara in 1921, have sought to restitute a vision of the revolution and its aftermath that recognizes the decisive role played by the slaves

[3] A notable exception to this trend being Glissant, who, as I have already mentioned, saw 1848 as a clear example of the Antillean non-event, in that failed to serve future generations as a moment around which a sense of national identity could coalesce.

[4] The role of Schœlcher and his proper place in the history of the 1848 abolition in the Antilles was, in the 1970s and 80s, a particularly charged question. Édouard de Lépine, a historian and member of the *Groupe révolution socialiste* along with Placoly, takes a somewhat unexpected position in his 1978 *Questions sur l'histoire antillaise* when he accuses nationalists and specifically, Camille Darsières, then-secretary of the Parti Progressiste Matriniquais (PPM), of incorrectly minimizing the role of Schœlcher for political reasons. Lépine writes that for "ceux qui tiennent Schœlcher pour une création du colonialisme et l'admiration que le peuple continue de lui vouer pour une manifestation de son aliénation, peut-être pourrait-on faire observer que les premiers à avoir tenu Schœlcher pour un imposteur et un mégalomane ont été les colons" (43) and that "entre l'infantilisme de la critique nationaliste, et l'ingénuité de l'apologétique assimilationniste, il y a place pour une nouvelle critique de l'Abolition et du schœlchérisme" (45)

themselves and the self-serving rhetoric of Western historiography.[5] Before considering the historiographic variation in these accounts, let us first begin with a brief overview of the events themselves. I do not aim to present a thoroughgoing account of resistance to and the abolition of slavery, which is well beyond the scope of my work, but to present a set of dates and facts that will provide context for the historiographic and literary arguments this chapter puts forward.[6]

In the decades leading up to the 1848 emancipation, a constellation of factors, both economic and ideological, assured the eventuality of emancipation. First, the economic importance of the Caribbean as a site of sugar production was waning; the domestic beet-sugar industry, which had seen significant development since the beginning of the century, was beginning to rival the Caribbean in terms of output and driving down the price of sugar. Second, the slave trade was likewise in decline. The British Slave Trade Act of 1807 had outlawed the buying and selling of slaves by British merchants, and by 1808 the Royal Navy had actively begun interdiction of slave ships off the coast of West Africa. By 1815, the French had likewise outlawed the slave trade, although it was reinstated from 1827-31. The 1833 Slavery Abolition Act set the stage for the gradual emancipation of the slaves in British Caribbean territories. An antislavery movement in France, headed by the Société française pour l'abolition de l'esclavage, sought to pressure the restored French monarchy to end slavery but, as Lawrence C. Jennings explains in *French Anti-Slavery: The Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in France, 1802-1848*, the group never won broad public approval and "had not proved strong enough to

[5] *Histoire de la Guadeloupe (1492–1900)* (1923). Note that Oruno Lara (born in 1879) was the grandfather of Oruno D. Lara (born in 1934), and the uncle of novelist Sully Lara, author of *Moeurs créoles: sous l'esclavage* (1935) the first novel by an Antillean author that portrays the 1848 revolution.

[6] If Caribbean literature has, for some time, explored the legacy of the maroon slave and insurgent resistance to slavery, the disciple of history, as Jean-Pierre Le Glaunec explains, it is only "'"depuis la fin des années 1990" que le domaine de l'histoire académique a entrepris le travail permettant de "donner une 'juste place' [. . .] aux esclaves en résistance" (31).

overcome the opposition of the plantocracy and the procrastination of the government" (285). Instead, The July Monarchy passed the Makau law in July 1845, which obligated slaveholders to accord certain rights, including marriage, property, and an elementary and religious education, to their slaves. However, these measures, taken with the intent to prepare slaves for their eventual emancipation, were intended to be implemented by colonial governments that in many cases declined to do so. With the collapse of the July Monarchy and the Revolution of 1848, the speed of emancipation accelerated greatly. On February 24th, King Louis-Philippe abdicated and the Provisional Government of the second French Republic assumed executive and legislative power within France and its colonies. On March 4th, the government decreed its intention to enact emancipation and establish a commission, headed by Victor Shoelcher, to write the law that would finally end slavery in French colonies. On April 27th, the Provisional government voted in favor of the law, declaring that slavery was "un attentat à la dignité humaine" and an affront to the republican virtues of liberty, equality, and fraternity, and mandating full abolition within two months of the bill's passage. Unlike the first abolition of slavery in 1794, which was reversed under Napoleon's First Empire, the 1848 abolition became the definitive end to slavery in the French colonial system.

During this same period, numerous events in Martinique testified to a resilient desire for emancipation on the part of the slaves as well as the impossibility of maintaining the status quo. As Françoise Thésée writes "Après l'avènement de la République noire d'Haïti en 1804, puis l'abolition de la traite des Noires en 1815, la conscience d'une liberté possible s'est développée chez les esclaves des petites Antilles" (284). An abortive rebellion, launched in October 1822, was repressed severely by the colonial authorities, who executed twenty of its leaders. Just one year later, the Affaire Bissette, in which three members of the community of free blacks in Martinique were arrested and condemned for having distributed a pamphlet deemed seditious by

the colonial authorities, riveted the attention the French and colonial press. Although eventually freed after public outcry in France (Bissette, a future representative in the Assemblée Nationale and the implacable political enemy of Schœlcher, was nonetheless banished from the French colonies for two years), the affair brought the question of racial inequality back into the public eye. From 1831-33, two more insurrections broke out; as in 1828, the colonial authorities responded violently to 1833 rebellion and executed fifteen of those involved. Although ultimately unsuccessful, these incidents indicate that slaves and free colonial subjects were increasingly willing to challenge the injustice of their legal, social, and economic inferiority.

If the likelihood of the end of slavery had become increasingly apparent in the first half of the eighteenth century, when the news of the fall of the Orleanist regime reached the colonies, that likelihood turned to certainty. The March 4th decree, which arrived in Martinique in early April, led to a particularly charged situation in which the slaves became all the more impatient for their promised liberty. Incidents of unrest and demonstrations became more and more common as the delay continued. In May, unrest turned into outright insurrection. By May 22nd, rebellion was sweeping across the island both in the plantations and in the cities. The following day, it was apparent to the governor, Claude Rostolan, that an immediate and unilateral abolition of slavery was the only means to prevent a full-scale revolution. The authorities in Guadeloupe quickly followed suit, issuing their own decree ending slavery on May 26th. These declarations resulted not from the application of high-minded principles or the ideological triumph of enlightenment concepts of universal rights, but from real political power, itself derived from the possibility of enacting physical coercion, that the newly-freed slaves successfully employed. Abolition in Martinique and Guadeloupe was the product of a revolution from below, and as David Rigoulet-Roze writes, “l’insurrection Martiniquais de mai fut, dans tous les sens du terme, une Révolution martiniquaise et pour ainsi dire l’acte de naissance d’un ‘peuple martiniquais’

acteur de son histoire" (134). Yet such a conclusion begs the question: if the events of 1848 truly represent the birth of a collective identity, of a Martinican people acting as subjects of history, what happened in the intervening years such that contemporary theorists of the Caribbean like Glissant cannot point to it as a foundational cultural moment?

Oruno D. Lara, whose work addresses both the need to recuperate the forgotten history of 1848 and to consider space and history as inextricably linked, writes in *De l'Oubli à l'histoire: Espaces et identié Caraïbes* (1998), that a coalition of forces within the Second and Third French Republics worked to suppress the realities of 1848 and its revolutions: "nous partons de l'oubli, qu'il faut prendre en compte clairement. L'oubli voulu, organisé depuis 1848 par le gouvernement français avec ses complices: l'administration coloniale, le clergé enseignant, les colons, la presse réactionnaire" (10). For Lara as for Glissant, this forgetting of the Caribbean past, the unavailability of a sense of a communal historical background, is directly responsible for the social and cultural fragmentation of Caribbean populations. The April 27th decree, far from representing the advent of the universal human rights, in fact served three distinct purposes: "libérer les esclaves, maintenir et renforcer la colonisation dans l'ordre, [et assurer] la paix sociale"(151). For the authorities, both in the metropole and the colonies, the greatest problem was how to keep the newly freed workers on the plantations so that sugar production, the economic motor of the colonies, would not cease.[7] If rights and freedom were to be accorded to the former slaves, the Provisional Government and its successor state sought to ensure that political, and above all, economic power remained in the hands of white planters.

[7] Nelly Schmidt, in *La France a-t-elle aboli l'esclavage?: Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane (1830-1935),* underlines that the 1848 abolition must be understood as part of a longer history of the largely successful attempts of metropolitan France to maintain control over the colonies: "l'abolition n'avait été qu'une étape [. . .] dans le cours d'une histoire qui, dans la longue durée, demeurait dominée par le maintien d'un réglementation collective du travail au service d'une économie extravertie et par une dépendance politique complexe" (14).

As Lara explains in *Abolition de l'esclavage, 1848-1852* (2016), the end of slavery should not be understood simply as a lessening of colonial power: "à la France coloniale et esclavagiste de 1847-février 1848 succède une France Impériale qui durcit considérablement sa machinerie coloniale pour recevoir et neutraliser les nouveaux libres qui entre en scène" (12). Measures taken by colonial authorities to encourage the onset of cultural amnesia were tripartite in nature. First, coercive means were employed to discourage freed blacks from leaving the plantations: Planters, who legally owned the homes and belongings of their former slaves, threatened to confiscate the property of those who wished to leave the plantations, authorities imposed the *livret de travail* in order to identify unemployed workers, and strict controls on movements were enforced. Second, local governments and the press sought to minimize the magnitude of both emancipation itself and the violent confrontations that it brought about. For example, candidates in the electoral campaigns in 1848 and 1849 all promoted reconciliation, the maintaining of order, and the forgetting of the traumatisms of the past. Finally, an educational system valorizing agricultural labor, assimilationist policy, and French citizenship propagated a vision of 1848 denuded of its most revolutionary qualities. Subsequently, historians of both the second and third French Republics adopted this version of the events and propagated them in numerous historical and and pedagogical texts.

This discursive refashioning of the 1848 Caribbean revolution began almost immediately after the revolution itself. Consider the example of Adolphe Ambroise Alexandre Gatine, a prominent republican, abolitionist, and the representative of the commission pour l'abolition de l'esclavage who personally delivered the April 27th decree to the colonial authorities in Guadeloupe. In 1849, he authored an essay entitled *Abolition de l'esclavage à la Guadeloupe: quatre mois de gouvernement dans cette colonie.* Gatine's purpose was twofold: to reinforce the association of liberty and republicanism and to demonstrate the success of abolitionist policies in

Guadeloupe he enacted during his tenure as commissaire général. For Gatine, rather than proving the universality of the right to liberty, the emancipation from below of May 26th represented an "amère déception" (12), proof of an unmerited mistrust in the new French Republic. He recasts the revolution not as a moment of self-liberation, but as an unfortunate and divisive necessity brought on by impatience. Instead, he portrays the true source of liberation as "les décrets que le commissaire général [Gatine] leur apportait" (14). For Gatine, veritable liberty could only be provided by the laws of the French government. Although he laments the circumstances of his arrival, his account of the implementation of the new republic's policies are glowing. Responding to the two major concerns of pro-slavery arguments, that emancipation would lead to anarchy and the breakdown of colonial economies, he contends that emancipation "n'a pas fait tomber un cheveu de qui que ce soit" (97) and that the workforce had been "maintenu … et rétabli sur ses bases nouvelles" (49). In final analysis, Gatine's portrayal of his mandate as commissaire serves both to vindicate his own performance and to present republican abolitionist policies as wholly successful.

Abolitionists were far from the only political actors who sought to control the narrative of 1848 in order to further their political ends. In the closing decades of the nineteenth century, with the fall of the Second Empire and the advent of the Third Republic, historians and educators found a new reason to engage with the 1848 revolution and its consequences in the Caribbean. Some, who supported the colonial status quo, argued that that the most significant result of emancipation was economic disruption, while others, more invested in developing the mythos of the Third Republic, portrayed 1848 as a moment in which French law ended a morally abhorrent social order with very few consequences. In 1889-90, Louis Henrique, a deputé at the Assemblée Nationale representing French India, published a set of works entitled *Les colonies françaises*, in which he devotes two volumes to Martinique and Guadeloupe, respectively. Henrique, an ardent

supporter of the French colonial order, devotes little attention to emancipation. With regards to Martinique, he completely ignores the May 23rd liberation and notes simply that the end of slavery brought "importantes conséquences économiques" (4: 12). As for Guadeloupe, Henrique repeats Gatine's claim that emancipation occurred without incident and that "l'ordre ne fût pas troublé" (5: 28). During the turbulent elections of 1849, colonial troops stationed on Marie-Galante fired on a crowd of angry voters, killing around one hundred people, yet he describes the elections as occurring "tranquillement" and that the events on Marie-Galante amounted to "quelques troubles" (5: 29). Although far less invested in presenting the French Republic as the source of universal rights and liberty, Henrique likewise seeks to both minimize the violence of the period and erase any memory of the organic revolution that preceded the official moment of abolition.

In the opening decades of the twentieth century, historians and pedagogues saw the 1484 revolution as an important moment in the mythology of French republicanism. Take for example, Jules Lucrèce's *Histoire de la Martinique à l'usage des cours supérieurs et complémentaire des écoles primaires* (1933), a pedagogical text published both in Paris and Fort-de-France and destined for use in the French colonial schools. In Lucrèce's version of history, the French Republic, unilaterally abolishes slavery, and the May 23rd and 27th emancipations are expunged from the record. He also repeats Henrique-Duluc's claim that the transition from slavery to liberty occurred without violence or major incident. He writes that the application of the new law "se firent sans secousse violente; l'incendie de la maison de Sannois à Saint-Pierre … fut le seule événement regrettable qu'on eut à déplorer … Si le passage de la servitude à la liberté s'opéra sans violence dans la colonie, ce fut à cause des sages mesures que prit le gouvernement

provisoire" (134–35).[8] Not only does the new republic deserve all the credit for emancipation, but, according to Lucrèce, for maintaining social peace and the colonial order. He likewise recasts the repressive measures taken by the colonial authorities to keep the newly-freed slaves on the plantations as entirely positive initiatives:

> En même temps que le Gouvernement provisoire abolissait l'esclavage … il prenait une série de décrets qui … créaient, sur les propriétés domaniales, des ateliers nationaux où étaient employés les travailleurs sans ouvrage, réprimaient le vagabondage et la mendicité et organisaient des fêtes annuelles de travail pour 'effacer le caractère de dégradation dont la servitude avait marqué l'agriculture. (135–36)

Lucrèce's narrative serves to depict the Republican France as the ally and friend of the Martinican people and to distance it from the Monarchy and Empire, which bear the full responsibility for the horrors of slavery. His vision of history suppresses the popular revolutions that abolished slavery in Martinique and Guadeloupe, lionizes the dubious actions of the Provisional Government, and undergird a rhetoric of assimilation intended to maintain French control of its colonies.

The texts I have cited in this chapter, far from giving a comprehensive summary of the production of historical narratives in between the rise of the Second and the fall of the Third Republic, illustrate the development of a particular narrative of Caribbean history tailored to the needs of colonial power. The historiographic traditions of Western history transformed the story

[8] The "incendie de la maison Sannois" was an incident during the revolution in which a group of white colonists had barricaded themselves inside the Sannois family home, where they were surrounded by a large number of revolutionaries. Although the exact circumstances are not clear in the historical record, the house was set afire by the crowd, killing the 37 people inside (Church, 521). The incident has developed a literary afterlife of its own: mentioned in *Frères Volcans*, it also provided the inspiration for the climactic scene in Lafcadio Hearn's *Youma: The Story of a West Indian Slave* (1890) and later, in Sully Lara's *Moeurs créoles: sous l'esclavage* (1935)

of the 1848 revolution, like the Haitian Revolution before it, by silencing events and interpretations that did not conform to its aims. This is precisely the same process that Trouillot describes when he write that "any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences" (27). But to thoroughly redress the inadequacies of these narratives, we must both resituate them within the geopolitical and economic context that led to their creation and consider those narratives that have, in the contemporary period, come to challenge the conventional understandings of the 1848 revolution. As Trouillot insists,

> we must consider the processes by which these narratives are created:
> what history is changes with time and place or, better said, history reveals itself only through the production of specific narratives. What matters most are the process and conditions of production of such narratives. Only a focus on that process can uncover the ways in which the two sides of historicity intertwine in a particular context. Only through that overlap can we discover the differential exercise of power that makes some narratives possible and silences others. (25)

So far in this chapter, I have adumbrated how historians of the Second and Third Republics worked to produce a specific narrative intended to minimize and ultimately repress knowledge of the popular uprisings that ended slavery in the French Caribbean. As influential as Western historiography was, we cannot, however, conclude that the work of historians such as Lucrèce and Henrique were entirely successful. Their attempts to silence popular or collective memory did not preclude the perception, on the part of Caribbean authors and intellectuals, of the fundamental inadequacy of their version of history.

French historical and educational institutions did not fully accomplish the forgetting of the symbolic and historical significance of the Caribbean revolution of 1848, and since the mid twentieth century, Caribbean historians and authors initiated sustained efforts to revive, if not a

sense of collective memory, a sense of historical consistency in which the resistance to slavery practiced by the slaves and free blacks themselves can be recognized as the cause of emancipation. Lara, like Glissant, also sees a potential remedy in a sustained intellectual and experiential engagement with the moment in space-time where and when that forgetting occurred:

> Pour combattre l'oubli, une seule stratégie possible, remonter en 1848 et reprendre la série de problèmes qui se formulent à l'époque. Mais revenir au temps ou sonnent les trompes de la liberté et ou s'étend le catafalque de l'oubli ne suffit pas. II faut parcourir l'espace-temps et embrasser l'histoire des ancêtres se débattant entre les mailles des filets de la Traite négrière et prisonniers du Système esclavagiste. (1998, 11)

As such, the means to confront historical oblivion necessitate a direct reengagement with both the past and the spaces that link it to the present. Lara's historical and historiographical project does so by reexamining the archives, revealing the sources that contradict established accounts, and creating new historical narratives that address contemporary concerns (for example, the problem of origins discussed in chapter one). However, the means to perform this reengagement are in no way limited to the work of the archivist. As Trouillot reminds us, "next to professional historians we discover artisans of different kinds, unpaid or unrecognized field laborers who augment, deflect, or reorganize the work of the professionals as politicians, students, fiction writers, filmmakers, and participating members of the public" (25).

Vincent Placoly's *Frères Volcans*

Like Sainville before him, Placoly mobilizes the insufficiency of the historical archive to provide inspiration for a counter-narrative intended to remediate the historical rupture in the

Caribbean collective conscience. And like *Dominique*, *Frères Volcans* begins with an avant-propos set in the colonial archive:

> Les jours sanglants et confus qu'on a coutume d'appeler 'la révolution anti-esclavagiste de Mai 48 à la Martinique' restent à étudier. Lorsque je me suis rendu compte qu'il était nécessaire aujourd'hui, et possible, de donner une image concrète à cette liberté si subtilement volée aux esclaves dans les derniers mois de l'année, je me suis attelé à un essai sur la période. Les recherches sur le passé demandent que l'historien s'attable devant des piles de "mémoires, registres et lettres, tant ecclésiastiques que séculiers". Les documents d'archives emplissaient mes pensées du bruit de ces années-là. (9)

Placoly's frame narrator thus presents himself as a historian and a researcher seeking to construct a narrative of this pivotal moment in the Martinican past, specifically, how the former slaves could have won and lost their liberty within the space of a single year. But the narrator's ambitions do not come to fruition, largely due to lacunae in the archival records: "tantôt un document disparu, une page illisible déformaient la cohérence de la recherche … le travail, qui m'avait coûté tant de nuits blanches, finit par s'abolir de lui-même dans le silence des archives" (10). The futility of the narrator's work reflects the impossibility, as Glissant argued, of imposing a linear, Western-style model of History based on archival (colonial) documents onto the Caribbean past. Even if Placoly does not hesitate to criticize what he designates Glissant's "vision élitiste," here they find common ground. In his interview with Daniel Maragnès in *Les Antilles dans l'impasse?,* the vision of Antillean history that Placoly expresses harmonizes with Glissant's: "Quel est le rapport subjectif de l'Antillais à son histoire ? Il est pratiquement nul. Non seulement parce que l'éducation parentale et scolaire fuit ces problèmes en les occultant ; mais parce qu'aussi, nous avons vécu et nous vivons une histoire si compliquée et tortueuse, que nos historiens devront se lever tôt, comme on dit, pour en rendre compte" (142). For the narrator

of *Frères Volcans*, the history of the Antilles, alienated and complexified to the point that it eludes comprehension, cannot be assimilated into traditonal, Western models of linear historiography.

However this realization does not lead the narrator to completely abandon his desire to better elucidate the 1848 revolution, but rather to reconceive his project on different grounds. As he explains, "Du passé des Antilles, l'essentiel reste à découvrir; mieux, à faire. L'architecte qui conçoit l'équilibre des formes et la répartition des masses, fait la maison; et comme une maison réfléchit l'espace humain, ainsi fait-il les rues de la cité et des villes. L'historien des Antilles se doit d'être l'architecte de demain" (10). In this passage, the narrator signals his intention to shift from a predominantly analytical to a creative mode; reconstructing Antillean history from the fragments of the archive serves likewise to reconstitute the lived spaces of both the present and the future. Here, the narrator indicates for the first time the possibility of a synchronic, novelistic time that breaks from assumptions of linearity and provides an antidote the intentional rewriting of Antillean history by the historians of the French republics.

For the frame narrator, the moment of creative inspiration comes as he wanders the streets of Saint-Pierre:

> en surprenant là les noms de rue, là dans les blocs de roches intouchées depuis des siècle, là des anneaux de fer, et lé les soupirs de l'Atlantique qui vient coucher sous les pontons de la rade, je me suis laissé prendre à l'effet d'hallucination. Notre histoire est si proche de nous! ... La présence terrible des ruines, les vestiges présents du Fort d'Esnotz, les céramiques tordues dans l'enfer du 8 mai 1902, la descente des rues pavées ver le Mouillage, nous obsèdent. Combien de fois, en levant les yeux vers la Montagne endormie, et comme si les frondaisons du volcan en gardaient encore l'écho, n'ai je pas entendu la phrase magique que les esclaves, armés de flambeaux, couraient à répéter

> d'habitation en habitation et de mornes en fonds: LA LIBERTÉ VA VENIR … Le passé appelle l'avenir à écouter ses confidences. Des rayons tristes des archives était née une passion possible, avec la lucidité d'une tâche à accomplir. (10)

This passage underlines the importance of the experience of space to the narrator's project. As he explores the spaces of the ancient city, its sights and sounds transport his consciousness, in a fashion not unlike that of Proust's madeleine, into the past, where he imagines that he hears with his own ears the slaves calling for a future liberation. The call of liberty, emanating from the past, extends symbolically into the future of the text's creation; here the aims of Placoly the author-historian and Placoly the political activist intersect as he recognizes that the liberty so eagerly sought in 1848 has yet to be fully achieved. In this moment, past, present, and future converge in the streets of Saint-Pierre as the narrator discovers the creative inspiration necessary for the completion of his task.

Within the space of the same page, the narrator begins to shift from a historical register to one that implies his new approach as a novelist. He explains that, returning to the archive, he discovers a manuscript, ignored by previous scholars, that fascinates him.[9] The text is a journal written by an anonymous author, and as he reads it, he becomes increasingly obsessed with it and decides to "sortir le livre de l'oubli" (12). For the narrator, the act of rescuing the text from oblivion comports a spatial transposition as well:

> La limite incommodante des bibliothèques, les bruits artificiels qui règnent dans ces lieux, ainsi que le dégout qui prend à respirer la vieille poussière des textes, affadissent la

[9] According to Édouard de Lépine, who was a close associate of Placoly's at the time of the novel's composition, the false journal in *Frères Volcans* was inspired by the very real *Journal de Pierre Dessalles*, which chronicled, from the perspective of a white colonist, the events of the 1848 revolution in Saint-Pierre (*Dix Semaines* 189). But whereas the text of Dessalles' journal conforms to the conventions of the genre, Placoly does not hesitate to deviate from them, particularly, as we will see, with regards to the inscription of time.

> lecture des documents. On est obligé de relire souvent plusieurs fois le mêle texte avant d'en saisir l'intérêt. L'encre blanchissante du texte que j'avais sous les yeux hantait mes journées. Je me suis mis à recopier des pages entières pour pouvoir les relire à loisir, y ajouter, puisque toute liberté m'était donnée de le faire, des notes de mon crû. Et c'est ainsi que ce livre-journal est né. Car j'ai fini par découvrir, entre les lignes de l'auteur, un visage point tellement différent du mien. (12)

The narrator's obsesssion with the manuscript leads him to entirely recopy the text so that he can take it outside the stuffy confines of the archive. The result is a triple transposition: The text literally transposed from the space of the archive to that of the streets of Saint-Pierre. The original text, a private diary, becomes a publicly circulating account of 1848 revolution. Finally, the voice of the frame narrator is transposed into that of the inset narrator.

The avant-propos simultaneously announces the truth-value of the text as a whole at the same time that it marks it as fundamentally novelistic. The conceit of the found text, despite ostensibly making a claim to the authenticity of the journal, is, of course, a well-known novelistic trope that dates back centuries: one need only compare it to similar avant-propos in canonical Western novels such as *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) or *Adolph* (1816). As such, the text inscribes itself in a novelistic tradition that blurs the lines between fictional expression and veritable testimony. However, *Frères volcans*' closest antecedent is Jean-Paul Sartre's *La Nausée* (1938). In both works, the use of the fake journal, inset within a narrative frame that affirms the journals' veracity, ironically affirms their novelistic essence. But whereas Sartre presents the fictive journal of historian studying the equally fictive historical figure of the Marquis de Rollebon, Placoly's text is much more ambiguous in its relation to the real. Sartre's text, despite the chronology it establishes for itself, makes no mention of relevant historical events and situates itself in what Michel Contat et Michel Rybalka call a "géographie

imaginaire" (Sartre 1721). In contrast, *Frères volcans* offers a relatively faithful reproduction of Martinique and engages directly with its history. However, in both texts, the initially precise chronology, established by the dates of each journal entry, becomes increasingly vague as the plot develops. The journal *Frères Volcans* in begins as would any other, with an exact time and place: January 2, 1848 in Saint-Pierre, but as we will see, it reveals itself to be as much of a pretext as the avant-propos in which it is allegedly found: as the story unfolds, its generic markers, namely precise chronological markers, fall by the wayside as the text pursues the course of its own ideological development.

Placoly's choice of intradiegetic narrator indicates substantial differences between his approach to the writing of historical fiction and that of his contemporaries like Glissant or Chamoiseau.[10] Instead of granting narrative authority to a figure representing Antillean oral tradition like the *quimboiseur* Papa Longoué (Glissant) or the *marqueur de paroles* of Chamoiseau, the journal in *Frères Volcans* recounts the life of white colonist.[11] Furthermore, as Lépine insists, Placoly's sympathetic characterization of his narrator did not align with the more common portrayals, in the 1970s-80s, of white colonists as bloodthirsty monsters: "Ayant choisi de donner la parole à un blanc, Vincent pouvait faire de ce blanc un colon typique, un Laroche

[10] For Lépine, one of the principle and original merits of the text is its refusal to follow the lead of writers like Glissant and Chamoiseau in portraying a romanticized vision of slave resistance : "son mérite [Placoly] est immense d'avoir refusé les facilités du genre, dans une société qui réclame plus qu'aucune autre, et au début des années 80 plus qu'à n'importe quelle autre époque de son histoire, des héros et des ancêtres qui la consolent de la médiocrité des temps présent" (*Dix Semaines* 190)

[11] For Anne Douaire, Placoly's choice of narrator testifies to the differences in his vision of Antillean history from those of other writers working to construct a counter-history of the Caribbean. Douaire explains that Placoly "propose une autre solution pour parler d'histoire : non plus discréditer le pouvoir blanc, mais au contraire le contourner, l'intégrer de force à un propos pour lui donner une légitimité paradoxale. C'est le principe de *Frères Volcans*, qui fonctionne selon la technique du montage" (84). This suggests the possibility of a kind of discursive counter-assimilation in which the privileged testimony of the colonist comes to support the colonized resistants fighting for their liberty and adhere to their counter-historical vision.

ou un Senglis, et lui attribuer les idées, les réflexes et les postures qu'on prête en général aux colons de la fin de l'époque esclavagiste" (Lépine 1999, 190). In contrast, we learn that the journal's author is a *Schœlcheriste* who has sold his plantation and freed his slaves. Evidently a man advanced in his years, he is not physically well: returning home from a New Year's Eve dinner during which he begins to suffer from violent stomach pains, he collapses in the entryway of his home. The next day, his doctor and friend Raff tells him that he had "frisé la fièvre cérébrale" (16) while walking home through the streets of Saint-Pierre. The narrator, henceforth in convalescence, will rarely leave his house during the rest of the novel. He is, due to his physical condition, barred from participating in the life of the city around him, which he observes from his library window. Much like the frame narrator, he must witness passively the events that will soon transpire. As such the text immediately divides the novelistic space into two spheres: the public, which the narrator accesses only indirectly, and the private, the space of his home where he receives guests, talks with his manumitted servants, reads, and writes his journal. Compared with the protagonists of *Dominique, nègre esclave* or *La Lézarde*, in which the characters' peregrinations lead through a great variety of Caribbean spaces, this binary division between public and private appears highly restricted. But even from within the confines of his library, the narrator frequently considers the spatial networks that determine colonial life.

The relationship between France and the colonial society of Martinique constitutes one of his major preoccupations. On one hand, the racial and cultural distinction between the black African and Creole slaves and the white European colonists lay at the center of the social hierarchy that determined colonial life and justified the enslavement of the vast majority of the population. French identity was thus crucial to the ideological justification of colonial society. As the narrator explains, "la France, c'est-à-dire l'Europe, qu'un océan sépare la colonie, pour nous d'abord représente les ports de commerce, avec leurs tonnes de marchandises et de biens

grâce auxquels nous vivions comme toujours. Elle représente de plus la source de notre esprit, ainsi que Rome veillait sur l'immensité de son empire, par sa langue, ses, mœurs et ses plaisirs" (23). The narrator's explanation is striking in that it, purposefully or not, draws a clear connection between France as the terminal node in a network of transatlantic commerce and France as a cultural fount. Yet the enormous distance that separated the colonists from France threatened that cultural affiliation, so central to colonial society. Beyond the political and economic issues that led to tensions between colonists and the metropolitain French state, beyond the question of the abolition of slavery or of transatlantic commercial regulations, the narrator perceives a significant cultural and intellectual divide between colonial society and its purported source: "Il est difficile de recenser les données culturelles de la civilisation occidentale qui traverse la mer vers nous ; d'établir avec exactitude la part de l'héritage que nous laisse l'étranger ; et encore moins de démêler, dans le fatras de livres fameux, murés sur eux-mêmes, comme la pierre, l'originalité de notre fonds propre" (41). This moment is but one of many where the narrator's discourse would seem to mirror that of the author, who, trained in the French university system and intimately familiar with the canon of French literature, works to determine what part that distant cultural heritage might play in a distinctly Caribbean literature.

But just as we cannot confound the frame narrator with Placoly himself, nor can we see the journal's narrator as the faithful mouthpiece of the author. Despite his disgust for colonial society and his lack of faith in Western culture, the narrator is still very much a product of his times. This becomes increasingly apparent as he discusses the divide between white colonial society and black creole culture, which further isolates the narrator's small social world. While watching his two servants Nemorine and Abder tend to the garden and to the stable, he muses on what he sees as a fundamental difference between their experience of life and his own:

> J'ai mis du temps à me persuader que les nègres voient des choses que nous ne voyons pas, qu'ils vivent plus près que nous de la vie. Comme j'aurais ailé comprendre ce qu'ils marmonnent tous deux à leur travail ! Je sais que tout ce qu'ils peuvent me dire dissimule leurs pensées véritables, que toute la commisération du monde ne lâchera pas la bonde au vin de leurs secrets de cœur. Nous sommes deux mondes pour longtemps sinon à jamais exclus l'un de l'autre. (22)

Despite the narrator's support of abolition and his apparent sympathy for the plight of the slaves, he cannot but engage in a kind of speculative psychology of his servants that assigns them a place, not unlike that of the "noble savage," closer to nature and authentic living. Given his constant belaboring of the decadence and corruption of Western culture, it is hardly surprising that he enunciates the difference in such terms. Yet his recognition of the chasm of understanding that separated him from Nemorine and Abder does not prevent him from speaking with them, and indeed valuing their thoughts and opinions. It is Abder who helps him to understand that the question of abolition, which for the narrator is largely moral and ethical, can no longer be resolved by colonial society.

> La solution du problème vous échappe ; elle n'est plus dans vos mains. Lorsque l'abolition était possible, nécessaire, lorsqu'elle aurait pu couvrir le manteau de l'humanité de la fleur du courage, la colonie n'en a pas voulu parce qu'elle pensait y perdre son âme. C'est alors que les nations nègres se sont mises à *rêver* de liberté. Aujourd'hui les armées fuient devant la force du rêve. Est-ce que nous allons dissoudre la réalité dans le rêve ? Ou au contraire, mener le songe timide, bravement, jusqu'aux portes ensoleillées de la victoire ? (70)

For both the narrator and Abder, that colonial society and the "nations nègres" that cohabitate the same islands cannot reconcile because that society defines its "âme" with racial and cultural

criteria that would lose their force outside the social hierarchy of mastery and slavery. Colonial society is thus doubly separated: both from the culture it understands as it source, that is Europe, and from the slave culture it must keep at arm's length. The narrator understands that the ethical problem of slavery would not be resolved by white society, and consequently, the impossibility of the present situation points only towards an uncertain future.

In a microcosm of the broader spatio-cultural problematic of the colony, the narrator's home, the place in which the journal is composed and where nearly all the scenes occur, reflects the same sense of double isolation in a concrete, spatially-determined manner. The narrator recounts that after having sold his plantation, he bought "l'ancien hôtel Desgrottes. L'entrée principale donne sur la rue d'Orleans" (46), a respectable, bourgeois street where members of the plantocracy would gather and discuss colonial politics and gossip in its various salons. On the other side of the house, facing the rue de la Confession, he installed his library. Unlike the rue d'Orleans, he describes the rue de la Confession as "peu passant" and that its only frequenters are "les domestiques en retard de course; ils raccourcissent ainsi le chemin qui mène au marché. Mais ils s'y attardent encore pour se raconter des histoires. Leurs voix chantent à mon oreille, ainsi que leurs rires, libérés de toute entrave" (46). Enchanted by the popular scenes of life, the narrator explains that "il m'arrive de rester des heures à la fenêtre. La rue ressemble au théâtre de la vie. J'y vois des conversations passionnées et des baisers volés, des accolades fraternelles, aussi bien que de la violence, dans les gestes et dans les paroles" (46-7). In final analysis, the binary division of the novel's space becomes tripartite: the private sphere of the narrator's home falls between the public spheres of two different societies divided by the socioeconomic hierarchies of the plantation system.[12]

[12] As Molly Grogan-Lynch writes, "ce Blanc original habite son propre *no mans land* entre l'ordre des planteurs et les aspirations secrètes des noirs" (128). His home represents a space

In *Frères Volcans*, the public spheres act as the stage of life, actions, and events from which the narrator, in his infirm state, must abstain. In contrast, the private sphere of his home comes to represent a space of contemplation and death. Confined as he is to his library, he devotes himself to writing, reading, and rebinding his books as a means of preparing for his inevitable passing. Literature constitutes a means of spanning generations and creating an intellectual continuity and community. He writes that he inherited his library and his passion for books from his father who has himself passed away. "Un homme vit cinquant ans, un livre quatre fois de plus. Nos biens sont sujets aux aléas du temps, le livre non. Conservé, protégé et couvé, il peut durer des siècles" (19). Here, the narrator begins the elaboration of a distinctly Montaignian ethic of writing whereby literature, and particularly the writing of the self, provides a way to preserve the self from the passage of time and the inevitability of death. Later in the first section, he expands on his musings, writing that

> Je me refuse de penser à la mort. Je devrais écrire *à ma mort.* A *la mort* en effet il est facile, et dans un certain sens plaisant, de penser. L'esprit de l'homme cultivé connaît les ïambes somptueux de Sophocle, la tranquille assurance de Montaigne, les monologues retentissant de Shakespeare, l'immense sagesse de Dante… Des livres ont apprivoisé le monstre redoutable, parce que la littérature suppose l'immortalité de l'âme, en faisant de la vie une conquête interminable sur l'humanité. (36)

The narrator's invocation of the immortality of the soul is striking, in that immortality implies both the conquest of death and of time. His journal amounts to an intergenerational legacy and a testament to his engagement with questions of history and time that occupy his thoughts.

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stuck between the two irreconcilable worlds of the colonial society in decline which the narrator rejects and the vibrant society of the slaves to which he may merely be a spectator.

Both in its form and content, the journal testifies to a desire to escape from a linear and historic sense of time. The narrator's preoccupation with death and desire to transmit to future generations his thoughts corresponds with a profound anxiety as to how those future generations will judge him and his contemporaries. Early in the journal, he writes "quelle importance l'histoire accordera-t-elle demain à l'avènement des nations coloniales ? Le monde se souviendra-t-il que nous avons être autre chose que des étapes sur les routes du commerce, que la pensée universelle s'est enrichie des questions posées par nous aux philosophes … ?" (30). Here, the question is posed simply; have the colonies contributed in any way to the intellectual development of Western culture? But as the journal continues, his thoughts turn towards the ethical abomination of slavery and moral decadence of colonial society. "A quelle espèce de génération appartenons-nous, comment l'histoire nous jugera-t-elle ? … Que représente, par exemple, la ruine de notre économie, cet asservissement qui dure contre toute raison, et dont nous devrons rendre compte demain, la dégénérescence de notre race … ?" (47). In the second section of the journal, after the events of the May 22nd revolution, the narrator rephrases his question once more, but this time it is questions of historiography that preoccupy his thoughts: "Quels sont les faits qui devront figurer nécessairement dans le récit des événements ? … Le désastre sortait des règles établies, il reculait les limites du concevable. Comprendre pourquoi les autorités n'ont pas réagi plus fermement. En certains temps, les rigueurs de la justice créent des héros qui, en dehors du mouvement de l'histoire, tomberaient dans la fosse commune" (99-101). Not only does the narrator speak to the total anonymity of the revolutionary masses of slaves who, albeit briefly, succeeded in winning a form of equality with their former masters, he anticipates the problems of historiography with which this chapter engages. His immediate preoccupation with the way in which the events of the revolution will be remembered underlines his anxieties with regards to time, history, and its inscription in written discourse.

However, the most striking way the journal engages with the problems of historical time lies in the manipulation of chronology central to the text's narrative structure. The form that Placoly chose for his novel, the journal, is typically understood as strongly anchored by spatiotemporal markers: divided into distinct, dated entries, its temporal progression displays rigorous linearity. One date follows another in orderly fashion from the beginning to the end. The journal as a genre does exhibit a certain kind of synchronicity: they do reflect on past events and anticipate those in the future within a relatively restricted range of potential plot development. The first pages of the narrator's journal follow this pattern: from January 1st until February 3rd, the entries are short and punctual. In contrast, the February 3rd entry continues long after one would have expected it to end and ends up constituting the rest of the first section of the journal. In this part of the journal, the narrator attempts to escape from linear time by simply ignoring the markers of its passing, by attempting to live in an undifferentiated present where he can coexist with authors of the past and his musings on the future. He frequently remarks on the "torpeur" (35) and indolence of colonial life, which renders the passing of time les perceptibe. Such is the atmosphere he describes in a scene where a young woman, Vive, visits him at his home. "Nous échangions des banalités entre les heures qui ne passaient pas. Lorsqu'un souvenir montrait son jeune visage au travers des mille facettes d'un mot, nous le chassions d'un commun accord, puisque nous avions décidé d'abolir la durée" (39). Yet the reader can clearly detect that the days are passing. For example, a friend of Nemorine who, at the beginning of the entry falls ill, dies at an unspecified point later in the text. Chronological references become indirect and no longer a salient feature of the generic form. Near the end of the section, the narrator's observation that "la semaine sainte se passe dans la paix" (74) allows us to understand that it is now April 23rd and that nearly two months have passed since he began his entry.

The most significant instance of chronological disruption comes in the following pages. The first entry in the second section is dated to April 25th, but the reader familiar with the history of the May revolution immediately recognizes that the content does not correspond with entry's date:

> Ces derniers jours ont démontré que les faiblesses de l'individu sont ennemies de l'humanité, qu'aucune parole ne peut résister à l'assaut des faits, imprévisibles de nature, éclairant avec le fer et le feu les troupes de la nuit sans visage, sans cadence que celle de l'hallali du meurtre et des crimes de sang. J'ai vu des fusils chargés casser la tête des amis d'hier. J'ai vu des sabres affilés trancher la gorge des compagnons de toujours. J'ai vu la peur fondre sur la nature comme des grives poursuivies par le vautour. J'ai vu les chauves-souris de la trahison ouvrir leurs grands yeux inconnus sur le jour nouveau. J'ai vu des maisons centenaires tomber en cendres, des bras d'enfants semer la destruction parmi les monuments … J'ai connu la vie, et puis j'ai vu la mort … Les sacrifices imposés, le pied du mur de nos inconsciences, voici les 'ailes nocturnes' qu'on tissés les tragédies de ces dernières semaines. (79-80)

Chronologically speaking, the tragic events of the "ces dernières semaines" that the narrator describes could not have occurred in the two days between the end of the first section and the beginning of the second. The period that the narrator describes is clearly the weeks leading up to May 23rd, a fact he acknowledges a page later, writing "nous sommes le vint-cinq mai; il est onze heurs" (80). What explains this temporal lacuna, this gap of more than a month in the journal? The narrator's account is understandable, if prosaic: "La dernière page du journal date du vingt-cinq avril. Depuis cette date, un tourbillon d'événements tragiques a chassé de mon esprit la préoccupation d'écrire" (83). While this explanation is perfectly satisfying within the framework of the plot, it cannot account for the broader compositional implications the lacuna raises.

Why does the novel, whose subtitle is *chronique de l'abolition de l'esclavage*, elide the moment of the May 23rd revolution, its purported subject? Despite its disappearance into a kind of temporal lacuna, the revolution remains, in spatial terms, at the center of the book: located between the two sections of the journal, it nonetheless defines the text's primary structural division. The division of the text into two parts is also a compositional mark that signals the intervention of the extradiegetic narrator, if not the author, and does not correspond to the generic frame of the journal itself. The choice to not to represent the *event* of revolution directly emphasizes the problems of linear historiography and the impossibility of reconstituting a faithful account, based on archival sources, of an history that has been so thoroughly deformed by Western historical practices.

"Le Passé d'aujourd'hui": From Poetics to Politics

In the closing pages of the novel, the narrator recounts the measures taken by the colonial authorities that effectively ended the revolution: the reestablishment of the property rights of the plantocracy, the repressive work regime, and the end of free circulation for the emancipated slaves (106, 115). If May 1848 did bring liberty to the black population of the French Caribbean, equality and fraternity remained out of reach for the free, but destitute masses. The journal's final entry describes the scene of the planting of the "arbre de fraternité," a supposed symbol of the isle's republican future:

> La foule, animée de mouvements contradictoires, interrompit la cérémonie. Des coups de poings, des lèvres ensanglantées, le déchirement du drapeau tricolore, une race affrontant l'autre, la déroute des autorités.
>
> Je suis rentré péniblement chez moi, non sans avoir remonté lentement le boulevard qui, en longeant la mère, mène aux premières frondaisons de la Montaigne. Des drapeaux

> rouges flottait dans l'air ; j'ai entendu quelqu'un crier : 'Pié bois là ça pa ké pôté ! faut nous raché li !' L'arbre ne portera pas ! Nous allons l'arracher ! (115)

The journal would seem, then, to end on a decidedly pessimistic note; the revolution has failed and the tree, its symbol will bear no fruit. If so much can be said of the final moment set in 1848, the overall message of the text seeks to recuperate the failures of the May revolution by projecting them into the present and future. As we will see, the author would undoubtedly agree with his narrator's assertion that "Je vois bien qu'il n'existe pas de voie ouverte en dehors de la contestation du passé" (48). As we will see, for Placoly, the only means to overcome the Antillean impasse, to attain a more equitable future, is to discover an cultivate the past's heritage within the contemporary experience.

Placoly ends his novel with a postface entitled "Le passé d'aujourd'hui" that, more so than the predominantly fictional avant-propos, provides a clear statement of the author's intentions and an interpretative framework through which the reader may reflect on the journal's import.

> Ceux qui, pour se retrouver, ont quelque peu fouillé 'l'histoire hallucinante des Antilles,' et ont pu surmonter la déception des documents tronqués (j'allais dire truqué), savent que sans descente en soi-même, sans l'intuition mobile de la rêverie, il n'est pas possible de donner corps à des faits que le fleuve du temps a recouvert de sa boue
>
> De ce point de vue, le premier devoir des générations qui s'en vont est de préparer pour celles qui viennent les armes de la lutte contre l'oubli. Ceux-là n'auront pas de mort tranquille tant que le cancer de l'oubli rongera les chairs de leurs enfants. (119)

In addition to his sly acknowledgement of the journal's counterfeit origin, Placoly begins to formulate the means by which his readers and compatriots can overcome the spatiohistorical rupture that plagues the Caribbean collective consciousness. Rather than calling for a return to or

an examination of the past to understand the problems of the present, Placoly argues that the Caribbean author should seek to look inward, to consider the legacy of the traumatic past that lingers in the present of contemporary experience.

Herein lies the crux of the poetic and creative process that the novel exemplifies: what Placoly calls the "effet de hallucination" or "l'intuition mobile de la reverie," concepts he introduces in the avant-propos and develops more fully in the postface. He contends that the experience of space and place can lead the creative consciousness towards a recuperation of the silences of the past. As the frame narrator learns during his own hallucinatory reliving of the 1848 revolution, "La rue connaît ses mémoires, ces contes, ces histoires" (119). The combination of attention to both the experience of space and a profound examination of the self provide the means to reimagine that space as it was experienced in the past, to see it through the eyes of its former inhabitants, and to allow it to reemerge from the multitude of discourses that have manipulated historical narratives to suit their needs: "le silence tragique, il faut le déceler sous l'abondance des paroles actuelles, sous l'hystérie des volitions d'aujourd'hui, sous ce flot de sentences verbeuse qui noient le corps en le rejetant loin des rivages du temps" (120). For Placoly, this is the lesson of the failure of 1848. Enchanted by the verbiage of revolutionary republican propaganda, the slaves accepted an abolition that granted them nominal liberty, but denied them, due to preservation of the private property rights and economic hegemony of the plantocracy, the possibility of real equality. "Pour résumer," as Placoly writes, "disons que les semaines tragiques de mai ont sorti les nègres de l'abrutissement de l'esclavage pour leur enseigner de façon vivante les premiers rudiments de l'économie politique" (121).

For Placoly, the crucial task facing Caribbean literature is not merely to account for the legacy of the region's troubled past, but to uncover that past through an examination of the present self. Those authors capable of understanding the present configurations of the past within

themselves are undoubtedly destined for greatness: “le roman vrai de l’esclavage reste à faire. Celui qui se donnera la force et qui prendra la patience d’accomplir l’autopsie de soi-même, laissera sur le sujet des pages immortelles” (123). Not only does this approach work to mitigate the deleterious effects of silencing of the Caribbean past, it offers a way forward, a means of combating the project of political and cultural assimilation that republican France has pursued since the 1848 revolution. Placoly, convinced that Caribbean peoples have inherited the experience of space and history of their revolutionary ancestors, insists that in the absence of written testimony from the period, the best, and only, means of recuperating it is through a profound self-examination: “Si les esclaves n’ont rien laissé d’écrit, comment retrouver le chemin de leur civilisation sinon en écoutant, pour le décrypter, le code de tout ce qui peut rester d’immortel en nous, d’inaltérable, le legs de tous ces corps qui découvraient, du fond de leur caverne, l’idée de la liberté ?” (124).

Frères volcans, through its incorporation of historical documents and its engagement with the philosophical context of the period, anchors its discourse in a sociohistorical reality and succeeds in overcoming the limitations of the archive as a repository of historical fact. As Daniel Seguin-Cadiche writes in “*Une explosion dans la cathédrale,” ou regards sur l’oeuvre de Vinccent Placoly,*

> La parole de Placoly s’inscrit dans l’Histoire en la commémorant et en l’expliquant. Elle accompagne l’Histoire, la commente et l’éclaire. C’est ainsi qu’elle devient proposition de lecture, de relecture de l’Histoire … Il s’agit pour l’auteur d’enraciner les problèmes existentiels dans des situations historiques concrètes, puisque le destin de l’homme se joue dans le temps. (211)

However, I argue that Placoly goes beyond simply rooting contemporary existential problems in the past, but rather takes those problems as points of departure for the rereading (and rewriting)

of history central to the novel's project. His conception of a poetic process doubly informed by an examination of the past's presence in the contemporary and the experience of space recalls both Glissant's emphasis on the importance of overcoming the unilinear structure of Western historiography and Althusser's insistence on the necessity of developing a concept of the historical past through a careful consideration of its configurations in the present. This critical insight sets Placoly's literary endeavor apart from those of many of his contemporaries and predecessors. If we can argue that the narratives of 1848 in the Caribbean propagated by writers such as Gatine, Henrique, or Lucrèce represent a kind of fiction, an intentional distortion of world-historical events and processes, then Placoly and his narrator's approach, which recognizes fiction as integral to the process of narrative creation, can be understood as possessing the same degree of historical legitimacy. As Placoly writes in his essay "La Mer et la forêt," "tout écrivain ment pour dire la vérité" (79).

Part Three

Antilleans Abroad: The Caribbean Author in a Postcolonial World

Preface

From the Margins to the Market: Caribbean Literature as a Postcolonial Commodity

> Les coeurs et les imaginations se moquent, quant à eux, des files d'attentes aux postes-frontières. Ils s'installent n'importe où, fleurissant partout à leur gré. Pour eux, les continents dérivent et de majestueuses forêts tropicales peuvent bien s'épanouir au beau milieu des trottoirs de Manhattan.
>
> Maryse Condé, "Qu'est-ce qu'un Caribéen? *A fortiori*, qu'est-ce qu'un écrivain caribéen?"

The final section of this study shifts its attention to a period leading up to the present day. The first period that I addressed takes place during the struggle for decolonization, featured writers who worked to situate the Caribbean within broader, world-historical discourses of geography and history. The second, I argue, gives rise to a particularist reaction to its predecessor's universalizing rhetoric, and the authors I present correspondingly make the case for examining Caribbean time-space within a localized context. If, in the two decades following the end of Caribbean decolonization, authors like Glissant and Placoly turned away from the models of linear history that characterized the works of their anticolonial predecessors, this chapter will consider how contemporary Caribbean writers have effected a spatiotemporal turn of their own. In this final section of *The Spatiohistorical Imagination* I consider the works of two of the best-known and most widely-read Haitian novelists: Edwidge Danticat and Dany Laferrière,

and specifically, how their works articulate and respond to a new set of spatiotemporal problems of the present era. If the writings of Glissant and Placoly abandon the notion of a recoverable, universal history to instead develop a particularistic form of discontinuous historical expression, for the contemporary novelists I examine here, the circumstances of their lived experiences preclude such an approach: both Danticat and Laferrière were obliged to emigrate from Haiti before beginning their literary careers and use narrative fiction as a means to explore the experience of the itinerant author in a world understood as both postcolonial and transnational.[1] As Maryse Condé eloquently explains, the world of Caribbean letters no longer remains within the archipelago but spreads across the globe, from continent to continent and back and forth across the Atlantic.

These two authors provide salient examples of how the geocultural and literary contexts of their writing, and in particular their status as transcultural subjects, the collapsing of

[1] Beginning in the 1980's critical theorists began posting that the nation-state, which, in the modern era had functioned as the primary unit of geopolitical control, was losing its capacity to assert sovereignty over the territory it claimed and that supranational organizations (governmental, non-governmental, corporate, etc) had usurped much of their power. In *Empire* (2000), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri express precisely this view, writing that "the collapse of [geopolitical] boundaries has taken place both within each national context and on a global scale. The withering of civil society and the general crisis of the disciplinary institutions coincide with the decline of nation-states as boundaries that mark and organize the divisions in global rule. The establishment of a global society of control that smooths over the striae of national boundaries goes hand in hand with the realization of the world market and the real subsumption of global society under capital" (332). This resolutely materialist understanding of the decline of the nation state coincided with the rise of postcolonial skepticism with regards to the validity of paradigms of national culture championed by the anticolonial movement. As Laura Chrisman writes, by the 1980s "the great era of Third-World anticolonial nationalism was at an end, and violent ethnic communalism was beginning to assume global dimensions. Such political shifts fed the tendency of postcolonial studies to regard nationalism as inherently dominatory, absolutist, essentialist, and destructive. The 1980s additionally witnessed the global expansion and intensification of capitalism. This led to the popular academic view that the era of nation-states was itself nearing a close and that nationalism was therefore redundant" (183). The decline of the nation-state as both geopolitical unit and cultural paradigm lead to its replacement by the concept of transnationality, which, in subsequent decades, has become ubiquitous.

boundaries between national language literatures, and the rise of a globalizing postcolonial aesthetic, necessarily conditions the ways they approach constructing novelistic space-time. My analysis of their works will demonstrate a tendency in contemporary fiction to re-engage with the notions of universalist-oriented spatiotemporal configurations of the anticolonial era, but with significant modal variances. Specifically, I understand this neo-universalist phase of spatiotemporal narrative as re-engaging with the world beyond the geographic limits of the Caribbean basin, but in a way that breaks from the dialectics of the metropole and colony that preoccupied the anticolonial: writers reference or allude to prior texts from diverse literatures and languages, and their works frequently narrate stories of diaspora and transculturation. Narrative once again appears capable of recuperating a sense of continuous history; however, the historical scope of these narratives largely restricts itself to personal or familial histories and thus lack the rhetoric of world-historical import of writers like James or Sainville.[2] Finally, the narratological construction of these works displays a (relative) return to chronologically linear forms, although they may not progress from past towards the future. The significance of these shifts should not, however, be examined through a framework that limits itself to either the careers of the authors or even Caribbean literature more broadly. Rather, they must be understood in relation to the set of spatiotemporal practices established by the field of postcolonial studies, practices that have impacted both the expectations of contemporary readers and their interpretative procedures.[3] I will, in the next section, provide a concise history of the

[2] Despite the frequent invocations on the part of postcolonial theorists of their intent to valorize a spatialized, nonlinear time opposed to the Western notion of progress, Anne McClintock notes the paradoxical linearity of postcolonial chronologies. "The *term* postcolonial," she writes, "is haunted by the very figure of linear 'development' that it sets out to dismantle. Metaphorically, the term 'post-colonial' marks history as a series of stages along an epochal road from the 'pre-colonial,' to 'the colonial,' to 'the post-colonial'—an unbidden, if disavowed, commitment to linear time and the idea of 'development.' (85).

[3] In *The Empire Writes Back,* Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffen argue that postcolonial theory and literature as a whole deals with "the problems of transmuting time into

development of the emergence of the postcolonial as discursive, readerly, and interpretative practices.

A Short History of Postcolonial Anxiety

In the closing decades of the twentieth century, postcolonial literature, initially conceived of as a refashioning of British commonwealth literature, coalesced into a field of its own. Although the term appeared infrequently dating back to 1910, the 1978 publication of Edward Said's Orientalism marked the emergence of a distinct literary-historical and theoretical movement. As Ato Quayson writes, the publication of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back* in 1989 and influential articles in PMLA by Henry Louis Gates Jr and Debra A. Castillo in 1990 led to a shift in meaning of what is evoked by the term postcolonial: "the 1990s saw a decisive shift of usage from the merely temporal to the more discursive and theoretical, with Robert Young, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Aijaz Ahmad, Bart Moore-Gilbert, Ania Loomba, Elleke Boehmer, Ato Quayson and Achille Mbembeamong others providing key parameters for debating the field." (5). Quayson's historical framing of the development of the postcolonial demonstrates that, unlike earlier anticolonial literary movements like *Négritude*, which was enunciated through the literary works of its practitioners, the postcolonial originated in a conjuncture of theoretical and discursive practices that looked to literatures produced in formerly colonized sites that represents the experience of the legacy and

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space" as a means of refuting Eurocentric notions of history and linear chronology, and that this spatiotemporal operation somehow relates to the postcolonial project of overturning binary thought: "the various models by which texts and traditions in post-colonial literatures are discussed intersect at a number of points. However, place is extremely important in all the models, and epistemologies have developed which privilege space over time as the most important ordering concept of reality. In the same way the pole of governor-governed, ruler-ruled, etc. are inverted and the concept of dominance as the principle regulator of human societies is recognized but challenged" (35). Again, we can observe here a critical tendency to interpret any form of conceptual complexity as an invariable sign of the postcolonial.

history of colonialism. As such, the limits of what constitutes postcolonial literature are subject to ever-increasing expansion: the postcolonial, conceived of as a set of critical and discursive practices, defines postcolonial literature as the set of those texts upon which those practices operate.

Postcolonial theory's success in crafting its own corresponding literary field out of texts from quite disparate geographical regions and national literary traditions sets it apart from earlier schools of criticism. For example, literary scholars do not speak of a "psychoanalytic" or "new historical" literature, despite the extensive use of such critical practices over the course of decades.[4] To demonstrate the scope of this critical requisitioning of literary texts, one need only examine the table of contents of postcolonial anthologies; for example, *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature* (2012) includes articles addressing the literary production of Africa, Canada, the Caribbean, the Middle-East, Latin America, Southeast Asia, India, and Germany, to name but a handful. Postcolonial literature thus draws its corpus from a thoroughly global set of literatures; if, as the retention of the above geographical indicators suggests, there exist certain traits or traditions of these subsets of postcolonial literature that can be productively linked to local or regional literary production, we can nonetheless conclude that postcolonial readerly and critical practices have sought to look beyond the frame of national literatures and draw thematic, critical, and historical parallels between literatures that had in previous periods been read as geographically or culturally specific. Perhaps the most universal trait of postcolonial criticism, as I argue throughout this study, consists of a critical gesture wherein a text is shown to express a level of cultural or conceptual complexity (in the form of hybridity, ambivalence, indeterminacy,

[4] Postcolonial Studies is not the only critical approach to literature to seek to develop its own canon, although it is the first. Subsequently, theoretical schools like queer theory or ecocriticism, which developed in the same timeframe, also display this capacity, "queering" and "greening" traditionally canonical while brining to light previously ignored texts.

différance, etc.) inconsistent with a binary model of culture, complexity which then marks that text as inherently postcolonial.[5]

Thus, from the 1990s to the present, postcolonial studies both establishes itself as critical discourse and accretes into a kind of conglomerate literature. While postcolonial authors and critics ostensibly and explicitly valorize a cultural particularism divorced from the concept of the nation-state and a politics of identity intended to counter the cultural homogenization associated with the postmodern or neocolonial period, postcolonial critical and readerly practices as a whole, through the construction of supranational literary field and associated critical practices, contribute to the globalization of culture that, ironically, they claim to resist.[6] I draw attention to this seeming spatial paradox within the field not to criticize or condemn it, but rather to draw attention to how it signals a return to the kind of universalizing textual practices I earlier associate with the anticolonial period. Nor am I, by any means, the first to consider the relationship between the universal and the particular within the frame of postcolonial discourse. Another of the defining features of postcolonial criticism is undoubtedly its sense of self-reflexivity and tendency towards autocriticism. In particular, with increasing levels of institutionalization within the European and American academies and the valorization of

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[5] Stuart Hall, responding to the problem of the periodization of the postcolonial in his essay "When Was 'the Post-Colonial?' Thinking at the Limit," emblematizes this perspective, writing that "the shift from circumstances in which anti-colonial struggles seemed to assume a binary form of representation to the present when they can no longer be represented within a binary structure … and this shift is precisely what the serialised or staggered transition to the 'post-colonial' is marking. But it is not only not marking it in a 'then' and 'now' way. It is obliging us to re-read the very binary form in which the colonial encounter has for so long itself been represented. It obliges us to re-read the binaries as forms of transculturation, of cultural translation, destined to trouble the here/ there cultural binaries for ever" (247). As such, the *sine qua non* of postcolonial criticism becomes this rhetoric of increasing complexity relative to earlier (anti-) colonial cultural paradigms.

[6] Terry Eagleton sustains such a critique of postcolonial studies, noting that "for all its emphasis on difference, post-colonial theory has sometimes too quickly conflated very different societies under the same 'Third World' category; and its language has too often betrayed a portentous obscurantism incongruously remote from the peoples it champions (206).

"postcolonial" narratives in the literary marketplace, postcolonial critics began to question the cultural stakes of their project and consider to what degree they may be acting in complicity with the notion of a western capitalist cultural hegemony that they sought to critique.[7]

If we accept Quayson's assertion that the field coalesced around 1990, it is notable that the tendency towards autocritique begins at precisely the same time. In an essay entitled "Poststructuralism, Marginality, Postcoloniality and Value," Gayatri Spivak writes of the possibility that postcolonial scholarship participates in an "unwilling or unwitting perpetration of a 'new orientalism' as the inscription of an 'overall strategy' (222).[8] Spivak is particularly concerned that "arguments from culturalism, multiculturalism and ethnicity, however insular and heteromorphous they might seem from the great narratives of the techniques of global financial control, can work to obscure such separations in the interests of the production of a neocolonial discourse" (222). The problem relates to the question of how discourses on marginal identities operate as a form of institutionalized cultural capital coded in a "currency of the equivalencies of knowledge" that "measures the magnitude of value in the sphere of knowledge" (227). Arif

[7] One way in which postcolonial criticism has been understood as complicit with the systems of political and economic control it purports to critique lies precisely in its efforts to stake out a common ground between colonial discourse and its anticolonial corollary through its incessant appeal to a third term (Bhabha's "Third Space," discussed later, serves as a prime example). As Simon During writes, "Postcolonialism came to signify something remote from self-determination and autonomy. By deploying categories such as hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence . . . all of which laced colonized into colonising cultures, postcolonialism effectively became a reconciliatory rather than a critical, anti-colonialist category" (31).

[8] Although I choose to focus on this essay as a representative of the earliest expressions of postcolonial self-criticism, Spivak has produced lengthier and more incisive works in this genre. See, for example, "Teaching for the Times." *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, edited by Anne McClintock, Amir Mufti, and Ella Shohat, Minnesota Press, 1997, pp. 468–90; *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present.* Harvard University Press, 1999; *Death of a Discipline*. Columbia University Press, 2003. For a more in-depth analysis of Spivak's critiques of postcolonialism, see Bongie, Chris. *Friends and Enemies: The Scribal Politics of Post/Colonial Literature*. Liverpool University Press (2008).

Dirlik goes further: beginning with Spivak's suspicions, he ultimately concludes in "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism" (1994) that "postcoloniality is the condition of the intelligentsia of global capital" (356).

Both of these early critiques of postcolonial studies focus on the question of how scholars create critical discourses and crucially, where these discourses originate and circulate. However, subsequent scholarship has extended the scope of this anxiety of complicity to cover concerns related to the material and economic realities of the publishing industry. Although still predominantly focused on questions of discourse circulation, Graham Huggan's 2001 study *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* connects the issue of the circulation of culturally valorized "new orientalist" marginal discourses and the marketing, sale, and promotion of books. If Huggan initially introduces the argument of his book as a study "of the varying degrees of complicity between local oppositional discourses and the global late-capitalist system in which these discourses circulate and are contained" (vii), he does not tarry in extending this complicity from the discursive sphere to the material, noting that

> postcolonialism is a discourse of translation, rerouting cultural products regarded as emanating from the periphery toward audiences who see themselves as coming from the centre. The metropolitan locations of the major publishing houses (London and New York, for example) lend strength to this view, as does the increasing number of foreign-language texts from the 'non-West' available in translation. (4)

With the increasing institutionalization of postcolonial studies came a concomitant demand for the kinds of literary works that would appeal to the new, postcolonial readership; namely, works that provide cultural insight into "marginal," "peripheral," or "third-world" localities. However, the ethical stance of this new readership does not align with that of the postcolonial author or critic

What Huggan calls the postcolonial exotic lies at the intersection of two opposing facets of the postcolonial: *postcolonialism*, which designates the politically motivated project of producing discourses to counter those of neocolonial epistemological and institutional structures, and *postcoloniality,* which refers to the trafficking of "exoticized" or "othered" cultural production. Huggan carefully insists that this second, negative side of postcolonial literature relates to the way it is consumed, not created, thus implicating a somewhat nebulous figure of the western reader as responsible for the exoticizing of the largely blameless postcolonial author. Despite the noble intentions of the critic and author, this metropolitan reader engages in a form of reading that takes the identity or culture expressed through a work as an aesthetic object to be consumed discreetly instead of engaging more profoundly with the social, historical, and theoretical contexts of these works. This model of postcolonial reading has not been accepted without critique, however. Notably Sarah Brouillette explains in *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (2007), that Huggan's distinction between the postcolonialism of the critic and the postcoloniality of the mass-market consumer "is a version of what it analyzes, subscribing to a logic that separates the authentic from the inauthentic, the insider from the outsider, in an endless cycle of hierarchical distinction and counter-distinction" (19).

While all of the aforementioned critics share a focus on the politics and aesthetics of English-language postcolonial authorship, readership, and criticism, it is more notable for the present reading that that they all likewise write of a distinct tension between the locally-centered and culturally specific identities of postcolonial authors and the globalizing, universalizing tendencies of the postcolonial literary field. Furthermore, this contrast takes on an ethical contrast: whereas Spivak, Huggan, and Brouillette all take care not to implicate exemplary postcolonial authors, they do not hesitate to condemn the limiting tendencies of the "new orientalism" (Spivak) of the western academy, the exoticizing metropolitan reader (Huggan) or

quite simply the literary marketplace (Brouillette). In its broadest lines, then, postcolonial critical discourse takes a firm stance against universalizing tendencies that is sees itself as enabling, if not directly enacting. Specifically, this line of critique suggests that the postcolonial discursive project that comes to supplant the explicitly political project of the anticolonial period, the construction a counternarrative of global capitalism, cannot accept or justify the potential for misreading (in an exoticized or orientalist mode) that it unintentionally engendered.

Here we can observe a double break from both the universalism of the authors and intellectuals I feature in the second section of this study, and the particularism of those of the third section, both in their valuation of the universal and the relation of the universal to the particular. Whereas James and Sainville saw Caribbean local histories and narratives as central and essential to the broader, Marxist-inspired vision of universal history that they work to refine, postcolonial studies positions the local and the universal in necessary opposition and indelibly stains the latter as necessarily complicit with capitalism, neocolonialism, and western discursive hegemony.[9] Whereas Glissant, Placoly, and the Haitian Spiralists turn away from the globalizing rhetoric of Marxism and decolonization to focus on explorations of their specific Caribbean cultures and their discontinuous histories, Postcolonialism has no origin or locale to which it can attend. Rather, it can only self-consciously return to the deterritorialized site of its own discursive origins. As such, postcolonial literature has for the last two decades enacted a

[9] In his article "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?," Dipesh Chakrabarty enunciates the postcolonial quarrel with the discipline of history: that history, complicit with global capitalism and its primary geopolitical unit, the nation-state, privileges a conception of the modern that is largely synonymous with Western or European culture. "So long as one operates within the discourse of 'history,'" he writes, "it is not possible simply to walk out of the deep collusion between 'history' and the modernizing narrative(s) of citizenship, bourgeois public and private, and the nation-state" (19). Chakrabarty understands the discipline of history to be inseparable from the nation-state, and as such, inevitably further a Eurocentric, universalizing understanding of culture as essentialist and tied to a dubious politics of nationhood.

Sisyphean negotiation of the relationship it expresses between the sense of locality expressed by its authors and the necessary globality of its metadiscourse. The recourse to concepts such as *hybridity* or Homi Bhabha's notion of the *Third Space* thus appear as the logical synthesis of a spatial dialectic thought which a group of theorists who inherited Postmodernism's inherent mistrust of binary propositions attempt to position themselves in a discursive sphere at some midpoint between the universal and the particular.

Between Here and There: The Postcolonial Compromise

In the first chapter of *The Location of Culture* (1994), entitled "The Commitment to Theory," Homi Bhabha attempts to resolve the simmering conflict between those in the field working out of a poststructuralist semiotic framework and their predominantly Marxist detractors. Specifically, he addresses the charge leveled by Dirlik and others that postcolonial theory reiterates discursively the global economic and political structural imbalances created by colonialism and maintained by neocolonialism. "Are the interests of 'Western' theory" he writes "necessarily collusive with the hegemonic role of the West as a power bloc? Is the language of theory merely another power ploy of the culturally privileged Western elite to produce a discourse of the Other that reinforces its own power–knowledge equation?" (30). [10] Citing the seeming opposition of politics and theory as a paradigmatic example, Bhabha articulates in this

[10] Alex Callinicos' critique of Bhabha in his essay "Wonders Taken for Signs: Homi Bhabha's Postcolonialism," takes as its premise that postcolonialism is little more than a form of postmodernist and poststructural thought that claims for a political relevance. Focusing on such claims to the political, he contends that "Bhabha's analyses of colonial power are themselves so thoroughly imbricated with poststructural concepts—those of Saussurian philosophy of language read through Lacan and Derrida—that they cannot provide any independent support for the claim that there is a privileged relationship between these concepts and 'colonial textuality.' One rather has the feeling that some sort of card trick is going on: colonial discourse is invoked to give poststructuralism much needed political and historical content, but this discourse turns out itself to be a poststructuralist construct" (105-6).

chapter, and in emblematic postcolonial fashion, a critique of conceptual binaries that would keep the terms separate. His interest lies in establishing a middle ground upon which a politically-engaged theoretical practice might be developed, and quickly reframes his problem accordingly: "In what hybrid forms, then, may a politics of the theoretical statement emerge? What tensions and ambivalences mark this enigmatic place from which theory speaks?" (33). However, as his new question implies, his defense of theory operates in the poststructuralist semiotic mode he seeks to defend: it will be the "tensions and ambivalences" inherent to the enunciation of the language of theory that redeem his critical approach:

> The language of critique is effective … to the extent to which it overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation: a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of a political object that is new, *neither the one nor the other*, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics. (37)

Here Bhabha argues for the conceptualization of theoretical and discursive approach, couched in the language of the space and place, that can transcend binary oppositions imposed by outdated political models.[11] Numerous critics have already debated the question of whether or not

[11] Benita Perry, in *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (2004), points out that postcolonial theory's critique of the binary mode it reads in both colonial and anticolonial discourse fails to do justice to the nuanced perspective of anticolonial theorists and writers. She writes that some postcolonial critics "whether because of doctrinal aversion or willed ignorance, have dismissed anti-colonialism as always nativist, essentialist, atavistic and wedded to pre-modern ideologies. What is overlooked is that notions of communal ethnic identity were invoked in the interests of mobilizing populations against their foreign rulers, while cultural heritages denigrated and despised by colonialism were affirmed as authentic traditions. Such recuperations, however, were not made in the interest of discovering uncontaminated origins or claiming ethnic purity, and were remote from any attempt to retrieve a past known to be irrecoverable" (10). It is precisely such a nuanced view of pre-postcolonial theory and literature that the present study aims to support.

Bhabha's reliance on poststructural methodologies is justified.[12] Rather, I am interested in demonstrating, through the kind of symptomatic reading that Bhabha explicitly rejects, a reading in which "the nervous tics on the surface of ideology reveal the 'real materialist contradiction' that History embodies (37). Specifically, I argue that Bhabha's development of the concepts of *hybridity* and of the *Third Space*, despite its ostensible grounding in the ambivalent semiotics of cultural expression, testifies to a latent spatial anxiety that is both immediately obvious (through the systematic use of spatial vocabulary) and yet largely unacknowledged by Bhabha and his critics.

The materialist contradiction that can be read in Bhabha's concepts relates to the tension between the universalist and particularist understandings of space and place that I have explored over the course of this study.[13] If, as I have argued at the beginning of this study, the physical world does not retain either its physicality or its claim to an ontological reality outside of discourse within the realm of representation, be it theoretical or literary, we must insist on a corollary: that the representation and conceptions of the world elaborated in the imagined space of discourse directly influence, or even dictate, the set of human material practices with which

[12] In addition to the critics of postcolonial studies that I cite directly, see, for example, Aijaz Ahmad. *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures.* London: Verso, 1992; Larsen, Neil. *Determinations: Essays On Theory, Narrative, and Nation In the Americas.* London: Verso, 2001. Parry, Benita. *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*. Routledge: New York, 2004,

[13] Simon Gikandi, in his article "Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality," argues that appealing to the notion of globalization provides a way for Bhabha and his followers to reconcile, rhetorically speaking, the tension between the universal and the particular. "Clearly, globalization appeals to advocates of hybridity … because it seems to harmonize the universal and the particular and, in the process, it seems to open up to a multiplicity of cultural relationships unheard of in the age of empire: for Bhabha, the globalization of social spaces reflects a state of 'unsatisfaction' that, nevertheless, enables the articulation and enunciation of 'a global or transnational imaginary and its 'cosmopolitan subjectivities'" (629). Furthermore, for Gikandi, this notion of "happy hybridity" belies are more difficult truth that postcolonial theory avoids: that of the failure of the postcolony as a political project promising an anticolonial form of modernization.

individuals, cultures, and polities act upon the real world. That is to say that any spatial designation applied to the material world, even "imagined communities" or "imagined geographies," have direct, material ramifications in the physical world, the geographic territory they serve to delimit and define, such as those demonstrated by the history of European colonialism in the Caribbean.

In this sense, my understanding of the relationship between theoretical knowledge and the empirical world does align with Bhabha's. This is in fact one of the main premises on which he bases his argument for the essential interrelatedness of politics and theory. "The function of theory within the political process" he writes, "makes us aware that our political referents and priorities – the people, the community, class struggle, anti-racism, gender difference, the assertion of an anti- imperialist, black or third perspective – are not there in some primordial, naturalistic sense" (38). Rather, these political referents are objects of knowledge constructed through theoretical discourse and only belatedly enter into a politics capable of acting on the material world. Bhabha's priorities lie in advocating for an abstract space of negotiation that would allow the culturally-oriented field of postcolonial critique to enter into a kind of symbolic coalition with other schools of radical, political critique such as Marxism or Feminism; by insisting that all politics originate in theoretical discourse, he minimizes the distinction between his own approach and those of other critics whose methods or priorities are more ostensibly and immediately political. The purpose of this rhetorical maneuver is multiple: it both allows for a redemption of cultural critical theory and a justification of the postcolonial turn towards the cultural sphere and its repositioning into a Third Space that is neither the center or the periphery.

Specifically, Bhabha responds to the charge levelled by Dirlik and others that postcolonial theory acts in complicity with capitalist or "Western" hegemony, particularly with regards to its tendency to either appropriate meaning produced outside the metropole or to

weaponize it as a component of critiques of western cultural paradigms. “This is a familiar manoeuvre of theoretical knowledge” he writes, adding that after having established a regime of containable cultural difference, “the knowledge of cultural difference must be made to foreclose on the Other” (45) who, “cited, quoted, framed, illuminated, encased in the shot/reverse-shot strategy of a serial enlightenment,” invariably “loses its power to signify, to negate, to initiate its historic desire, to establish its own institutional and oppositional discourse” (46). In other words, Bhabha’s defence of critical theory is not absolute; rather he also engages in the postcolonial preoccupation of autocritique, arguing that the ambitions of theory must go beyond internal critiques of western discursive practices that ultimately retain the epistemological and teleological aspirations of the Western Enlightenment tradition. He concludes that this is only possible “if we relocate the referential and institutional demands of such theoretical work in the field of cultural difference – *not cultural diversity*” (47).

In short, this operative distinction maintains that the paradigm of cultural diversity maintains the preexistence of specific cultural content that precedes its articulation in thought, and more nefariously, it is “the representation of a radical rhetoric of the separation of totalized cultures that live unsullied by the intertextuality of their historical locations, safe in the Utopianism of a mythic memory of a unique collective identity” (50). This conception of autonomous cultural traditions persisting through time corresponds with the fantasm of unilinear cultural filiation described by Glissant in *Poétique de la relation*; it also, in the thought of Bhabha, represents a latent assumption in much critical theory that his concepts of Third Space and Hybridization serve to deconstruct. In contrast with such models of cultural diversity, he proposes a shift towards a conception of cultural difference that challenges the historiographic implications of an assumption of collective identities that purportedly include a sense of immutable tradition or cultural memory. To enunciate cultural difference is to problematize

> the binary division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address. It is the problem of how, in signifying the present, something comes to be repeated, relocated and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic. (52)

For Bhabha, enunciating cultural difference opens a breach in linear cultural historiography, a passage into the Third Space located at the intersection of the subject of language and the signifying subject, a deterritorialized and unrepresentable site in which "the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (55). Herein lies the (battle)field of the theoretician and the revolutionary alike, who, precisely in their rejection of fixed notions of cultural filiation, may overcome the burdens of identity politics and theoretical squabbles.

However, Bhabha's ultimate intention goes beyond refuting the critiques of postcolonial practices penned either by traditional Marxists or by postcolonial theorists themselves. He holds that the concept of the Third Space offers a conception of cultural interpretation that can also serve as a model for the relationship between theoretical discourses and cultural content emanating from different places that avoids the exoticising tendencies of what Huggin calls *postcoloniality* and explicitly recognizes the instability of cultures and cultural difference. He concludes the argument with the suggestion that

> the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an *inter*national culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is the 'inter' – the cutting edge of translation and

> negotiation, the *inbetween* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist histories of the 'people'. And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves. (56)

As I have already stated, my interest in Bhabha's work and my intention in sustaining this reading of his work do not amount to a qualitative judgement of the validity of his theoretical arguments, but rather the ways in which they testify to the spatial anxiety at the heart of the postcolonial critical enterprise.

Bhabha's argument exudes spatial metaphor, yet dependent as it is on the figurative use of terms like place, location, and territory, he elides the spatial implications of his particular style of argumentation by rerouting concepts through other critical paradigms such as the opposition of politics and theory, past and present, and enunciation and reception. Despite Bhabha's initial contention that he addresses the seeming conflict between theory and politics and his frequent rhetorical detours, he spends most of the chapter arguing for the validity of a universalizing theoretical approach to particularist cultural production, an approach that to me encapsulates the problematics of postcolonial theory and literary critical practices. How does a critical approach that relies on the semiotics of poststructuralism and the globalizing ambitions of postmodernism reconcile the material and discursive difference between the creators of its Western theoretical bases and the "colonial or postcolonial provenance" of its "productive capacities" (56)?[14]

[14] In *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts Practices, Politics*, Bart Moore-Gilbert takes Bhabha to task for his reliance on European, and primarily French theorists, particularly what he identifies as the second stage of his career. He writes that "despite [Bhabha's] genuflection to the argument that postcolonial criticism emerges from 'those who have suffered the sentence of history—subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement,' the most distinctive essays of the second phase, such as 'The Postcolonial and the Postmodern,' are referenced almost exclusively in terms of contemporary Western thinkers, in this particular instance Hannah Arendt, Bakhtin, Lacan, and Barthes. Such is the extent of Bhabha's debts to metropolitan sources … that one might be

It does so through a threefold rhetorical move observable in the in Bhabha's emblematic text. First, by shifting the emphasis of critical interpretation from the expression of national or ethnic culture to the act of expression itself, and consequently the signifying subject producing that expression, it deterritorializes the cultures in question and effects a transition from the collective to the individual writer, who possesses the linguistic and transcultural competencies necessary to translate localized cultural formations into a universally-consumable form. Second, through an explicit valorization of the aesthetics of translation, hybridity, and in-betweenness, postcolonialism justifies the collapsing of linguistic and stylistic differences between literary traditions. Finally, my symptomatic reading of Bhabha's (and more broadly, postcolonial theory's) willingness to engage in geographic indistinction, evinced by the systematic use of concepts such as margin and periphery, The West and the Third World (which denote broad global distinctions of space), demonstrate a receptiveness to a universalizing concept of cultural exchange that has proved central to the elaboration of a distinct aesthetics of postcolonial literature.

The purpose of this theoretical interlude is, again, not to propose some kind of qualitative judgement of the aims and accomplishments of Bhabha's or postcolonial theory's work, but to demonstrate how a spatial reading of his quintessentially postcolonial theoretical argument draws out the latent tension between universalist and particularist notions of culture. From this perspective, the differences between postcolonial and anticolonial critical approaches, which both share a universalizing drive, appear modal and not fundamental. Rather in my view, postcolonialism represents an attempt to recuperate the universalist conception of space and history, albeit in different terms, of the anticolonial moment. Although my explicitly spatial

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tempted to argue that the effect of the second phase of his career is—contrary to his professed intention—actually to rename the postcolonial from the perspective of the postmodern" (128).

priorities differ from previous iterations, I am not the first scholar to suggest that the two fields are more similar than they are commonly understood to be; notably, this is one of the main points David Scott makes in *Conscripts of Modernity*. Rather, what distinguishes my argument is that I understand postcolonialism to be, at least in part, and at least within the context of Caribbean letters, to be a reaction to the particularist tendencies most active during the decades following political decolonization and before the rise of postcolonial studies. Moreover, whereas many scholars such as Scott or Vivek Chibber, Peter Hallward, or Chris Bongie have recently debated the critical efficacy of the field, I understand that the universalizing ambitions of postcolonial studies have undeniably been realized. As a set of readerly and critical practices in (particularly American) academic institutions, postcolonialism has produced generations of readers attuned to its preoccupations and priorities. As the work of Huggan, Brouillette, Lise Gauvin, and others has demonstrated, these practices determine what literature emanating from places such as the Caribbean gets published, taught, and read. Any Caribbean author aspiring to more than an extremely localized readership must reckon with them. Even Glissant, who earlier in this study served as a primary example of localist fictional tendencies, nonetheless, in his later career, embraced a new form of postcolonial universalism.[15]

In the subsequent chapters of this section, I examine novels by two contemporary authors, Danticat and Laferrière, and the ways in which each negotiates the problematics of the postcolonial literary field. Although their biographies would seem to indicate a similar trajectory--both were born in Haiti but emigrated to metropolises in continental North America where they became internationally-renowned authors--the ways in which their fiction finds its place in the literary field display a distinct divergence. Whereas Danticat largely embraces postcolonial aesthetics and her role as a prominent spokesperson for the Haitian diaspora in

[15] Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial,* 67.

America, Laferrière explicitly rejects attempts by critics and journalists to qualify both his work and literary persona as Haitian or postcolonial.[16] However despite their manifest differences, scholars have largely approached their work through the same lens: one that emphasizes the themes of literature of exile, diaspora, and immigration. In my discussions of their work, I will demonstrate how, despite the stark differences between their respective literary enterprises, they both respond to the particular set of readerly and critical expectations that define the contemporary era of Caribbean literary universalism.

[16] Bénédicte Boisseron makes a related observation in her book *Creole Renegades: Rhetoric of Betrayal and Guilt In the Caribbean Diaspora,* noting that "Laferrière and Danticat are different types of Haitian immigrant writers offering two perspectives on the cultural obligation of the diasporic subject: one avoids addressing Haitian misery at all costs, and one makes Haitian misery her main concern. In both cases, the line between cultural obligation and opportunism gets dangerously thin for the immigrant writer at work (97)

Chapter Five

Not Just Any History:
Edwidge Danticat and the Writing of the 1937 Massacre

Edwidge Danticat, born in 1969 in Port-au-Prince, is perhaps the best-known and most widely-read of the authors considered in this study, and certainly the youngest. Raised by her extended family in Haiti until the age of twelve, she then rejoined her mother, father, and two youngest siblings who had settled in Brooklyn, New York. After completing high school, she majored in French literature at Barnard College before completing a Masters in Fine Arts at Brown University. It was during this period of her life that Danticat describes discovering both Haitian literature and African American literature, noting authors such as Maya Angelou, Jacques Stephen Alexis, Jacques Roumain, and Marie Chauvet as important influences. Unlike any of the other authors in this dissertation, she began her career as a writer in the era of postcolonial studies; her first novel (which was also her Masters Thesis), *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994), features many of the dominant tropes of postcolonial fiction, in that it is a narrative of migration and transcultural hybridization that portrays a predominantly female genealogy whose members struggle to come to terms with the inherited legacy of sexual trauma. The novel evidently and successfully catered to an American postcolonial readership, winning several awards, and perhaps more importantly, being selected for the Oprah Book Club, guaranteeing Danticat an extensive readership, a degree of financial stability, and a public posture as a leading voice of the Haitian diaspora in America.

Like the previous writers I have discussed, Danticat participates in the decades-long project of constructing a historical literature of the Caribbean past. However, with the exception

of her young adult novel *Anacanoa* (2005), which is set during the initial Spanish colonization of Hispañola, all of her narrative fiction takes place either in the present or in the recent past. Whereas the traumatic history of authors like Glissant stretches back to the era of slavery and appears to a certain degree inaccessible to the contemporary author, the traumatic past in Danticat's work remains within the reach of generational memory. The most "historical" of her novels, *The Farming of Bones,* takes place in 1937 and 1961; this recent past appears far more immediate than that of the colonial era, due to the existence of better historical records and testimony. The paratext of the original hardcover edition of the novel signifies this accessibility: the end papers feature images of historical documents describing the massacre, and although only partly legible, they imply a certain historical authenticity that extends to the fictional text. Conversely, however, the illegibility of the documents, caused both by their superposition on top of one another and the fact that their text is in French and Spanish, suggest that they are unable to convey the full extent of the story, and require fictional supplement. [1]

The Farming of Bones will serve as an emblematic text, both of the ways by which postcolonialized Caribbean writers come to terms with practices of their readership and how they adapt the inscription of time and space within their narratives to cater to as well as resist them. The novel displays the hallmarks of what I call the neo-universalist spatiotemporal imagination: It deploys a semi-linear, hybrid narrative temporality that alternates between chapters set in a sequential time that delineate the action of the plot and chapters, marked in bold text, that

[1] This second interpretation of the end papers, which implies the unreliability of the official documents they represent, aligns with the general trend in paratextual intervention that Richard Watts, in *Packaging Post/Coloniality: The Manufacture of Literary Identity in the Francophone World* (2005), identifies with postcolonial fiction. "From the mid-1970s on," he writes, "one finds a distrust with the entire apparatus of authority surrounding the text" and that that there exists a distinct "tendency in postcolonial francophone literature to disavow the authority of the paratext, not simply in order to decolonize it, but to subject it to a postcolonial refashioning" (6). I will argue that Danticat's retelling of the 1937 massacre constitutes exactly such a postcolonial refashioning of the official history represented by the documents of the end papers.

emanate from an unidentifiable place "outside" the geography of the plot and that reflect or meditate on the main character, Amabelle's, subjective experience of time. Furthermore, this hybrid temporality corresponds to the reduction of the scope of "History" to that of a personal history, abdicating (in a non-derogatory sense of the word) the responsibility to connect the particulars of the narrative with broader, world-historical concerns beyond those directly affecting the subjectivity of the main character. Thirdly, the novel's setting, in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, allows it to engage with the problems of imperialism and neocolonialism, but from outside of the dialectic of the metropole and the colony; not only does it eschew the colonizer-colonized dichotomy but it also turns away from the politics of social class favored by explicitly Marxist authors towards an examination of how intersectional forms of oppression impact the life of the individual.[2] Finally, *The Farming of Bones* exhibits the typically postcolonial tendency towards auto-criticism by calling into question the text's ability to faithfully portray the experience or the discourse of the fictional subjectivity to which it gives voice.

[2] That the novel would engage with the legacy of American imperialism, and by extension, the long history of colonialism in Hispaniola, demonstrates the pervasiveness of the changes wrought by foreign influence in the early 20th century. The United States, fearing growing European, and specifically, German, influence in the Caribbean, invaded and occupied both Haiti and the Dominican Republic. In both nations, the US invasions provided an opportunity for American corporations to take advantage of weak local governments and appropriate land for large-scale agricultural exploitation, a return to the export-oriented model of plantation agriculture dominant in pre-revolutionary San Domingue. In Haiti, this moment marked the beginning of the gradual erosion of rural communities and the concomitant migration of peasants to the cities, notably Port-au-Prince, where they found work in newly-established manufacturing concerns, most often controlled by American financiers. The only alternative to the precarious life of the urban proletariat was exile, and thousands of Haitians migrated to the Dominican Republic in search of work. In *The Farming of Bones*, the Haitian characters find themselves in the Dominican Republic, not because of intentional choice, but rather as a result of a series of economic and political tragedies that compel them to leave their homes.

Danticat's writing lends itself quite readily to postcolonial readings, and somewhat unsurprisingly, scholarly responses to her work have largely conformed to postcolonial models of criticism. For example, Nadège T. Clitandre, whose book *Edwidge Danticat: The Haitian Diasporic Imaginary* (2019) constitutes the first monograph dealing exclusively with her fiction, immediately signals her participation in the postcolonial project when, in the first paragraph, she writes that Danticat's work is "fueled by a desire to engender new imaginaries of identity, belonging, and home spaces that transgress binaries, stable signifiers, and monologic truths that promote absolutes and validate the geopolitical boundaries of nation-states and their mythic narratives" (1). This argument, while certainly *correct*, is most notable in the way that it performs, as if by rote, a set of preestablished postcolonial critical gestures such as overturning of binaries, critiquing the nation-state, and exploring hybrid identities. It should come as no surprise and require little argumentation that Danticat writes eminently postcolonial texts. Yet the vast majority of scholarly work to date has focused on exploring exclusively postcolonial themes such as exile, diaspora, and transnationality.[3] Again, my point here is not that these scholars are wrong, but that if the much-lamented stagnation in postcolonial studies is to be overcome, new questions must be asked and new answers proposed.

Danticat's explicitly postcolonial thematics, and in particular, her use of the English language, have undoubtedly conditioned the reception and critical interpretation of her works. Although her choice to write in a language that she acknowledges as not her own (*Create*

[3] See, for example, Ards, Angela A. *Words of Witness : Black Women's Autobiography in the Post-Brown Era*, University of Wisconsin Press, 2016; Boisseron, Bénédicte. *Creole Renegades: Rhetoric of Betrayal and Guilt In the Caribbean Diaspora*. University Press of Florida, 2014; Braziel, Jana Evans. *Duvalier's Ghosts: Race, Diaspora, and U.S. Imperialism In Haitian Literatures.* University Press of Florida, 2010; Munro, Martin. *Exile and Post-1946 Haitian Literature: Alexis, Depestre, Ollivier, Laferrière, Danticat*. Liverpool University Press, 2007; in addition, essays by Régine Jean-Charles, Kiera Vaclavik, Mireille Rosello, and Myriam J.A. Chancy in the collected volume *Edwidge Danticat: A Reader's Guide* (2010) all approach Danticat's work through the postcolonial frame of displacement, diaspora, or transnationality.

Dangerously 44) is certainly logical given her biographical trajectory, it nonetheless marks her work as something of an anomaly within the field of Haitian literature. Historically, nearly all Haitian authors have published in French, and to a lesser degree in more recent years, kreyòl.[4] This choice, coupled with her participation in the American literary and publishing scene, undoubtedly contributed to her popular readership, and perhaps ironically to her international renown. In scholarly or academic context, her writing crosses disciplinary boundaries—her works might be studied or taught in diverse institutional settings, such as African-American, Caribbean, Francophone, or Anglophone studies departments. Intriguingly, her books cross disciplinary boundaries in a way that mirrors the physical crossing of borders enacted by the characters: nearly all of her narratives are stories of either emigration or return. Unsurprisingly her writing frequently dwells on the spatial relationship between the country of her birth and that of her adoption. In an essay on the death of the Haitian journalist Jean Dominique in *Create Dangerously*, Danticat explains that as a Haitian immigrant in America her country was not physically embodied in the form of a distinct territory: "My country, I felt, both as an immigrant and as an artist, was something that was then being called the tenth department. Haiti then had nine geographic departments and the tenth was the floating homeland, the ideological one, which

[4] Within the critical literature, there is a clear consensus that Danticat's use of English in no way invalidates her inclusion within a canon of Haitian literature that is for the most part Francophone or Creolophone. Most scholars would concur with Yolaine Parisot, who writes in *Regards Littéraires Haïtiens: Cristallisations De La Fiction-monde* that because "elle joue de l'imaginaire des langues et de la traduction, tel que se le représente la mémoire littéraire haïtienne, l'oeuvre anglophone d'Edwidge Danticat fait, quant à elle, *de facto* partie du corpus qui s'ouvre, par là-même, à une infinie déterritorialisation autour de motifs singuliers--la naissance de la Première République noire, les 'vêpres dominicaines' de 1937, le roman de la dictature, les *boat people*, le séisme" (29). Munro concurs, noting that her use of English indicates a "very postmodern detachment from the rigid identity–language equation that underpins many discourses of postcolonial nationalism" (213), and that if there is such a "a language–identity equation, it is one that evolves incessantly, and this, again, is a liberating, self-affirming idea for the exiled author, because exilic identity is itself in a state of constant, unpredictable evolution" (215).

joined all Haitians living outside of Haiti, in the *dyaspora*" (58). The way in which Danticat describes the *tenth department* identifies it as a heterotopia in the Foucauldian sense: a virtual, conceptual construct that acts as a stand-in for an absent geographic location, a deterritorialized Third Space available to migrants who can neither renounce the land of their birth or the place where they live their current lives. Of particular interest is Danticat's manifest coding of the word *dyaspora*; her choice to use kreyòl orthography concisely restricts the semantic field of a word used frequently in global postcolonial studies to the experiences of Haitian peoples, including her own.

The semiotic strategy in this short quotation epitomizes Danticat's response to a tension that pervades the relationship between her work and its popular and critical reception. Although Danticat's oeuvre appeals to and facilitates postcolonial practices of readership and criticism that assert a universalizing force on global literatures, her fiction nonetheless endeavors to retain or perhaps reclaim a sense of cultural specificity that requires, and indeed encourages, the reader to engage with localized culture in a more profound way. As Elena Machado Sáez argues in *Market Aesthetics: The Purchase of the Past in Caribbean Diasporic Fiction* (2015), writers of Caribbean historical fiction face a kind of pedagogical imperative to use their fiction to resist the universalizing pressures of the postcolonial literary marketplace, and that this pedagogical impulse

> has two facets, teaching historical facts alongside a historical vision. The factual drive of diasporic historical fiction addresses two problematics: the Caribbean trauma of a shift from colonialism to postcoloniality and the diasporic reality of a decontextualization brought about by globalization. By linking these two contexts of globalization and postcoloniality within their historical narratives, Caribbean diasporic writers aim to counter the erasure that is both local and global.

Here, I will suggest that the decontextualization that Sáez references is not simply the economic and political homogenization effected by neocolonialism, but also includes the discursive homogenization ironically practiced in postcolonial criticism. How, then, does the Caribbean writer in the postcolonial literary marketplace resist the decontextualizing force of the field in which they participate? In the case of Danticat, this involves a strategy of semiotic ciphering that requires culturally specific competence to decode. In other words, universalist postcolonial readerly practices fail to account for the full breadth of meaning expressed in her narratives.

I will begin my argument by making the case for another set of interrelated points that concern specifically how Danticat's historical vision aligns with these neo-universalist textual practices. The account of the history of the massacre that Danticat presents in her novel is one particularly adapted to the postcolonial priorities of her fictional enterprise. First, unlike its closest literary antecedent, Jacques Stephen Alexis' *Compère Général Soleil*, which presents its hero as emblematic of the Haitian national character more broadly, the main character in *The Farming of Bones* speaks as a stateless individual, an exile in both Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Second, the text self-consciously calls into question its own role as a Third Space of hybridization, displaying a distinct ambivalence towards the politics of translation that it both stages and enacts. Crucially, Danticat's presentation of the root causes of the violence coincide with postcolonial theory's turn away from the insistence on class and economics that characterized anticolonial Marxist analysis and towards a more thorough interrogation of the intersectional roles of racial, cultural, and economic difference.

The Divergent Historiographies of the Massacre

Haitian literature, like any other national literature, has long been invested in the task of exploring the experience of the historical moments that have shaped the country. While the

Haitian Revolution remains the most prominent of these, many Haitian novelists have turned their literary attention to the events of the lesser-known Massacre of 1937, known as *El Corte* in Spanish or *Kout kouto-a* in Kreyòl. In this incident, the dictator of the Dominican Republic, Raphaël Trujillo, ordered the massacre of tens of thousands of Haitian plantation workers, some of whom had been living in the Dominican Republic for generations and were thus, under the Dominican constitution, citizens. The massacre of 1937 has come to be known as the "Parsley Massacre" in English because Trujillo's soldiers used the Spanish word perejil as a shibboleth to differentiate Haitians from darker-skinned Dominicans. Danticat's narrative centers on the experiences of its main character and narrator, a Haitian woman named Amabelle Désir. Orphaned when her parents drown in the river separating the Dominican Republic and Haiti, she is taken into the home of a well-off Dominican of Spanish birth and becomes the maid and companion of his daughter, who, as we learn in the first chapters, is married to an Army officer slavishly loyal to Trujillo. The first dramatic incident of the novel arrives when this officer kills a Haitian cane-cutter while speeding on a country road. This initial act of accidental violence prefigures the intentional violence of the massacre, and the narrative of Amabelle's flight to Haiti comprises the second phase of the novel. The final phase, comprising the last third of the book, depicts Amabelle's struggle to come to terms with what she has experienced and establish a new life in Haiti.*The Farming of Bones* is far from the only novel to portray the massacre: Jacques Stephen Alexis's *Compère Général Soleil*, Freddy Prestol Castillo's *El Masacre se pasa a pie* (1974) and René Philoctète's *Le Peuple des terres mêlées* (1989) represent important predecessors.

In the eight decades following the massacre, historians in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and elsewhere have sought to establish the facts as well as the causes of this campaign of genocidal violence. Despite incomplete or questionable documentation supplemented with oral

histories collected from survivors and participants, they have managed to delineate salient factors and have proposed multiple interpretative frameworks through which different narratives of the events have emerged. While any thoroughgoing explanation of the massacre must acknowledge, as Suzy Castor writes, “la convergence de raisons diverses: le poids des facteurs géopolitiques, la question de la frontière dans son évolution, le phénomène migratoire avec toutes ses implications et le développement d'une idéologie marquée par un fort anti-haitianisme de la part de L'oligarchie dominicaine” (114), different historians have emphasized certain factors more than others. This interpretative diversity can be broadly categorized into two major strands: one that emphasizes the economic and imperialist catalysts of the massacre and one that instead highlights the cultural, linguistic, and racial differences that motivated the anti-Haitian rhetoric of the Dominican political elite. In the following argument, my purpose is to demonstrate that a parallel divergence exists in the historical fiction depicting the massacre. I will focus my analysis on a set of texts that I read as emblematic of it. Specifically, I will present Richard Lee Turits’ 2002 article “A World Destroyed, A Nation Imposed: The 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic” and Jacques Stephen Alexis’ 1955 novel *Compère Général Soleil* as representative of the narratives stressing political factors, whereas Suzy Castor’s 1988 *Le massacre de 1987 et les relations haïtiano-dominicaines* and Danticat’s *The Farming of Bones* epitomize a historical vision more invested in analyzing the intersecting regimes of difference at the heart of the genocide’s ideological heart.

It bears repeating that nearly all contemporary accounts of the massacre recognize the diversity of contributing factors, and certainly the question of difference looms large in all of them. Although Turits recognizes that “narrating the history of the Haitian massacre as a story of anti-Haitian racism resonates powerfully with contemporary issues in Haitian-Dominican relations and comparative themes in world history, namely, hostility toward lower-class

immigrants and the racial and ethnic conflict, ethnic cleansing, and genocide that marked the twentieth century" (595), he also cautions against interpretations that rely too heavily on paradigms of ethnic division that he sees as arising in the post-1937 period. Furthermore, he insists that the massacre was as much a result of internal conflicts within the Dominican Republic as pure xenophobia. He depicts the massacre as an attempt by the Dominican political elite to impose a vision of Dominican nationality on a culturally hybridized region. Turits' argument first establishes the cultural and linguistic plurality of the border regions before arguing that that the essentializing and racist anti-Haitian rhetoric of the Dominican elite would not have been espoused by the residents of the regions, ultimately concluding that the massacre was itself constitutive of the regimes of difference often used to explain it.

In contrast to narratives that portray the Haitian victims and survivors of the massacre as itinerant wage laborers working on large Dominican sugar plantations, Turits describes them as well integrated members of the local economies. The low population of the Dominican Republic's westernmost regions could not support the large-scale labor necessary for intensive sugar production, and abundance of uncultivated land afforded many residents the ability to work their own small- to medium-sized plots. Both ethnic Dominicans and Haitians frequently crossed the border for commercial and cultural reasons: to visit markets, attend schools, and perform religious rites in Haitian churches. Although he does note a certain degree of division of labor along ethnic lines in the larger towns, Turits nonetheless insists that such class hierarchies did not prevail in rural regions. "In short," he writes, "ethnic Haitians did not occupy an inferior position in the overall rural economy and society in the frontier. And Dominican frontier denizens had generally viewed Haitians neither as a poorer and subordinate group nor as outsiders" (598).

At the heart of Turits' argument is the premise that narratives of Haitian immigration to the Dominican Republic in the pre-1937 era generally assume the presence, at the outset, of a stable, distinctly Dominican population that predated immigration. In contrast, he asserts that "Haitians settling in the Dominican frontier helped constitute what was to a large extent the original society of this part of the country. From the start, that society was a bilingual, bicultural, and transnational one spanning the Haitian and Dominican sides of the border" (594). The emphasis here on bilingualism is of particular importance given how, in English-language histories, the question of linguistic difference has taken on an outsized role; that the genocide has come to be known as the "parsley massacre" in English indicates the imagined importance and efficacy of the shibboleth that features prominently in nearly all accounts of the massacre. The oral histories amassed by Turits and Lauren Derby paint a different picture, one of a region with porous borders, extensive intermarriage between Dominican and Haitian families, and fecund cross-linguistic exchange. As such, Turits describes the shibboleth as

> "less a genuine tactic for identifying Haitians than a theater of national linguistic difference separating Haitians and Dominicans. The perpetrators of the massacre slowed their killing machine for what was doubtless an often dubious test. Yet, however problematic or false it was, by acting as if this test was clear and efficacious, the killers imputed to their victims radical cultural difference that served to rationalize the violence and ethnicize images of the nation. (618)

In this narrative, the shibboleth becomes a means of acting out and reifying a nationalistic identitarian politics enunciated by the Dominican elite and enforced by the military hierarchy.

Turits' vision of a multicultural and bilingual border region in which ethnic Haitians lived in relative harmony with their Dominican neighbors corresponds to the description of the Dominican Republic furnished by Jacques Stephen Alexis's novel *Compère Général Soleil*. This

novel, which represents an important predecessor and influence for Danticat, nonetheless differs from *The Farming of Bones* in significant ways. In the third section of the novel, Alexis' proletarian hero Hilarion Hilarius emigrates to the Dominican Republic with his family in search of work and settles in the fictional town of Macoris.[5] Like Turits, Alexis describes the region as a place of cultural interchange:

> Cette région était curieuse. Les haïtiens y restaient bien haïtiens, ils pensaient toujours à la patrie lointaine, mais ils n'étaient plus les mêmes … ils avaient une façon de concevoir les choses, des gestes et des manières de faire particuliers. Les autres habitants de la région n'étaient pas non plus comme les autres dominicains. Ils parlaient un langage où le créole haïtien se mêlait au parler dominicain … ici se mélangeaient deux cultures nationales. Qui sait ce que réserve l'avenir ? Ces deux nations étaient sœurs … Quelque chose se nouait ici, par le travail, les chants, par les joies et les peines communs, qui finirait par faire un seul cœur et une seule âme à deux peuples enchaînés aux mêmes servitudes. (262-3)

Here, we see that Alexis' novelistic portrayal of Macoris conforms with that of Turits in three significant ways: the portrayal of a cultural hybridization resulting in formation that transcends defined national cultures, a multilingual, and furthermore, interlingual mode of communication, and an economic hierarchy in which the majority of Haitians and Dominicans share the same position as workers.

Although Alexis and Turits share a vision of the social, linguistic, economic, and cultural situation in the border regions, the same cannot be said for their motivations for writing. If we can assume that Turits writes as an academic attempting to ascertain a certain degree of historical

[5] Although there exists in reality a city in the Dominican Republic named Saint Pedro de Macoris, it lies in the southeastern end of the nation, far from the border. This real place does not correspond well with the fictional geography of the novel.

veracity concerning the events of the past, Alexis' ideological motivations are undoubtedly more literary and political in nature. A staunch Marxist who developed throughout his career a pan-Caribbean aesthetic that would prove fundamental to the development of the literary style of Marvelous Realism, Alexis's interest in depicting the 1937 massacre was not to establish an documentarily verifiable historical truth or to arouse nationalist anger, but to demonstrate that the burdens posed by imperialism and capitalism were (and are) shared by workers, regardless of their nationality, and that international solidarity could and should form the basis for an anti-imperialist politics and literary aesthetic. In his novel, Dominican characters are consistently portrayed in sympathetic terms; many assist Hilarion as he attempts to escape to Haiti with his family. The only antagonistic Dominicans that the novel presents are a *Trujillist* petty-bourgeois shopkeeper and the plantation guards, whom Alexis marks as agents of American imperialism by referring to them with the English term "watch-men." In *Compère Général Soleil,* Trujillo appears as nothing more than the lacky of a larger threat; rather than focus on the racial dimension of the massacre, it forcefully indicts American imperialism and capitalism as bearing the ultimate responsibility for the genocidal violence.

Alexis' understanding and depiction of the massacre thus align with the literary and political priorities of his larger oeuvre. Born in 1922, Alexis lived his early life during the American occupation of Haiti, a period of intense violence and exploitation that created and exacerbated systemic problems in Haitian governance that persist into the present. As a communist, Alexis understood international socialism as the sole means of combating colonialism, imperialism, and the oppression of people of color across the globe. As I have argued throughout this study, the contingencies of the present necessarily inflect depictions of the past in Caribbean historical narratives, and Alexis is no exception. In precisely the same way, Danticat's 1998 novel presents a narrative of the 1937 massacre adapted to the needs of her

postcolonial present. However, unlike Alexis, her novel focuses much more explicitly on the regimes of difference that both Turits and Alexis minimize. Before turning to Danticat's novel, I will consider an alternative academic account of the massacre that emphasizes the importance of understanding these regimes of difference: Suzy Castor's *Le massacre de 1987 et les relations haïtiano-dominicaines*. Although both Danticat and Castor both recognize the role of imperialism in Trujillo's anti-haitianism, they argue that the racist assumptions of the Dominican upper class hold equal weight as other, political or economic factors.

Castor begins her historical study with a direct acknowledgment of the pivotal role played by legacies of European colonialism and American imperialism, noting that both Haiti and the Dominican Republic were occupied by US marines in the early twentieth century. "Dès lors," she writes "les deux états gravitent dans l'orbite dans la puissance néo-coloniale américaine, dans le cadre de la dépendance et du sous-développement, inhérents à la domination externe" (27). Yet she immediately identifies the exportation of racist attitudes and racial hierarchies as one of the most salient effects of the occupation : "Le racisme inhérente à l'impérialisme et à l'idéologie du régime trujilliste durant plus de 30 ans à amené le préjugé anti-haïtien a sa plus grande expression durant l'occupation des États Unis et à l'époque de la dictature" (28). Furthermore, the persistence of this prejudice against phenotypes associated with black african heritage invariably influenced the historiography of the massacre itself. She argues, in 1988, that it was only recently that historians had successfully rejected a historiography of the massacre tainted by "subjectivisme" (28), a term she uses to designate the attitude of the first historical accounts, written by individuals complicit with the Trujillist government, that sought to justify the government's actions. In its place, the beginnings of a scientific study of the massacre, and Haitian-Dominican relations more broadly were just beginning to be delineated. For Castor, the "subjective" histories of the massacre share a fundamental understanding of the event as

having been motivated by the necessity of resolutely delimiting the border of the Dominican nation. These arguments, had, for decades, come to define popular understandings of the massacre: “De nombreux dominicains-collaborateurs trujillistes, historiens de diverses tendances et en general un important secteur de la popula-tion partagent ce point de vue: le but primordial et unique du massacre était de résoudre de manière définitive, le problème de la frontière” (82). Castor rejects this thesis. A purely political rational, she argues, defies logic in that the governments of Haiti and the Dominican Republic had, the year prior to the massacre, signed a treaty resolving a two-hundred-and-fifty-year long dispute as to the exact location of the border, and that the Trujillo-controlled Dominican press routinely issued pronouncements on the newfound friendship of the two nations (Turits, 610). If prior conflicts between Haiti and the Dominican Republic played out on the battlefield, the 1937 massacre responded not to outward aggression on the part of Haiti, but to the gradual demographic pressure. Castor concludes that “il est nécessaire de considérer cette question sous une autre perspective: celle des mouvements migratoires” (84).

Here we can observe the first essential difference between the historical accounts of Turits and Castor: whereas Turits understands ethnic Haitians to have constituted part of the original population of the border regions, Castor interprets their presence as a result of a process of migration that is itself subject to historical analysis. And whereas Turits describes these Haitians as relatively well-integrated members of their local communities, Castor appears far more skeptical as to their levels of cultural, linguistic, and economic hybridization. She describes the Haitian migrants as economically disfavored, largely uneducated (92), and relegated to specific sectors of the economy such as agricultural work, domestic servitude, and certain trades (91). Moreover, she writes that although they “habitaient en territoire dominicain,” they remained “entièrement intégrés à la culture haïtienne. De plus, leur adaptation linguistique n’était

que partielle. Les immigrants haïtiens, conscients d'être étrangers, ne manifestaient aucun désir de s'assimiler à la population dominicaine" (93). She expands somewhat ambiguously on the linguistic situation, writing that "jusqu'à 40 kilomètres à l'intérieur du territoire dominicain on parlait couramment aussi bien le créole que l'espagnol," but also cites a source claiming that "en 1935 dans une école de Dajabon 'sur trente-deux de ses élèves, vingt-sept ne savaient pas l'espagnol'" (95). Altogether, Castor depicts the ethnic Haitians living in the border regions as poorly integrated into local communities: economically disadvantaged, retaining a strong sense of cultural difference, and possessing only a partial fluency in the official language of their country of residence, they lived lives not unlike those of other migrant communities throughout the world in the twentieth century.

As I noted earlier, the other important feature that distinguishes Castor's argument from both the subjective perspective of prior Dominican historians and that of Turits is her account of the question of racial prejudice in the unfolding of the massacre. She proposes that the attempted genocide of the ethnic Haitians living in the border regions amounted to an attempt to reify the myth, propagated by the political elite, that the Dominican population was, if not white, nonetheless by in large free of African—and thus black—heritage. In particular, the use of the term "mestizo," which is used to describe people of mixed European and Native American ancestry, to designate the majority (66%) of the Dominican population in 1935 represented an attempt to "de faire passer ce pays pour une communauté nationale de population non-noire" (100-1).[6] Castor argues that anti-black bias, reinforced by the racist attitudes of the US Marines during their occupation of the country (1916-24), translated into an overt desire on the part of the political elite to differentiate the Dominican population from Haitians, and moreover to

[6] Castor notes that due to the extent of the indigenous genocide during the initial Spanish occupation of Hispañola, it would have been impossible that such a significant portion of the Dominican population would be of mixed white/indigenous heritage (99-101).

"améliorer la race" (103) by encouraging white European immigration and repressing the only statistically significant migration actually in progress—that of black Haitians. This leads Castor to conclude unhesitatingly that "On peut affirmer sans la moindre hésitation que dans le génocide de 1937 est intervenu le désir insensé inspiré par l'idée qu'en effaçant un 'conglomérat humain indésirable,' on créerait une barrière à la 'négrisation' du peuple dominicain" (104). Even if she stops short of arguing that anti-black racism constituted the primary cause of the genocide, it nonetheless represented an important element in a complex web of factors.

The importance of Castor's work cannot be overstated. *Le massacre de 1937 et les relations haïtiano-dominicaines* represents the first major historical work by a Haitian scholar to confront both the causes and the legacy of the massacre in the context of Haitian-Dominican relations since Jean Price-Mars' 1953 *La République d'Haïti et la République Dominicaine*. Moreover, its importance to the work of fiction at the center of this chapter, *The Farming of Bones*, is wholly unambiguous: Danticat cites it as an important source of historical material. As the subsequent reading will show, Danticat's presentation of the Dominican border regions aligns much more closely with that of Castor than that of either Turits or Alexis. Danticat's spatiohistorical imagination is not merely informed by a desire to elucidate little-known historical facts, but, much like Alexis, crucially conditioned by the political and literary concerns of the era in which she writes and publishes. In what follows, I will make the case that Danticat's historical *prise de position* plays determinate effects not solely on her depiction of the social, economic, and linguistic context of the massacre but also in the ways that space and place function within the thematic economy of the text.

Differential Geographies

In *The Farming of Bones*, novelistic space changes in relation to the three phases of the novel: the initial exposition in the Dominican town of Alegria, Amabelle's flight through the countryside back to Haiti, and her new life in Le Cap, Haiti. Each of these phases displays a distinct set of spatial relations, particularly with regard to the difference between private and public spaces. At the narratological level, this difference corresponds to the division between chapters in an uninflected font that recount the plot and the chapters in a bolded font that the narrator enunciates from a private space of reflection.[7]

Danticat's historical vision in the articulation of these spatial relationships becomes apparent in the first phase of the novel. Alegria's most salient spatial organizational structure is that of the compound: multi-family residencies with multiple buildings that resemble, in organization and function, the plantations of the colonial period. Nearly every scene in the first

[7] The first twenty-six chapters of the novel alternate between these short, bolded chapters and the overarching narrative. However, due to their brevity, the fact that the narrator does not change, and that they often provide contextual or background information on characters who appear in the more narrative chapters, they do not disrupt the apparent linearity of the plot. The twenty-seventh chapter breaks from this pattern: instead of presenting a short interlude in bolded text, the linear narrative of her flight proceeds. This continues for the rest of the novel, with only three bolded exceptions, a short passage in chapter thirty, and chapters thirty-seven and forty. This typographic and stylistic shift clearly correlates with events of the plot: the first scenes of the massacre appear in chapter twenty-six, and the narrative of Amabelle's flight from the town of Alegría where she lived close to the Haitian border contains no interludes whatsoever. As such, the pace of the narrative accelerates as the action rises and continues undiminished until Amabelle reaches the relative safety of Haitian national territory. The short bolded passage, located as it is in the chapter immediately following her arrival, thus signifies a return to both safety and the narrative time of the first phase of the novel. These bolded chapters and passages not only provide background information about the characters but also introduce, from the very beginning of the text, a retrospective temporality. Although not apparent during a first reading of the novel, subtle clues indicate that these interludes do not correspond chronologically with the narrative chapters they divide. For example, in the first chapter, when Sebastien tells Amabelle that he will take her "back into the cave across the river" (1), this statement situates the scene in Haiti, and consequently after Amabelle's return to her native land. Likewise, whereas the conjugation of the verbs in the unbolded chapters indicate that the action is taking place at a time prior to the narration, those of the bolded chapters are most often in the present, except when describing events that precede the novel's timeline entirely. In this sense, the temporality of the novel's narrative structure aligns with the retrospective position that any work of historical fiction must invariably occupy.

phase of the novel takes place in one of three places: The Ignacio household where Amabelle works, or the compounds owned by Don Gilbert and Don Carlos, where the cane cutters live. Already we can observe the prominence of spatial divisions between these three locations; for example, Don Gilbert's compound is enclosed by " a circular wall" and a "tall wrought-iron gate" that keep outsiders out. Not only does Danticat's description of Alegria almost exlusivly feature these closed, self-contained domestic spaces, it conspicuously lacks public spaces. At no point does the novel present a market, town square, restaurant or café, or any other place in which public life occurs. The only interactions between characters not situated within the domestic space of the three compounds occur on the road, and most often end in danger, confrontation, or death. Furthermore, these compounds themselves show strong internal divisions: in each, the spacious and solidly-constructed homes of the owners contrast with the shacks where workers sleep. These shacks, with dirt floors, thatched roofs, lacking doors and windows and with minimal furnishings, nonetheless provide a measure of intimacy and privacy and the setting for pivotal character interactions.

This fragmentation and division of the compounds corresponds with Danticat's portrait of society divided on racial, linguistic, and economic lines. Like Castor's history of the massacre, Danticat's novel brings to the forefront the question of the role of race and racial discrimination in the motivations for the massacre. In the opening chapter of *The Farming of Bones,* Danticat presents the primary protagonists, Amabelle Désir and Sebastien Onius, in what the reader will later determine to be a dream sequence or extemporal hiatus expressed through the perspective of Amabelle, the sole narrator. Notably, this presentation of the characters immediately highlights their skin color. Amabelle describes Sebastien as appearing "lavishly handsome by the dim light of my castor oil lamp, even though the cane stalks have ripped apart most of the skin on his shiny black face" (1). Despite the physical scars that years of working as a cane cutter has left on his

body, Amabelle affirms the essential beauty of his physical form. Sebastien likewise invokes both the blackness and beauty of Amabelle, saying to her "look at your perfect little face … your perfect little shape, your perfect little body, a woman child with deep black skin, all the shades of black in you" (3). These lines, which immediately and indelibly mark the characters as black people, inaugurate a pattern in the novel wherein the skin color of major characters is noted and commented on by the narrator.

This pattern becomes apparent in the following chapter when Amabelle's employer, Señora Valencia Ignacio, gives birth to twin children: first, a boy who, like "Señora Valencia … was coconut-cream colored, his cheeks and forehead the blush pink of water lilies" (9), and a girl whose skin "was a deep bronze, between the colors of tan Brazil nut shells and black salsify" (11). Although the narrator's metaphorical language avoids direct comparison, the phenotypic difference between the twins is clear: Valencia has given birth to one very light-skinned and one very dark-skinned child. She describes her daughter as having the profile of "a true Indian queen" (29) and worries she may be mistaken for Haitian, whereas the son is named Raphaël after Trujillo. Furthermore, the daughter, Rosalinda, nearly dies during birth because an umbilical cord is wrapped around her neck, "as if the other one tried to strangle her" (19). The symbolism of the birth is unambiguous: the light-skinned son, who can variably represent the either European colonialism or the Trujillist dictatorship posed a mortal danger to the daughter, who is marked as the black or indigenous racial other.

The discrepancy in color between the two children provokes some consternation in the Ignacio household. When the Doctor, Javier, remarks to Valencia's father, Papi, that the daughter has "a little charcoal behind the ears," he immediately responds, proclaiming the racial purity of his family line:

> ‘It must be from her father’s family,’ Papi interjected, his fingertips caressing the skin of his sun-scorched white face. ‘My daughter was born in the capital of this country. Her mother was of pure Spanish blood. She can trace her family to the Conquistadores, the line of El Almirante, Crisobal Colòn. And I, myself, was born near a seaport in Valencia, Spain.’ (17-8)

Eliding the fact that Christopher Columbus was not of Spanish blood, Papi’s interjection responds to an acute anxiety concerning racial heritage. The daughter’s dark skin tone raise the specter of impurity or impropriety at some point in the family history, a notion Papi has no interest in entertaining. Doctor Javier understands this clearly, remarking to Amabelle that “my passions are language and lineage … That little Rosalinda teaches me something when I look at her” (20). Although generally depicted as a sympathetic character, the doctor’s fascination with language and lineage, two of the most prominent aspects of the regimes of difference described by Castor, suggest an atmosphere in which the slightest indication of difference is exposed to scrutiny.

Both Papi’s reaction to the doctor’s assertion and Valencia’s characterization of her daughter as an indian queen correspond with Castor’s description of the desire on the part of upper-class Dominicans to deny the possibility of black African genealogy among the Dominican people, both by insisting on the essentially European culture of Dominicans and, implausibly, that non-whites in the country were descended not from African slaves but exclusively people of Native American and Spanish heritage. A striking example of this rhetoric of racial difference comes near the end of the novel, when Amabelle encounters a priest, Father Romain, who was arrested and tortured in a prison during the massacre, and consequently loses his mind. While in prison, Father Romain was forced to say phrases of racists propaganda that he then repeats mindlessly during his conversation with Amabelle: “‘On this island, walk too far in

either direction and people speak a different language' continued Father Romain with aimless determination. 'Our motherland is Spain; theirs is darkest Africa'" (260). This scene testifies to the attempts on the part of the Dominican government to inculcate a regime of racial difference that could serve as a justification for genocidal violence. Moreover, it underlines the government's desire to establish clearly delineated spatial divisions between different racial and linguistic groups.

The differences between Haitians and Dominicans in Danticat's novel are not, however, merely racial. Again, Danticat's portrayal of the border region conforms to Castor's with regard to economic inequality. The economy of the town, Alegría, where the first phase of the novel takes place is dominated by the production of sugar; although Danticat differentiates it from the larger-scale sugar plantations on the eastern side of the island, sugar production in Alegría nonetheless requires a large body of agricultural labor, provided mostly by Haitian immigrants. The vast majority of Haitian characters are either cane workers like Sebastien or domestic servants like Amabelle, and correspondingly, most Dominican characters, like Amabelle's employers, are wealthy bureaucrats, plantation owners, or professionals. None of the novel's Dominican characters work in the fields, and although the text does acknowledge that there were Dominicans who did, it does not represent them directly. Furthermore, it specifically marks cane work as being the domain of the foreigner: Mercedes, a "peasant woman with city ways" who runs a food stand, denigrates Dominican cane workers, saying "to anyone who asked" that they "have no reason to live like pigs. This is their country" (105). The statement implies that those who work in the cane live like pigs and that this life is only fit for foreigners and specifically Haitians. Danticat provides some exceptions to these general trends: for example, the Dominican characters Juana and Luis also work as servants in the Ignacio household and two Haitian characters, Don Gilbert and Dona Sabine, are well-off landowners.

The migrant Haitian workers live on the margins of broader society; in the first section of the novel, Sebastien resolves to quit the cane-cutting life, telling Amabelle "Sometimes the people in the fields, when they're tired and angry, they say we're an orphaned people … They say we are the burnt crud at the bottom of the pot. they say some people don't belong anywhere and that's us. They say we are a group of vwayajè, wayfarers" (56). Caught in the tight web of spatial delineations that define and circumscribe the novel's geography, Haitians like Sebastien and Amabelle experience a form of lived placelessness; beyond the walls of their flimsy shacks, they have no territory to call home either in the Dominican Republic or in Haiti. But the text makes it clear that this experience of placelessness is not solely a function of the migrant workers' poverty but also depends on the racial, linguistic, and bureaucratic divisions that prevent them from becoming fully-integrated members of the community. the text acknowledges that some of the Haitian residents of Alegría have fared better than the cane workers, who contrast their lives with those of their more established compatriots, whom Amabelle refers to as "non-vwayajè haitians." Unlike the cane workers, who live in rudimentary shacks, these stable residents inhabit "houses made of wood or cement. They had colorful galleries, zinc roofs, spacious gardens, cactus fences with green vines crawling between the cactus stems … They were people whose families had been in Alegría for generations: landowners, farmers, metalworkers, stonemasons, dressmakers, shoemakers … we regarded them as people who had their destinies in hand" (68). However, despite the relative ease of their material existence, even these well-off Haitians were ostracized from Dominican civil society. Outside an overcrowded one-room schoolhouse, a woman complains of the lack of educational opportunities for her child: "I pushed my son out of my body here, in this country" she says. "My mother too pushed me out of her body here. Not me, not my son, not one of us has ever seen the other side of the border. Still, they won't put our birth papers in our palms so my son can have knowledge placed into his

head by a proper educator in a proper school," to which a man responds, "To them we are always foreigners, even if our grandmèmès' grandmèmès' were born in this country … This makes it easier for them to push us out when they want to" (69). Although it is tempting to read the presence of these stable, long-term ethnic Haitian residents as evidence of a kind of Haitian middle-class, an economically integrated section of Dominican society, the state's refusal to recognize them as citizens nonetheless indicates their precarity, a fact apparent to Amabelle who expresses worry at the thought that even the settled Haitian residents "were unsure of their place in the valley" (70).

That these details crop up in *The Farming of Bones* reinforces my argument that Castor's historical analysis accords with Danticat's fictional portrayal. Whereas Turits notes that "a large number of the children" attending new schools set up by the Dominican government between 1932 and 1935 "were ethnic Haitians" (609), Castor insists that these Haitians lacked educational opportunities and were largely illiterate. Moreover, where he stresses that ethnic Haitians nominally had citizenship under the Dominican constitution (590), Castor argues that they lacked nationality of any kind:

> Selon le principe du Droit International en vigueur en Haïti et en République Dominicaine 'toute personne a droit à une nationalité et ne peut appartenir à deux nations à la fois.' Dans le cas d'union entre Dominicain et Haïtien ou entre Haïtiens, leurs enfants, Haïtiens d'origine, mais Dominicains de naissance, n'avaient de fait aucune option en ce qui concerne leur nationalité, en raison de la clandestinité ou de l'ignorance dans laquelle vivaient leurs parents. Légalement, ils n'appartenaient à aucune nation et par conséquent constituaient un groupe d'apatrides. (93)

This is precisely the situation in which Amabelle finds herself. Reflecting on her own situation, she thinks to herself, "I had no papers to show that I belonged either here or in Haiti where I was

born" (71). Caught between two nations, Amabelle can legally claim neither Haiti nor the Dominican Republic as hers.

Caught in the interstice between two nationalities, Amabelle, and by extension, the novel itself, locate itself between overlapping linguistic regimes. The politics of language play an essential role at both the intra- and extradiegetic levels of the text. The crucial role of language becomes apparent in the epigraph. Taken from the book of Judges (12:4-6), the verses recount the biblical origin of the term shibboleth: the men of Gilead, having defeated the invading Ephraimites, take the ford of the river Jordan and force anyone wishing to cross to a test of their phonetic competency. Anyone unable to pronounce the initial consonant as the Gileadites pronounced it (which the Ephraimites could not) was killed. The choice of this passage as epigraph foreshadows and and underlines the importance of linguistic difference that will arise later in the text: For the victims and survivors of the massacre, the inability to normatively pronounce the Spanish "j" and trill the "r" will result in subjection to horrific violence. Language thus becomes a powerful marker of otherness and a key factor in establishing the difference necessary to Trujillist identitarian politics.

At the intradiegetic level of the text, language use, and specifically within the Dominican border regions, appears diverse and fluid. Within the text, the reader encounters words and phrases in Iberian Spanish, Dominican Spanish, Latin, French, Kreyòl, and a localized creole of Dominican Spanish and Kreyòl. Many characters are bilingual or multilingual, such as Amabelle who speaks Spanish to her employers and Kreyòl with her Haitian compatriots, or Doctor Javier who, as the narrator tells us "spoke Kreyòl like a Haitian, with only a slight Dominican cadence" (79). However, their speech is not reproduced mimetically, that is, the overwhelming majority of dialogue has been translated directly by the narrator into English. In certain instances, multiple languages appear within the space of a single phrase, such as when Amabelle describes the

myriad of ways the Haitians used "pèsi, perejil, parsely" (62), or when the Kreyòl phrase "kòt a kòt" (145) appears, untranslated, in a Haitian character's speech. Short phrases and exclamations often appear in these diverse languages, often but not always translated subsequently in the main body of the text.

The first of these markers of linguistic difference appears in the second chapter, when the reader is introduced to the character of Señora Valencia, whose title, spelled with the characteristic "ene" (or the "n" with a tilde), identifies her as a Spanish-speaking Dominican. Her first words of dialogue confirm this: "'¡Ay, no!' the señora shouted through her clenched grinding teeth. 'It's too soon. Not for two months yet.'" (5). Here, both the exclamation in Spanish, and use of the inverted exclamation mark the beginning of the quotation, reinforce the introduction of linguistic difference, not merely between Valencia and the narrator but also between Valencia and the English-speaking reader unaccustomed to this particularity of Spanish punctuation. While such exclamations largely go untranslated, phrases, especially those in Kreyòl, almost always are, such as when Amabelle tells the reader that Sebastien considers his murdered friend Joël to be lucky "to no longer be part of the cane life, travay tè pou zo, the farming of bones" (55). This particular instance of translation resonates outside the frame of the text, informing the reader that the title of the work itself is a translation and thus highlighting the fundamentality of the text's translingual function.

Despite the predominance of English, the text nonetheless explicitly demonstrates the process of linguistic creolization at work in the border region. Early in the novel, the narrator recounts how the sight of pigeons always makes Sebastien say "'Ay, pobrecita mamman mwen.' My poor mother" (25). What at first the reader might assume to be Kreyòl in fact represents a hybrid locution: the first two words "Ay, probecita" are Spanish whereas the latter two "mamman mwen" are in Kreyòl. But for Amabelle, this intermixing of languages does not

represent some kind of happy hybridization of those migrants who retain their original identity while adapting to the culture of their new home. Rather, it symbolizes an uncertain and uncomfortable in-betweenness, a site of linguistic un-belonging. She tells the reader that this interlanguage is a "tangled language of those who always stuttered as they spoke, caught as they were on the narrow ridge between two nearly native tongues" (69). Here, the Third Space of enunciation provides no way out of the dichotomy of Dominican and Haitian language and instead traps those who inhabit it; the multilingual practice of the characters will be challenged, and indeed, destroyed by the monolingual politics imposed by the Dominican government.

In the second phase of the novel, Amabelle decides to flee the rapidly-collapsing hybrid spaces she inhabits with her fellow Haitians for the border. Once Amabelle takes to the road private spaces disappear completely. This section of plot consists of a series of increasingly dangerous episodes and encounters along the road toward Haiti: she meets other refugees, passes through mountain village filled with Trujillo's supporters, and finds a Haitian home in the hills whose owners have been lynched. In one instance she encounters a Dominican woman and her sister searching for her Haitian fiancé who has been taken by the Dominican army. Despite the similarity of their plight, no real solidarity develops between the Dominican sisters and the other members of the group; as they near Dajabon, Wilner, one of the Haitian refugees insists that they part ways, saying "this is their country. Let them find the border themselves. They can go to any village in these mountains, and the people will welcome them" (183). In contrast with the *Compère Général Soleil*, in which Dominicans repeatedly aid Hilarion during his flight towards Haiti, in *The Farming of Bones*, no form of intercommunal solidarity develops between the Dominican and Haitian refugees. Furthermore, Wilner's rejection of the Dominican sisters reflects how, in this phase of the novel, the only public space available to the Haitians, the road, is more the facilitator of dispersion and migratory flows than of community building.

The collapsing of Amabelle's hybrid cultural space comes to its dramatic head as Amabelle and her travelling companions approach the Haitian border. While waiting in the public square of Dajabon for their travelling companions to return, Amabelle and two other Haitian characters attempt to remain inconspicuous, but a group of Dominicans detect their otherness and subject them to the shibboleth while, ironically, stifling their voices by shoving parsley into their mouths. Beaten by the crowd, Amabelle is hit in the mouth by a thrown stone. When they are finally rescued by friends, she tries to express her amazement, but her "voice came out in one long grunt" (195), unintelligible to anyone. For Amabelle, the ordeal of the shibboleth deprives her of the ability to communicate in any language, leaving her mute: all of her dialogue in the rest of the chapter and most of the subsequent one is qualified with phrases like "I tried to say" or "I mumbled," but in each instance her "words ran together, blurred and incomprehensible" (199). But this episode of muting will be overshadowed by an even darker one: as her group crosses the river, Amabelle is forced to stifle the screams of her travelling companion Odette by putting her hand over her mouth, effectively drowning her. Odette dies on the Haitian side of the riverbank, and "with her parting breath, she mouthed in Kreyòl 'pèsi'" (203). Amabelle's physical loss of voice at the climax of the massacre also marks a turning point in the thematic portrayal of language in the novel--once she returns to Haiti, as Stefan Helgesson and Christina Kullberg write, "the fluid process of translingualism is suddenly arrested as the referential function of language is suspended," and the importance of ethno-linguistic distinctions becomes less important.

Amabelle's return to Haiti, seventeen years after her parents drown in the river attempting the same border crossing, indicates the transition into the final phase of the novel, in which she adapts to the new life she must make for herself in the aftermath of the massacre. After returning to Le Cap, the city where she was born, she takes refuge in the home of Man

Rapadou, Yves' mother, whose dwelling consists of a series of rooms set around a central courtyard. Man Rapadou's compound, although superficially similar to the plantation compounds Amabelle knew in Alegria, corresponds more closely to the model of the *lakou*, a system of social and spatial organization that evolved in post-independence Haiti as a means of resisting attempts to return the country to the plantation model of agriculture that dominated the colonial period.[8] Despite efforts by early leaders such as Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe to maintain large plantations and to pay cane workers salaries in exchange for their labor, the Haitian peasantry demanded land reform, and many plantations were divided into small plots that the peasants farmed communally.[9] This allowed for the development of what Gérard Barthélémy calls a "système égalitaire sans état" (28), in which individuals, as part of a collective based on the nucleus of the family, live in an anti-hierarchical equality, protected from the coercive forces of government and capitalist economics.[10] In Man

[8] In *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (2012), Laurent Dubois provides a succinct definition of the *lakou* and its importance: "a *lakou* (from the French *la cour*, or courtyard) refers to a group of houses--sometimes including a dozen or more structures, and usually owned by an extended family--gathered around a common yard. But the *lakou* also came to represent specific social conventions meant to guarantee each person equal access to dignity and individual freedom" (107). Although primarily a social form present in the rural Haitian interior, the analogy between Man Rapadou's household and the *lakou* can be sustained because, as Dubois notes, "many of those who live in urban areas were born in the countryside, and they have imported elements of the *lakou* setup to the cities as well" (107-8). Gonzalez concurs, writing that internal migration to the cities in the 20th century brought typically rural social practices such as the *lakou* (253). In addition to the works I cite directly, see also Bastien, Rémy. *Le Paysan haïtien et sa famille: Vallée De Marbial*. Paris: Karthala, 1985, and Moral, Paul. *Le Paysan haïtien: Étude sur la vie rurale en Haïti.* Port-au-Prince: Éditions Fardin, 1978.

[9] James G. Leyburn writes in *The Haitian People* (1944) that during the period of reunification under the rule of Pétion and subsequently Boyer, the large estates kept intact by earlier leaders were broken up and distributed. "By 1942," he writes "it is probable that not a single plantation of the size common in colonial times was still intact. However, the portioning out of the large estates did not always proceed via institutionalized processes; Leybrun notes that "only a third of the people owned their land" (76).

[10] In *Maroon Nation: A History of Revolutionary Haiti,* Johnhenry Gonzalez explains that the social and economic practices that developed in rural Haiti in the 19th century correspond with a "maroon pattern of social life" that was defined by the conscious rejection of globalizing modernity. He argues that "rather than struggling to express their collective aspirations through

Rapadou's lakou, Both Amabelle and Yves support themselves without formal employment: Yves grows food crops on his family's land and Amabelle becomes a seamstress, mending garments for members of the community. Whereas in the Dominican Republic, both of their lives were temporally structured by the rhythms of work imposed by their employers, back in Haiti, they find the freedom to live their lives as they see fit.

However, if Amabelle finds autonomy and a degree of freedom in Man Rapadou's lakou, she also never integrates into Haitian society. The autonomous, stateless model of the lakou implies a separation that precludes the possibility of participation in national civil society, and several episodes in the final third of the novel suggest the impossibility for Amabelle of publicly communicating her experience.[11] Even though Amabelle eventually regains her ability to speak, it is as if there is no one to listen to her testimony. The first example of this arises when Amabelle goes to see a justice of the peace who is gathering the testimonials of the survivors of the massacre and supposedly distributing money to those who can document their experience. However, when she arrives at the police building where the justice of the peace is working, they encounter a group of more than a thousand people waiting to be heard. When the justice of the peace declares that he can hear no more stories, the crowd returns for sixteen consecutive days

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participating in nascent public institutions," the former slaves of Saint-Domingue chose to avoid "the repressive reach of the state and carved out semi- autonomous rural farms and communities that partially recalled the evasive strategies of colonial-era maroons. Rather than toiling for an enlightened, patriotic bourgeoisie and helping to create a powerful new nation-state with robust insti- tutions, the Haitian masses resisted their haughty rulers by creating a separate and parallel system of economic and cultural institutions. These included a form of extended family farm compound called the *lakou*, the bustling network of decentralized public marketplaces, and a host of African-derived religious assemblies and secret societies" (44).

[11] For Luc-Joseph Pierre, writing in *Haïti: Vodou, lakou, esclavage et identité*, the development of the *lakou* system resulted from "l'éclatement, l'émiettement de la société en bandes, factions militaires, castes et clans" (77) in early postindependent Haiti, and that the "faible intégration" of the former slaves, or *cultivateurs*, led to a form of social *marronage* that rejected the modernity of new Haitian state in favor of traditional, autonomous modes modes of life. If the *lakou* thus represents a social formation resulting from the rejection of the overarching *polis*, Amabelle's retreat into Man Rapadou's household constitutes a similar form of social *marronage.*

until a police sergeant announces that "there would be no more testimonials taken" (235), and the crowd angrily sacks the police station. Amabelle's story goes unheard by the government. Next, she goes to see a priest at the Cathedral in Le Cap. After waiting to see the priest, he tells her that he cannot listen to her story: "You've come to talk to me about the slaughter?" he asks, "To all those who tell us of lost relations, we can offer nothing, save for our prayers and perhaps a piece of bread. So we have stopped letting them tell us these terrible stories. It was taking all our time, and there is so much other work to be done" (254). No public institution can offer Amabelle a chance to testify to her experience, let alone help her recover her loved ones or her life. Yves effectively summarizes the text's pessimistic attitude towards the possibility of communication when he tells Amabelle, before she goes to see the priest that ""I know what will happen … You tell the story, and then it's retold as they wish, written in words you do not understand, in a language that is theirs, and not yours." (246). But for Amabelle, caught as she is "on the narrow ridge between two nearly native tongues," what language could be said to be truly hers? Yves' doubts as to the possibility of testifying to the massacre, in written form, extend past the diegetic frame of the novel and pose a challenge to the novel itself: Can Danticat's novel, written in the tongue of the "Yanki" oppressor, communicate any authentic truth of the experience of Haitian women born generations before the author?

Danticat's "Diasporic Lens"

If the text appears overwhelmingly pessimistic as to the capacity of literature to convey personal experience in translation and, in archetypal postcolonial fashion, offers a self-critique of its language politics, it nonetheless does suggest that Amabelle will be understood, by at least one person. Man Rapadou's *lakou* provides the same kind of intimate, domestic space that allowed for interpersonal communication in the first phase of the novel. During their first

conversation, Man Rapadou tells Amabelle "you can call me Man Rapadou … I know your story" (227). Although Amabelle expresses some skepticism towards this declaration, saying "Which story of mine did she know? What story was she told? (227), the two characters grow close, and Man Rapadou takes on the role of a surrogate mother figure for Amabelle, who was orphaned in childhood. Amabelle spends her days in Man Rapadou's compound, where the two develop a confidence in one another. Before Amabelle goes to see the justice of the peace, Man Rapadou again insists that she understands what Amabelle went through: "'You don't need a justice of the peace,' she said. 'You don't need a confessor. I, Man, Rapadou, I know your tale'" (244). Here, the transmission of experience seems to occur instantaneously, and moreover, outside of linguistic exchange. The text never directly presents the two characters speaking about the massacre, but it does reinforce the bond of confidence between them when Man Rapadou reveals to Amabelle that she had intentionally poisoned her husband, a secret she had told to no one else. Furthermore, Man Rapadou's name, which could be translated as "Madame Sugar," links her to a character in a dream Amabelle recounts earlier in the novel. In her dream, the Sugar Woman wears a locked collar and a muzzle, artifacts of the physical violence used to control slaves during the colonial period, and has widely been interpreted, as Elvira Pulitano writes, as a symbol of "the ancestral history of the Middle Passage" (10). Through her connection to this oneiric figure of ancestral memory, Man Rapadou represents both a source and recipient of memory.

Man Rapadou and Amabelle form the same genealogical structure of memory transmission that features prominently in much of Danticat's work, for example in both *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *The Dew Breaker*. However, given the historical context of *The Farming of Bones*, the short story "Nineteen Thirty Seven," published in her 1996 collection *Krik? Krak!* represents an immediate predecessor. In that story, a young woman makes several visits to see

her mother in prison after she has been arrested for witchcraft. The reader learns that both mother and daughter belong to a "secret" society of women who, through a ritual of questioning and answering, transmit the memory of the massacre through a matrilineal genealogy. Évelyne Trouillot comments on this theme, which pervades Danticat's work, writing that her texts "refer to the past, and sometimes to history. Family memory, from one generation to the next, the thread that passes on legends, taboos, values plagued by clashes with reality" (170). In *The Farming of Bones*, Danticat's use of an intradiegetic narrator positions the reader as the privileged recipient of this intergenerational transmission of memory that raises the scope of Amabelle's personal experience to that of history.[12] The scope of history communicates only at the scale of personal experience, related in the intimacy and confidence of the domestic space. Man Rapadou's *lakou* becomes the site of a matrilineal counter-history that contrasts with the inaccessible masculinist genealogies of traditional Haitian history.[13]

Here, the novel's use of intradiegetic-homodiegetic narration comes to the fore, in that it frames the narrative as a kind of (albeit fictional) testimony. This testimonial aspect of her writing likewise serves to better inscribe the experience of women in the massacre's historiography. As Myriam J. A. Chancy writes, *The Farming of Bones* continues "in the

[12] Braziel concurs, noting that Danticat's historical intervention must be understood through a gendered lens, as her stories "seek to reclaim historical losses and to refigure Haitian women back into the national body and its diasporic offspring. Through alterbiographical accounts, Danticat evokes the suggestive power of genealogy for history and the writing of lives through literary genres while also resisting the dominant power relations traditionally mapped through genealogy, genre, and even autobiography" (173).

[13] Here, Parisot's connects the relationship between this feminin, generational mode of historical transmission and its masculine analogue with an overarching pattern in postcolonial literatures. "Quant à l'incorporation du politique," she writes, "c'est une idée désormais admise, dans le champ des littératures postcoloniales, caribéennes en particulier, que l'écriture féminine opposerait aux constructions épiques des écrivains masculins l'individualité, l'intime et l'intériorité, avatars de 'l'éthique du care,' et au discours historique, la mémoire collective, même si cette délégation/relégation à la 'parole de nuit' tend à confondre espace féminin et espace de la culpabilité" (191).

trajectory of her previous work, situating her female characters within community and yet demonstrating that women are not lost in those communities but actors within them" (131). In *The Farming of Bones*, this community aligns not with the overwhelmingly masculine-encoded space of the nation state but with the familial community centered in Man Rapadou's *lakou*.[14] At first, this configuration of a hyper-specific space of communication and a reduction of the scope of the world-historical to the expression of personal experience might suggest merely the logical extension of the ideals of the particularist phase of Caribbean literature. However, Danticat's novel is, at both the diegetic and thematic levels, a narrative of migration and spatial indetermination. Amabelle's recurrent insistence that she does not belong in Haiti, or that Haiti does not belong to her, marks her as an eternal "vwayajè," a *dyasporic* Haitian whose claim to her national territory remains ephemeral and contingent. In this way, Amabelle resembles the author, whose homeland is the floating, ideological, and heterotopic space of the tenth department.

As I have demonstrated, the inscription of space and time in *The Farming of Bones* shares the predominant features of what I call the neo-universalist turn in Caribbean literature. Deeply influenced by notions of cultural hybridity, self-reflexivity, and intersectional difference that serve as thematic touchstones in the global field of postcolonial studies, neo-universalist narrative turns its attention to the lived experience of space and time of the Caribbean subject. This turn towards the individual and the biographical entails a return towards more linear temporalities that, because of their reduced scope, do not make the same claims to world-

[14] Munro pushes back on the idea that the two gendered spheres of the feminin/personal and masculine/political must necessarily be understood to be in opposition: "Danticat's work explores both the personal and the political, so that she personalizes politics and, conversely, politicizes the personal. Although Danticat's female characters often inhabit the limited space of the home, they are always susceptible to the effects of the outside, to the historical and political shifts, to the migrations and displacements that inevitably shape their experiences" (220).

historical import such as we saw with writers like James or Sainville. The focus on individual experience likewise allows the staging, both outside and inside the region, of the kind of transcultural exchange and creolization that Glissant theorizes. In this sense, neo-universalist literature can be read not simply as a reaction to particularism or as the imposition of a global postcolonial aesthetic on the Caribbean, but as the logical continuation of Caribbean spatiohistorical discourse.

Although at the beginning of this chapter I argue that *The Farming of Bones* serves as an emblematic text of Caribbean narrative in the era of postcolonial literature, it cannot speak to the experiences and literatures of the entirety of the second Caribbean diaspora, which, as Brinda Mehta correctly asserts, should be understood as a set of "distinctive yet intersecting diasporas" (1). For Mehta, a new generation of writers like Danticat, Évelyne Trouillot, and Laure Moutoussamy, as well as more established authors like Maryse Condé or Gisèle Pineau, distinguish their work from that of their predecessors through their use of a "diasporic lens" (1) which allows them to transcend the geographic, linguistic, and ideological borders operative in both the Négritude and Créolité movements. Although Mehta focuses specifically on women's writing and how it responds to the masculinist literary histories of the Caribbean, the point she makes concerning the importance of the diasporic lens is crucial to my own, spatially-oriented reading. In the final chapter of this study, I will consider the work of another writer and member of the Haitian diaspora: Dany Laferrière. Although his work differs in fundamental ways from that of Danticat, both the contrasts and similarities that arise between their respective literary endeavours will serve to illustrate the pervasiveness of neo-universalist textual strategies in contemporary Caribbean literature.

Chapter Six

The (Haitian) Writer in Spite of Himself:
Dany Laferrière's Postcolonial Paradox

Dany Laferrière, born Windsor Kléber Laferrière in 1953 in Port-au-Prince, has, like Danticat, become one of the most famous contemporary authors of Haitian origin. Named for his father, a journalist and former mayor of Port-au-Prince who was forced into exile by François Duvalier, Laferrière spent much of his early childhood under the care of his grandmother Da in the town of Petit-Goâve outside the Haitian capital. Laferrière returned to Port-au-Prince in 1964, where he completed his secondary education and began a career as a journalist. In 1976, Laferrière fled Haiti for Montréal after the assassination of his freind and colleague Gasner Raymond at the hands of Jean-Claude Duvalier's tonton-macoutes. After years spent working as a laborer, Laferrière published his first novel, *Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer*, in 1985. An immediate success, the novel launched Laferrière's career and established his reputation as provocative, original, and fiercely independent literary persona. Over the next fifteen years, he published nine more of his semi-autobiographical novels, completing in the year 2000 the ten-volume cycle of novels that Laferrière refers to as his "autobiographie américaine." Laferrière's literary production has remained constant into the twenty-first century, and like his bibliography, his international renown has continued to grow. In particular, his 2009 novel *L'Énigme du retour*, won him the prestigious Prix Médicis among other literary prizes. In 2013, Laferrière was elected to the Académie Française, cementing his status as a preeminent french-language author.

Unlike the other authors whose work I examine in this study, Laferrière's fiction does not explicitly concern itself with the (re)writing of the Caribbean past. In an interview with Raj Kamal Jha in 1990, Laferrière explained that unlike "other Third World immigrant writers who get nostalgic, I am not tied to history … My ideology is the ideology of witnessing the present. I want to tell the reader what it is like now, not what it had been in the glorious past or should be like in the dreamy future." Throughout the multitude of interviews and essays in which Laferrière discusses his relationship to the literary field or marketplace, he consistently reiterates his refusal of any ideological responsibilities as an immigrant, a person of color, or any other identitary marker. This refusal amounts to an explicit rejection of what Saez calls the pedagogical imperative, or the responsibility to both convey facts about the colonial and neo-colonial past and cultivate among metropolitan readers a receptivity to the historical revision enacted by Caribbean letters.[1] Despite Laferrière's ostensible refusal of the role of spokesperson for the Haitian diaspora and frequently-expressed hostility towards the idea of being classified as a postcolonial writer, his novels have been predominantly read in relation to the themes of exile and diaspora.[2]

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[1] For Munro, Laferrière's rejection of national affiliation and the presumed task of glorifying or defending his country of origin marks his work as "audaciously postmodern" and a stark departure from that of authors like Alexis or René Depestre: "In Laferrière's work we are no longer witness to the traumatically dis- oriented individual caught in the modernist dramas of exile-induced uncertainty and identitary chaos, but are invited to question the very notion of identity itself; binary oppositions of here and there, self and other, are replaced by a postmodern vision of identity as an ever-evolving, contingent, and constructed phenomenon" (178). Despite his insistence on the term "postmodern," we can nonetheless clearly read in Munro's theses the familiar gestures of postcolonial criticism: the rejection of binaries, stable identity, and nation-states.

[2] Although the content of his novels quite obviously lends itself to this kind of critical attention, it should also be noted that the theme of exile had already become a major touchstone in Haitian literature by the time Laferrière's career begins. Léon-François Hoffman, in his 1995 study *Littérature d'Haiti* that "pendant les trois décennies du régime duvaliériste, la plupart des oeuvres haïtiennes marquantes ont été publiées en disapora" (183), a historical process that lead to the "élargissement de la thématique" (185) of Haitian literature. Although Hoffman's

If Laferrière refuses to elaborate explicitly political or ideological vision of history in his works, he nonetheless indulges frequently in nostalgic re-living of the past in the present.[3] The autobiographical tendencies in his writing necessarily result in the creation of representations of the past which correspond to specific periods in his life, from his early childhood in Petit-Goâve or his emigration to Montréal. As such, Laferrière's textual relationship with both the past and his homeland of Haiti appears complex, and in some instances, contradictory. Although he expresses a distinct satisfaction in the opportunities he takes to write about Haiti and its past, he strongly rejects any kind of perceived responsibility, imposed by the field of postcolonial literature or the literary market, to do so. His seventh novel *Pays sans chapeau* (1996), which, within his fictional chronology, concludes the *autobiographie américaine* with his return to Haiti after a twenty year-absence, marks a turning point in that the narrator expresses his pleasure in having the occasion to write of his homeland. As Ursula Mathis-Moser writes in *Dany Laferrière: La dérive américaine*, the novel signals that "Dany Laferrière consent désormais à investir le pays d'origine d'une valeur métaphorique destinée à transcrire une facette toute particulière de son écriture" (71). However, while the act of writing about Haiti clearly pleases

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comments on Laferrière do not exceed a single sentence, they clearly associate his early novels with those of a new generation of writers who expanded geographic scope of Haitian Literature.

[3] Braziel contests the notion that Laferrière's work is, as Munro writes, "largely apolitical" (181), writing that Laferrière, "like other Haitian diasporic writers, artists, musicians, and directors, produces cultural forms that contest the relations of power between the first and the third worlds in the global economy while also challenging imperialist foreign policies and the negative impact those policies often have on his home country ... Not only have Laferrière's politicized critiques of historical constructions of black heteromasculinity been little understood, but these misperceptions of the reading public have also obscured other political frames or framings of the author, who has openly satirized "development," U.S. militarism, and international financial institutions and critiqued political corruption in Haiti under dictatorship, military despotism, and global capitalism (26-7). Braziel is certainly correct in the sense that any form of cultural production necessarily takes some political stance (including the ostensible refusal of politics), however there can be no doubt that Laferrière's political commitments pale in comparison to those of his radical predecessors like Jacques Stephen Alexis or contemporaries like Danticat or Roxanne Gay.

the narrator, and by extension, the author, Laferrière repeatedly and consistently resists attempts by journalists and critics to identify him, ontologically, as a Haitian author. In his book-length interview with Bernard Magnier, *J'écris comme je vis*, he explains his revulsion to the constant labeling that critics of his work have performed: "écrivain immigrant, écrivain ethnique, écrivain caribéen, écrivain du métissage, écrivain post-colonial ou écrivain noir … Je suis condamné, quelle que soit la posture que je prends, à le faire coller une étiquette sur le dos … En tout cas, personne ne m'a encore lancé cette gifle: écrivain folklorique" (85). Laferrière writes wholly conscious of the fact that his readership may be engaging in the kind of "new orientalist" reading practices critiqued by scholars such as Spivek, Huggan, and Brouillette.

Given the linguistic, intertextual, and geographic diversity that his fiction represents, the imposition of any of these adjectives would necessarily reduce the field of signification produced by his texts to a certain number of clichés invoked in uncritical understandings Caribbean literature. As he explains, "ce n'est pas parce que le paysage que je décris est rempli de manguiers que je suis pour autant un écrivain caribéen … et dans le mot caraïbe, on voit tout de suite tous les ingrédients: couleur local, paysages toujours verts, dictature, dépendance coloniale" (87). Even If Laferrière's Haitian novels do engage with such images and ideas, they constitute but a small part of his broader oeuvre, one that is varied, cosmopolitan, and eminently transnational. Laferrière frequently plays with labels, adjectives, and clichés in his fiction, occasionally ways that, if they are understood unironically, seem controversial or provocative, if not offensive. Regardless of their exact setting, Laferrière's fiction displays a distinct sensitivity to the role of place, an aspect of his writing that he acknowledges in his interview with Magnier, declaring that "Je suis un écrivain extrêmement sensible aux lieux" (160). To the physical and cultural geographies that generally constitute a person's knowledge of a place, we should add, in the context of Laferrière's novels, literary geographies as well. The intertextual networks of

allusion and imitation that his texts construct demonstrate the geographical diversity of his stylistic influences; as such, reading Laferrière within the frame of a national literature, be it Haitian, French, Québécois, or otherwise, would not do justice to a thoroughly transnational literary voice. In this, the final chapter of my study, I will argue that Laferrière's novels, like those of Danticat's display the hallmarks of the neo-universalist mode of Caribbean writing that I outlined at the beginning of this chapter: a reengagement with the broader world outside the Caribbbean basin, and ideologically, outside the paradigm of anticolonial resistance, a reduction of the scope of history to that of the world-historical to the personal, and a corresponding return to linear narrative. Furthermore, these authors

On Laferrière's Spatial Stylistics

In the first fifteen years of his authorial career, which saw the writing and publication of the ten texts making up his *autobiographie américaine,* Laferrière developed two distinct styles of writing that correspond, spatiotemporally, with the subject of each book he writes. Laferrière's first novel, *Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer*, both inaugurated the author's career and what we might call his montréalais style. The novel begins by demonstrating the author's sensibility to place with an extended description of Laferrière's quintessential Montréalais place: the small, dirty apartment in a disreputable part of town:

> On crève, cet été, coincé comme on est entre la Fontaine de Johannie (un infect restaurant fréquenté par la petite pègre) et un minuscule bar-topless, au 3670 de la rue Saint-Denis … Une chambre exiguë, coupée en deux par un affreux paravent japonais à grands oiseaux stylisés. Un réfrigérateur constamment en état de palpitations comme si on nichait à l'étage d'une gare ferroviaire … Avec, en prime, la croix du mont Royal, juste dans l'encadrement de notre fenêtre.

The description of the room succinctly encapsulates the wretched conditions in which the narrator and, with the description of the Mount Royal Cross, firmly establishes the apartment within the local geography of Montréal. But Laferrière's purpose in invoking his narrator's squalid lifestyle is not, as it might be for a stereotypically postcolonial author, to protest or draw attention to the plight of migrants. Rather, the narrator seems to celebrate the bohemian lifestyle he leads: in lieu of work, the narrator passes his time with either sensual or literary pursuits.

Beyond the setting, Laferrière's montreal style, also exemplified in novels like *Eroshima* (1987), *Cette grenade dans la main du jeune nègre est-elle une arme ou un fruit?* (1993) or *Je suis un écrivain japonais* (2008), is characterized by the pronounced use of short sentences, provocative language, bawdy or taboo subject material, capitalization of words or phrases for emphasis, the use of other languages (particularly English), extensive allusions to other writers, and wry humor. In such texts, Laferrière frequently plays with racial and national stereotypes and their respective values in the world marketplace of ideas. Returning to the second chapter of his first novel, the narrator bemoans the fact that black identities are no longer in vogue in the West:

> Ça va terriblement mal ces temps-ci pour un dragueur nègre consciencieux et professionnel. On dirait la période de NÉGRITURE terminé, *has been, caput, finito,* rayée. Nègre, *out. Go home Nigger* … Bon, bref, telle est la situation en ce début en ce début des années quatre-vingt marqué d'une pierre noire dans l'histoire de la civilisation nègre. À la bourse des valeurs occidentals, le bois d'ébène a encore chuté. Si, au moins, le nègre éjaculait du pétrole. (17)

In this short passage, not only can we can observe most of the characteristics of this *montréalais* style but also a fundamental association of racial or national identity with cultural capital. If, in this first book, written before Laferrière's rise to prominence, this cultural capital most directly relates to sexual politics, in later works, notably *Je suis un écrivain japonais*, he connects the

value of stereotypes to the literary marketplace and the pressures his narrator faces to present his identity as a saleable concept. Furthermore, the prominence of scenes of writing (or not writing) that occur in these texts, coupled with the insouciant wordplay and extensive use of intertextual references mark this style as inherently writerly.

In sharp contrast with the books that epitomize the Montréal style, texts such as *L'Odeur du café* (1991) or *Le Charme des après-midi sans fin* (1997), explore the narrator's memories of his childhood and adolescence in Haiti. Although sharing the use of short sentences with uncomplicated syntax, this Haitian style distinguishes itself from that of his first two novels primarily by its compositional structures and subject matter. These texts consist of chapters divided into short sections; individually titled, that resemble prose poems, often creating images of people and places or recounting short anecdotes. Whereas stereotypes and questions of racial identity loom large in his Montréalais style, here the narrator focuses on descriptions of his family and childhood friends. Allusions to other authors appear greatly reduced, and those authors mentioned tend to be of Haitian origin. Despite these differences, the two styles share a strong sense of geographic affiliation. Like in *Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer*, Laferrière immediately the reader of *L'Odeur du café* with a precise description of site where the action will unfold:

> J'ai passé mon enfance à Petit-Goâve, à quelques kilomètres de Port-au-Prince. Si vous prenez la Nationale Sud, c'est un peu après le terrible morne Tapion. Laissez rouler votre camion (on voyage en camion, bien sûr) jusqu'aux casernes (jaune feu), tournez tranquillement à gauche, une légère pente à grimper, et essayez de vous arrêtez au 88 de la rue Lamarre. (17)

Here, 88 rue Lamarre takes the place of 3670 rue Saint-Denis, and in place of Mount Royal, morne Tapion. Despite the change in scenery, the basic function of the passage remains the

same: indelibly associate the text with location described. In each instance, Laferrière's narrator carefully situates the reader at a precise point in his fictional geography, one which curiously overlaps with the biographical geographies of the author.

If Laferrière's Montréalais style takes on a writerly characteristic through its use of wordplay and allusion, his Haitian style tends toward the visual. In addition to the extensive use of poetic descriptions of places and people, the narrator makes frequent reference, throughout his broader oeuvre, to painting, and in particular, the tradition of Haitian figurative painting that, in the mid-twentieth century, was known as "naive" Haitian art. The third passage of *L'Odeur du café* presents the reader with an ekphrastic passage describing an imagined landscape painting, replete with movement and details:

> On dirait un dessin de peintre naïf avec, au loin, de grosses montagnes chauves et fumantes. Là-haut, les paysans ramassent le bois sec pour le brûler … L'homme est en train de faire un feu à trois pas de sa maison, une petite chaumière avec une porte et deux fenêtres … une fumée noire et épaisse monte vers un ciel bleu clair … Je raconte tout cela à Da. Il faut dire que je raconte tout à Da. Da dit que j'ai un oeil d'aigle. (18)

The painterly aesthetic, coupled with an emphasis on the narrator's keen sense of observation presented in this early passage is an idea that Laferrière will return to frequently; for example, the novels *Le Goût des jeunes filles, Pays sans chapeau,* and the more recent *L'Énigme du retour* all feature expressions of admiration or affiliation with the naive painter.

These two styles contrast sharply at the beginning of Laferrière's career but do not remain hermetically divided for long. *Chronique de la dérive douce* (1994), the writer's fifth novel, employs the structure of short, poem-like prose sections and largely shares the wistful, nostalgic tone of his Haitian novels. Although the geographic setting of this text differs, it is situated chronologically directly before *Comment faire l'amour*, and thus before the moment in

which Laferrière, as he explains it, was "né écrivain à Montréal." However, it is his seventh novel, *Pays sans chapeau*, that best illustrates the overlap between these two geographic styles. In *Pays sans chapeau*, Laferrière brings together both of his stylistic approaches in order to render an account of his narrator's return, twenty years after going into exile, to Haiti and to the family and friends he left behind. As such, the novel combines the nostalgic subject matter of his novels set during his early life in Haiti, but in lieu of the naive viewpoint of the child, the narrator writes as an adult, and moreover, an established writer. The novel amounts to a hybrid text, but not in the way that Bhabba theorizes them: rather than negotiate the relationship between the culture of the "indigenous," "postcolonial," or "marginalized" author and that of the metropole, the negotiation that *Pays sans chapeau* stages occurs between the person the narrator was in 1976 and the writer he has become in 1996. This pivot towards the personal becomes all the more evident when one considers that the novel is set during one of the most politically meaningful moments in recent Haitian history: the return of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's first democratically-elected president, in 1994. That Laferrière declines to directly address the sociopolitical changes at work in his homeland during this critical juncture marks the neo-universal turn from the World-Historical to the personal.

Pays sans chapeau

The hybrid quality of *Pays sans chapeau* becomes apparent in the compositional structures that frame each section of the text. The first section of the novel, entitled "un écrivain primitif" transposes the narrator from his habitual bench in the Square Saint-Louis to a courtyard in Port-au-Prince: "J'installe ma vieille Remington dans ce quartier populaire, au milieu de cette foule en sueur. Foule hurlante. Cette cacophonie incessante, de désordre permanent … J'écris à ciel ouvert au milieu des arbres, des gens, des cris, des pleurs. Au cœur de cette énergie

caribéenne" (11-12). Although the decor is (stereo)typically caribbean, the milieu itself is not dissimilar from that of the rue Saint-Denis; the narrator writes *en plein air* with his typewriter in a working-class neighborhood, attentive to the sights, sounds, and passers by who enter into his field of vision. But this scene, which depicts the narrator in the act of writing, also introduces the painterly aesthetic associated with his Haitian style. The narrator tells us "Je veux perdre la tête. Redevenir un gosse de quatre ans. Tiens, un oiseau traverse mon champ de vision. J'écris: oiseau. Une mangue tombe. J'écris: mangue … on dirait un peintre primitif. Voilà, c'est ça, j'ai trouvé. Je suis un écrivain primitif" (15). Thus, at the outset of the novel, Laferrière's narrator indicates his intention to merge the naïve, painterly style associated with his Haitian novels with the mature, writerly persona of his Montréalais novels.

Pays sans chapeau, like many of Laferrière's novels, does not rely on intricate plots or dramatic action to provide its interest; the story itself is simple. The narrator arrives in Port-au-Prince, where he reunites with his mother and aunts. He wanders the streets of the city and relates various conversations he has with its residents, and eventually visits his friends from adolescence: Philippe, Manu, Lisa, and Antoinette. Near the conclusion of the book, the narrator visits the titular Pays sans chapeau, the afterlife, but is disheartened to find the *loa* engaged only in petty domestic disputes. Returning to the real world, he begins to write a book that is implied to be the novel itself. After the initial section, *Pays sans chapeau* consists of alternating sections entitled *pays réel* and *pays rêvé*, alluding to Glissant's 1985 poetic work *Pays rêvé, pays réel*. Like his Martinican predecessor, Laferrière will, in these sections, interrogate the relationship between the lived experience of the Caribbean present and the ephemeral or contingent conception of the past situated in an elsewhere that does not map on to the present. Yet, if for Glissant, the scope of historical memory reaches back, albeit tentatively (and perhaps unsuccessfully), past the middle passage, for Laferrière, the scope of time of the past, reduced

from the world-historical to the personal, corresponds to the twenty years the narrator has spent abroad. The penultimate section relates the narrator's visit to the land of the dead, and the final section, entitled both *Pays réel/pays rêvé* and *Un peintre primitif*, that relates an anecdote that the narrator claims is "peut-être à l'origine de ce livre" (225).

In the anecdote, the titular primitive artist, who paints landscapes filled with lush forests heavy with ripe fruits, smiling people, and other typically "Haitian" imagery. When asked by a journalist why he paints these oneiric landscapes instead of the real desolation surrounding him, he replies that "le pays réel, Monsieur, je n'ai pas besoin de le rêver" (225). The anecdote, which Laferrière will return to in *L'Énigme du retour*, speaks to one of the fundamental postulates of this study: that the literary (or artistic) imaginary permits the elaboration of new or alternative conceptions of space and place, heterotopias that reflect and modify our mental, abstract, or aesthetic images of the real world we inhabit. For Laferrière's narrator, this imagined country does not constitute an alternate world or some kind of utopia, but rather the lost Haiti of his childhood. For both author and narrator, the Haitian novels thus represent an attempt to break from the linearity of time and recreate the world before his exile. Unsurprisingly, one of the narrator's preoccupations throughout the book is his desire to have returned, not only to the land of his birth, but to the moment in time that saw his departure from it.

Le pays, entre rêve et réel

The compositional division of the novel's spaces into the real and the dreamed also operates at the level of representation of the Haiti itself; that is, the vision of Haiti presented in the alternating sections changes significantly. Take, for example, the juxtaposition, near the beginning of the novel, of two spatially identical scenes of writing. Returning to the opening lines of the novel, in the section, "Un écrivain primitif," the narrator writes that "Il y a longtemps

que j'attends ce moment : pouvoir me mettre à ma table de travail (une petite table bancale sous un manguier, au fond de la cour) pour parler d'Haïti tranquillement, longuement. Et ce qui est encore mieux: parler d'Haïti en Haïti" (13). Here, the ever-present crowds, incessant cacophony, and permanent disorder constitute a distinctly Caribbean energy that inspires the narrator. In contrast, the first of the *pays rêvé* chapters recreates the same scene, but with a completely different tone. Here, the narrator tells us that

> Cette chaleur finira par m'avoir. Mon corps à vécu trop longtemps dans le froid du nord. La descente vers le sud, cette plongée aux enfers. Les feux de l'enfer. Je suis en sueur sous ce manguier. L'odeur d'une mangue trop mûre qui vient d'exploser près de ma chaise m'étourdit presque. Quelques feuilles jaunes achèvent de se décomposer dans la cuvette au pied de l'oranger. Une eau visqueuse. Au loin: le chien mort couvert de mouches noires de la tête aux pieds. Ce bruit incessant de mouches bourdonnants.

In lieu of the idyllic portrayal of the courtyard we saw in the opening section, the narrator presents it as hot, hellish, and permeated by the aura of death. Here the theme of death, and its physical, geographical (omni)presence first comes to the fore.

For the narrator, death represents more an escape from the linearity of time than a definitive end to lived experience, and as such, the possibility of a temporal return to the time-space of his life in Haiti before his exile. Pouring out part of his cup of coffee in honor of the dead, the narrator explains that those who have passed away experience time differently than the living: "Le mort change immédiatement de mode de temps. Il quitte le présent pour rejoindre à la fois le passé et le futur. Où vis-tu maintenant? Dans l'éternité" (34). This transcendence of the linear experience of time, does not, however, deny them the possibility of a presence in the present; the narrator describes the sensation of their presence:

> Ils sont là tout autour de moi, les morts. Mes morts. Tous ceux qui m'ont accompagné durant ce long voyage … Ils sont là, je le sais, ils sont tous là à me regarder travailler à ce livre. Je sais qu'ils m'observent. Je le sens … Ils se penchent avec curiosité par-dessus de mon épaule. Ils se demandent, légèrement inquiets, comment je vais les présenter au monde.

Rather than read this passage as a statement of metaphysical belief on the part of the narrator, we can interpret it as an expression of a sense of responsibility. How can the narrator speak responsibly to an admittedly global audience about his ancestors and his ancestral country? Even if the novel does not offer a clear answer to the question, these passages demonstrate that the narrator, and by extension the author, does feel obliged to respond, in some way, to what Saez calls the pedagogical imperative, the ethical and aesthetic of translating a particular place with its particular history into a global literature.

The overarching depiction of Haiti that in *Pays sans chapeau* emerges from a dynamic that oscillates between the concepts of division and coexistence: between the dead and the living, the haves and have-nots, the present and the past. In the subsequent chapter, the narrator presents the *pays réel* as sundered by class and privilege. From the top of the morne Nelhio, on the southern edge of Port-au-prince propre, the narrator describes the cityscape: "les riches habitent au flanc des montagnes (les montagnes Noires). Les pauvres entassés dans le bas de la ville, au pied d'une montagne d'immondices. Ceux qui ne sont ni riches ni pauvres occupent le centre" (38). But this center, which might otherwise suggest a middle ground, in fact functions as boundary or edge: the narrator's family's house lies at "la frontière" (39), an unstable and uncertain site. The narrator's mother frequently expresses anxiety concerning the instability of their emplacement and a terror at ending up in the "l'enfer de Martissant" (39), the poor neighborhood at the foot of the morne Nelhio. This preoccupation with the conditions or

standards of living in Haiti dominates in the *pays réel* sections; for example, during his visits to the homes of his friends Philippe and Manu, who inhabit Pétionville (a rich suburb in the heights) and Carrefour (a slum along the coast), respectively.

In contrast, in the *pays rêvé* sections, the division is metaphysical, not material. These chapters seem to dwell on the implications of the story of the last time the narrator speaks with his father, who refuses to see his son, claiming that "tous [ses] enfants sont morts" because "il n'y a que des morts en Haïti, des morts ou des zombis" (202). In these chapters, the narrator investigates the rumor, or indeed the possibility, that the inhabitants of Haiti are all the living dead, that an army of zombies patrols during the night, sharing power with the soldiers of the United Nations forces who patrol during the day, and that Haiti thus comprises two distinct countries that never meet: "on dirait que ces deux pays se cheminent côte à côte, sans jamais se rencontrer. Un petit peuple se débat le jour pour survivre. Et ce même pays n'est habité, la nuit, que de dieux, de diables, d'hommes changés en bêtes. Le pays réel, la lutte pour la survie. Et le pays rêvé: tous les fantasmes du peuple le plus mégalomane de la planète" (44). If the lived, material division of the country operates spatially, separating the lives of the privileged and the impoverished, the metaphysical division operates temporally: "Nouvelle politique. Au lieu de séparer l'espace territorial … ils ont finalement opté pour une division du temps" (58). As I will demonstrate, this idea of the temporal division of the country corresponds with the narrator's own temporal dissonance, or more exactly, the contrasting and overlapping experiences of Haiti that emanate from the memorialized past and the present of the novel's composition.

Before delving into an analysis of the novel's temporal configurations, however, the question of the narrator's affiliation, or sense of belonging, needs some explication. In *Pays sans chapeau*, Laferrière's narrator must contend with the question of whether or not the time he has spent abroad has rendered him less Haitian than those who have never left. In *pays réel* chapters,

the narrator often expresses his attachment to the country, telling, for example, a shoe shiner that "Je suis dans mon pays" (51) or Philippe that Haiti is "mon pays aussi, que je le veuille ou non" (170). Conversely, doubts as to the narrator's claim to Haitian identity most often crop up in the *pays rêvé* chapters. On the radio, the question of the day is "faut-il considérér les gens qui ont vécu trop longtemps à l'étranger comme des Haïtiens?" (176). For some, the answer is clearly no: when his aunt's godfather Lucrèce comes to talk with the narrator about the book he is writing, Lucrèce tells him that "On dit aussi que vous venez de l'étranger," with the implication, as the narrator notes, that "ce qu'on disait était plus important que ce que j'avais à dire" (117). Regardless of whether or not identity is something that can be claimed unilaterally by an individual or is necessarily assigned societally, the narrator recognizes that his absence has deprived him of the ability to understand certain aspects of the country: "voilà ce que c'est d'avoir passé près de vingt ans hors de son pays. On ne comprend plus les choses les plus élémentaires" (102). In each instance, the uncertainty of his national affiliation results from the duration of his absence, implying that the divergence of the *pays réel* and the *pays rêvé* is not spatial but temporal.

Returning to the "Vieux Pays"

Unsurprisingly, then, a preoccupation with the passing of time and the changes it invariably entails dominates the thematic economy of the narrative. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator's mother remarks his lack of luggage, to which the narrator responds that he brought only one suitcase that weighs "le même poids que celle que tu m'as donné quand je partais il y a vingt ans" (19). This seemingly unremarkable exchange in fact is but the first of a series of incidents in which the passing of time seems, fleetingly, to have been suspended and the narrator returned, not merely to the place, but also the same moment of his departure. When

asked by his aunt why he had not returned sooner, in the subsequent sub-chapter, fittingly entitled "Le Temps," the narrator responds simply that "c'est le temps qui a passé." "C'est vrai" tante Renée replies, "nous ne pouvons rien contre le temps" (19). We can read this novel as in part a rejoinder to this seemingly evident truth; through the power of the imaginary, the narrator tries his hardest to go back in time, or more exactly create a literary "fantasme" of the recursivity of time. The anecdote that follows illustrates the illusory quality of such efforts: his aunt relates how, as a child, she would send him on errands and spit on the ground, telling him that he must return before the spit dried. As a child, the narrator always believed that he would come back in time; in fact, she would spit again when she saw him returning. "C'était le seul moment" concludes tante Renée, "où nous pouvions contrôler le temps" (19). Subsequent episodes in the novel suggest that here more explicitly than in any of Laferrière's other Haitian novels, the author uses fictional creation to recreate and reengage with the family history he left behind.

A particularly notable instance of this phantasm of controllable time occurs in the fifth *pays rêvé* chapter. This chapter immediately distinguishes itself from the others through its use of a hybrid stylistic approach: it is the only *pays rêvé* chapter to use the subchapter headings that characterize the *pays réel* chapters. Furthermore, it serves as a kind of transition between the day, associated with the *réel*, and the night, the time of the *rêvé.* The chapter begins during the day, with the narrator expressing a feeling of belonging, an appreciation of the familiar soundscapes of Port-au-Prince: "Je plonge, la tête la première, dans cette mer de sons familiers. Un air connu qu'on fredonne aisément, même si ça fait longtemps qu'on n'a pas entendu la chanson … Les gestes, les sons, les rythmes, tout ça fait partie de ma chair. Le silence aussi. Je suis chez moi, c'est-à-dire dans la langue" (76). But the narrator quickly recognizes that the feeling is illusory. Passing the shoe repair store where his mother would bring him to have his shoes repaired, he notes the same cobbler and his wife at work and that neither look a day older. "Pourtant," the

narrator remarks, “vingt ans ont passé. Et tant de choses sont arrivées durant ces vingt dernières années. Tant dans ma vie personnelle que dans l’histoire de ce pays” (78). Unlike the cobbler, who continues his work regardless of the changing political regimes, the narrator’s return, whether he directly acknowledges it or not, was only possible because of the fall of Jean-Claude Duvalier and the concomitant end of political exile imposed on so many Haitians. Whereas the cobbler, who seemingly has never left his boutique, appears unphased and unchanged by the passage of time, the narrator’s absence, or more properly *errance*, has amplified time’s effect. Later, in a subchapter entitled “La Nuit,” the narrator casts his gaze towards the stars in the night sky. “Geste banal que des milliers de gens font chaque jour dans cette ville. Pour moi, c’est différent, ça fait vingt ans que je n’ai pas vu ces étoiles” (80). But it is in this moment that the transition from *réel* to *rêvé* occurs: the night sky, as immutable as it is eternal, gives the narrator the impression that his return is not merely to Haiti, but to the past as well: “Je remonte vers le morne Nelhio, les mains dans les poches. Exactement comme je le faisais à vingt-trois ans. Je reprends ma vie au moment où je l’ai quittée. Je respire à pleins poumons. Libre dans la nuit port-au-princienne” (80). In this brief, fleeting moment, the narrator, immersed in the sights and sounds of the his personal *lieu de mémoire*, effects the temporal return that he seeks.

Several other instances of this kind of temporal recursivity occur during the rest of the novel. After the narrator’s reunion with his friend Philippe, the two stop at the narrator’s mother’s house for a meal. The act of eating together, coupled with each character’s familiarity with the others’ habits and gestures, gives the narrator the impression that he has indeed returned to an earlier era, that at least some aspects of life remain unchanged: Philippe thanks his mother as he enjoys his meal. “Ma mère sourit” the narrator observes, “Sommes-nous en 1976 ou 1996?” (143). A similar event arrives when the narrator encounters Lisa, a young woman with whom he was infatuated in his twenties. In a subchapter entitled “Rétrospection,” he asks her if

she shared his affection, and her positive response instantly transports him back in time: “La machine à remonter le temps travaille à une vitesse infernale. J’essaie de faire surgir de ma mémoire la moindre indice” (153). Neither he nor her had given the other the slightest impression of their feelings, but now, in the present of the narration, their mutual avowal returns them to that bygone era, stopping time, if only for a moment. A third example of this recursive time arrives at the home of Philippe. On their way, they stop at Coles Market, and the narrator recounts that as an adolescent, he once saw a girl leaving the market with an apple, and the sight of this girl and his apple gave him “le choc de [sa] vie” (156), even though he couldn’t understand why. Once arrived at Phillipe’s home, he encounters Karine, the sister of Philippe’s wife. At the sight of her, the narrator writes that “Tout mon sang se retire de mon corps. J’ai devant moi la réplique exacte de cette fille que j’ai vu, il y a vingt-cinq ans à peu près, près du Coles Market … Elle me regarde et elle sourit. La même émotion qu’il y a vingt ans. Nous ne changeons pas” (171). Although the examples I cite are not the only instances of the sudden resurgence of the past into the present, they suffice to demonstrate how *Pays sans chapeau*, unlike any of Laferrière’s previous works, bring into the same text both the wry, authorial *moi* of his novels set in the present and the naïve, wistful voice of his memoirs of childhood.

In all of these examples, the catalyst for the synchronization of past and present, this phantasm of recovering the lost time between the night of his departure and the day of his return, is the familial or amicable relationship, the unexpected pleasure in discovering that the love, platonic or amorous, that bound him to the people he left behind did not cease to exist during his absence. These people have changed, matured, or regressed, but in each instance, some facet of their personality or comportment assures the narrator that the *pays rêvé* of the past coexists with the real spaces of the present. Above all others, his relationship with his mother that best illustrates this possibility. Despite his recognition that his mother has changed from “une femme

étonnamment naïve" into an "animal parfaitement capable de se défendre dans l'une des plus terribles jungles humaines" (109), he asks himself why continues to act like "un jeune homme de vingt ans en présence de ma mère? On est toujours enfant à côté de sa mère, surtout si elle ne t'a pas vu depuis vingt ans. Les années d'absence ne comptent pas" (111). The narrator finds a certain comfort in this immutability of the familial relation, a reassurance that despite the oft-repeated fact that "ce pays a changé" (45, 51), his relationship with his mother, and by extension, Haiti itself, remains constant. The text also allows us to read this relationship with the mother as indicative of his sustained connection to the country itself. Reflecting on the fact that both he and his father were forced into exile, he writes that "Ma mère, elle, ne quittera jamais son pays. Et si jamais elle le quitte, j'aurais l'impression qu'il n'y a plus de pays. J'identifie totalement ma mère avec le pays" (129). Haiti thus becomes a kind of personal mère-patrie, a spatial and familial matrix that sustains the narrator's engagement with his past.

In the penultimate section of the narrative, entitled "Pays sans chapeau," the narrator, led by the loa Legba who has taken the form of Lucrèce, visits the afterlife, a culmination of the phantasm of the return that haunts the novel. This section, like the fifth *pays rêvé* chapter, employs a hybrid stylistic form that mixes the compositional traits of the *réel* and the *rêvé*. At first, the pays sans chapeau appears indistinguishable from the world of the living, but as the narrator continues his journey, he discovers that here time has lost its meaning. Stopping at an épicerie, the proprietor responds to his "bonjour" by explaining that here "il n'ya pas de différence du jour d'avec la nuit que vous avez là-bas" (206). Nor does the direction of his travel really matter: "Il n'y a qu'une seule route, c'est celle qu'on a choisie" (207) and that "quel que soit le chemin pris, il nous mènera toujours quelque part" (208). The narrator's path leads him to encounter several loa, Marinette aux jambes sèches, Ogou Feraille, and Erzulie, but he is disappointed that they are wholly engrossed in bourgeois domestic disputes and offer him no

metaphysical truths or otherworldly insights. Returning to the world of the living, the narrator discovers that despite not knowing whether he had been walking for "des jours ou des heures, ou même des années" (210), in fact he spent only "une demi-heure là-bas" (214). Although in one sense his journey appears to be fruitless, he does arrive at one important conclusion: the narrator writes that "Je suis maintenant dans le monde réel, et je ne vois aucune différence avec le monde rêvé" (215). In this way, the novel concludes with the coming together of the two worlds, indicating concomitantly the comingling of the narrator's dreams of the lost Haiti of his youth and the actual country in which the novel takes place.

As I have demonstrated, *Pays sans chapeau* represents a spatiotemporal reconciliation not only of the past and present of the author's understanding of Haiti but also of memory and reality, of past and present. Ultimately, *Pays sans chapeau* suggests that in Laferrière's fictional world, Haiti is a place in which truth and invention, phantasm and reality, appear indistinguishable. The novel's hybrid stylistics that the text employs mark this literary "retour au pays natal" as a turning point in Laferrière's career, the moment when he succeeds in reconciling his intense desire to be read as an individual and not a spokesperson for his country with his equally intense desire to write of that country, that place, and that society that helped shape his unique worldview.

Once returned from the afterlife, the Laferrière's narrator sets out to write his novel; but not without certain reservations. "Je vais faire mon livre malgé tout," he tells J.-B. Romain, the professor of ethnology (and avatar of Damballah) who comes to visit him, "mais je vous avertis que ce n'est pas avec ce ramassis d'anecdotes ternes, de clichés imbuvables que les dieux du vaudou se feront une réputation internationale" (218). Unfazed, the god-professor exhorts him to rehabilitate the international standing of Haitian culture: "notre réputation est au plus bas. Et nous demandons à tous les fils d'Haïti de faire un effort supplémentaire pour remettre à

l'honneur nos racines et nos dieux" (220). In typical fashion, Laferrière's narrator balks at the suggestion that he take responsibility for portraying, let alone defending, his native land to the world. But this sudden and unexpected resurgence of the pedagogical imperative, this expectation that the "third world," "marginal," or, in Laferrière's case, "Haitian" author would devote some part of their literary enterprise to the task of mediating between their homeland and rest of the world indicates that despite Laferrière's insistence on the personal aspects of his work, the world and its readers will always expect something more from him. If the reading of *Pays sans chapeau* that I furnish here principally addresses the author's literary reconciliation with Haiti, in the final section of this chapter, I turn towards a more recent novel, *Je suis un écrivain japonais*, in which Laferrière most forcefully refutes the expectations of the postcolonial literary marketplace.

Je suis un écrivain japonais

In his 2008 novel *Je suis un écrivain japonais,* Laferrière directly engages with some of the most prominent issues in field of francophone postcolonial studies, such as the relationship between author and book, the language of publication, and the cultural and national affiliation of his work. Yet in a plethora of essays and interviews, including those I cite at the beginning of this chapter, Laferrière has expressed frustration with the concept of cultural nationalism, particularly the tendency of the reading public to assign authors to national or cultural labels. In this provocatively-titled novel*,* he takes the notion of a transnational author literally; the narrator declares his intention to publish a novel with the same title as Laferrière's and unintentionally sets off a worldwide debate on the meaning of national literature itself. Why then, did he choose a title that would inevitably incite exactly the kind of debate that he has so often criticized as unnecessary and distracting? I will argue that in this novel, Laferrière chooses to confront

headfirst the perceived responsibility to speak for his home country imposed by the literary market and the reading pubic.[4] This novel demonstrates how writing offers a means to dispense with national and linguistic barriers and create a transnational and cosmopolitan literary space open to all. My analysis will focus on three aspects of the novel that together form a response to the field of postcolonial literature and its critical priorities: the authors iconoclastic use of cliché and stereotype, his insistence on the unimportance of national heritage, affiliation, and the concept of authenticity, and the vision he constructs of a world literature free from the exoticizing or new orientalist tendencies of postcolonial reading.

From the very first chapter, Laferrière's narrator, apparently the same as that of the novels making up the series he calls his "autobiographie americaine" expresses a distinct sense of anxiety with regards to his status as an author and his relationship with his work. The novel opens with a call from his editor, who inquires as to the progress he is making on his "foutu bouquin" (11). This offhand demystification of the book-as-object indicates a certain lack of seriousness with regards to the act of writing and corresponds to an attitude frequently associated with the "postcolonial" and "francophone" author. Dominique Chancé explains, in *L'Auteur en souffrance* (2000), that this anxiety reflects to a contradiction "qui déchire l'écrivain des Antilles, entre la nécessité d'écrire pour témoigner, retracer l'histoire … et la peur de trahir, de renier sa 'créolité' en adoptant l'écrit en français, dans une position de maîtrise" (5). But whereas for writers like Chamoiseau and Glissant, the imperative to recuperate lost history and preserve a sense of creole authenticity stems from the cultural and political discourses that their own work

[4] Parisot likewise reads the novel as challenge to the reader or the literary marketplace, writing that "avec *Je suis un écrivain japonais* … Dany Laferrière affiche la volonté d'explorer la possible fictionnalisation d'un récit transnational et d'un auctorialité qui se concevrait comme définitivement affranchie tant du vieux soupçon d'illégimité que du double horizon d'attente contraignant et perçu comme source de violences symboliques--quête d'exotisme d'un lectorat 'exogène' international ou du diktat de l'authenticité émanant du lectorat 'endogène' 'local.'" (230).

develops, for Laferrière, the expectation that his works speak to the Caribbean condition is imposed by the literary marketplace, here represented by his editor. Laferrière himself appears little concerned by such problems of language and identity; as he explains in *J'écris comme je vis*, the anxiety of authenticity that haunts the texts of Chamoiseau do not worry him: "Je ne me sens pas si proche des écrivains caraïbéens … mes influences viennent de partout" (89). In short, Laferrière rejects the literary nationalism (or perhaps culturalism) of his particularist predecessors and openly embraces a vision of literature that functions transculturally and transnationally.

Laferrière and his narrator do, however, share Glissant and Chamoiseau's dread of being misread or misunderstood. But unlike theses particularist authors, who's primary concern is that their works will not be read or appreciated endogenously and that the act of writing itself (and in the language of the colonizer) constitutes an act of treason, Laferrière's anxiety relates more closely to the commodification of literature itself. His editor and his readers are interested by "le nouveau," a concept that unnerves the narrator: "Pourquoi un nouveau livre? On devrait savoir, avec le temps, qu'il ne se fait plus rien de nouveau. Mais on s'y accroche. Le client veut toujours du nouveau" (12). The potential rupture between writer and reader here appears to be a questio of supply: can the narrator provide the market what it demands? Moreover, the narrator worries that his readers interest in his writing does not extend beyond either his own image as an (exotic) writer or simply the title of his books. Although he recognizes and appreciates his gift at coming up with provocative titles, he seems hardly satisfied by it: "Je suis bon pour les titres. Kurt Vonnegut Jr. aurait dit … que j'étais le plus rapide titreur d'Amérique. Le plus rapide titreur d'Amérique, bon, j'accepte, mais j'aurais voulu savoir dans quel contexte il l'avait dit" (12). Is that seemingly honorific title actually just a way of saying that "que je ne suis bon qu'à ça, et qu'avec moi nul besoin d'aller au-delà du titre?" (13). Despite his concerns, he nonetheless

conlcudes the chapter by accepting without hesitation his role as a writer and declaring that he considers himself "vraiment comme un écrivain japonais" (15). In light of the Chancé's problem of authorial anxiety, how can we interpret this declaration? This ironic literary posturing is without doubt a kind of metaliterary joke, one that will motivate the plot of the rest of the novel. But in the laughter the joke solicits, we can nonetheless detect the same anxiety as that of Chamoiseau's *marqueur de paroles* but conjugated differently. Laferrière's distrust turns not towards his text but towards his readers, or rather his "clients" who may not read his words at all.

In the following chapters, the narrator tells of the research into Japanese culture that he pursues. However, his attitude and commentary on Japanese culture appears extremely problematic to the postcolonial or francophone reader. Specifically, he takes a kind of *colonial* posture and writes in an exoticizing and reductive mode, telling us that he thinks of Asia "comme un explorateur du XIXe siècle" (23). This mode of writing homogenizes the orient, blurs cultural specificity and ignores real differences in favor of a clichéd vision of Asia. This involves, for example, suggesting to a Korean man that Japan and Korea are essentially the same and that the idea of cultural authenticity bores him to death (24). These provocative statements mark the narrator's insouciant attitude toward the aims of postcolonialism which often seek to dismantle the stereotypes of non-western cultures. Instead of seeking authenticity, he reproduces exoticized and eroticized images of a homogenized orient that discomfit the typical postcolonial readership. As such, Laferriére's critique of literary nationalism proceeds by attacking the notion that the concept seeks to express: that of cultural authenticity and essentialism. He does so through an overt embrace of stereotype, which inevitably underpins both the positive yet nonetheless reductive establishment of national culture and racist caricatures of the other.

Laferrière's use of a narrator preoccupied with clichés and erotic predilections poses a problem that goes beyond the diegetic frame of the novel and necessitates its resituating within

its social and literary context. First, we must recognize that the narrator's tone and voice constitute a posture, or perhaps a kind of imposture, emanating from the history of colonial literature and likely to be interpreted as reprehensible and anachronistic by the reader. The concept of an authorial posture, as Jérome Meizoz explains, designates the position of an author within the larger field of literary production. This posture is a function of the relationship between an author's text and all the other texts making up what he calls the "sociopolitique littéraire." An author's posture is one of the elements that makes up their *ethos*, that is, the "manière (générale) d'être (un) écrivain, lisible dans divers faits de position, d'habitus et de posture. Décrire l'*ethos* d'un écrivain … permet de penser à la fois sa 'stratégie' dans le champ et ses options formelles, à savoir sa poétique propre … J'y inclus la dimension rhétorique (textuelle) et actionnelle (contextuelle)" (16-17). In order to better understand the use of the narrator's colonial discourse, we will need to more closely examine the notion of posture and its functioning at both the textual and contextual levels, the latter of which is the site where our extradiegetic knowledge modifies our reading of a text. We do not immediately reject the novel as racist and orientalist garbage precisely because its offensive content is not what we expected when we began to read it. As such, Laferrière obliges us to recognize the ideological difference between our expectations and the novel's content, a process that indicates the central role of the reader in the conceptual structuring of the text.

With regards to the textual or intradiegetic level, the posture of a writer influences the ideological development of a text, and the colonialist discourse that the narrator employs historically worked to establish a position of epistemological superiority vis à vis its subject. As such, the posture taken by an author helps to orient the reader by establishing a hierarchy of knowledge in which readers, complicit with the author, situate themselves at the top. However in *Je suis un écrivain japonais*, readers easily recognize that the narrator's reductive perspective, if

taken literally, would in fact mark his epistemological inferiority, given, for example, his inability to differentiate between Koreans and Japanese. This ironic re-structuring of the hierarchy of knowledge inherent in the colonialist posture serves as form of critique when considered from the extradiegetic or contextual level. As Meizoz explains, every writer manifests a posture, but "la posture n'est signifiante qu'en relation avec la position réellement occupée par un auteur dans l'espace des postions littéraires du moment. C'est pourquoi on ne peut se contenter de décrire les éléments les plus visibles ou cosmétiques d'une posture, comme il s'agissait d'une mise en scène intentionnelle" (20-1). In other words, we cannot interpret the narrator's discourse at face value; rather, its incongruity with the current field of literary production allows the reader to recognize that his posture is in fact an imposture.

The characters featured in the plot, lacking this extradiegetic perspective, invariably fail to see the irony of the narrator's title and take it at face value. They do not differentiate between the identitary implications of the title and the narrator as an individual, or rather they see the "je" of the title as necessarily synonymous with him. As the novel's characters fail to distinguish between the narrator and his title, so could an incautious reader confuse Laferrière and his narrator. Indeed, his oeuvre invites this kind of misreading, and it is not without a certain irony that Laferrière refers to his first ten novels as a fictional "autobiographie." We must, therefore, recognize that the declaration of the title is less a statement of identity than an ironic literary strategy, even if in the first chapter the narrator claims to truly consider himself to be a Japanese writer. As the text progresses, he expresses uncertainty as to what a Japanese writer actually is: "Est-ce quelqu'un qui vit et écrit au Japon? Ou quelqu'un né au Japon qui écrit malgré tout … Ou quelqu'un qui n'est pas né au Japon, ni ne connaît la langue, mais qui décide de but en blanc de devenir un écrivain japonais" (21-2). The indefinable nature of the term prevents him from entering completely into this new identity, and in the chapters that follow, he becomes

increasingly reluctant to take on *any* identity. When a Japanese diplomat asks him "Vous êtes l'écrivain?" his response is evasive: "Parfois" (102). Eight pages later, the diplomat asks again, this time he responds "Pas en ce moment" (110). Finally, at the end of the chapter, he explains himself in greater clarity "Je ne suis pas un écrivain Japonais… J'écris un livre dont le titre est « Je suis un écrivain japonais », ça ne fait pas de moi un écrivain japonais" (115). Near the very end of the book, he goes further, telling his editor "je ne suis plus un écrivain " (259). His reluctance to self-identify underlines his insouciant attitude towards these kinds of questions, and by the end of the plot, the reader cannot conclude anything beyond the narrator's distrust of cultural or national labeling, and for that matter, authenticity

In this sense, the narrator most closely resembles his author. Laferrière knows that his readers and critics will try to frame and define his works by defining his cultural affiliation. Given his work's rich intertextual, linguistic, and geographic diversity, such labels risk reducing the field of significations in his texts to a handful of clichés. As he explains, to call him a Caribbean writer would be to conjure a whole host of images and ideas that have nothing to do with the book in question here; in fact, besides an episode where he runs into a childhood friend, there is no mention of Haiti or the Caribbean in the book. Laferrière challenges his readers to abandon paradigms of national and cultural affiliation by calling on them to consider his narrators discourse within the broader field of literary production. His refusal of cultural and national affiliation refocuses questions of identity on his individuality as a writer and the diversity of his influences.

In the epigraph of *J'écris comme je vis*, Bernard Magnier asks Laferrière the question "es-tu un écrivain haïtien, québécois, canadien, caraïbéen, américain ou français? " to which he responds "Je suis du pays de mes lecteurs. Quand un Japonais me lit, je deviens écrivain japonais" (10). The importance of this moment becomes clear, eight years later, when Laferrière

writes the novel that the interview prefigures. Furthermore, the reversal of the role of writer and reader, here indicated, becomes essential to the literary game at the center of the text. Both author and narrator displace the question of identity, projecting it onto the reader, essentially rejecting the ideology of national literature. The narrator does so explicitly, declaring "Moi, je n'ai rien à foutre de l'identité … Je l'ai fait pour sortir précisément de ça, pour montrer qu'il n'y a pas de frontières… J'en avais marre des nationalismes culturels" (197-8). Laferrière, through his opposition to national lables, paradoxically, affirms a conception of writing as offering a means of dispensing with political and linguistic boundaries and immerging oneself in a textual universe open to all.[5] The diversity of literary references and allusions that feature in the text confirm this transnational openness: classical French authors such as Diderot, contemporary Americans like Brautigan, as well as a whole litany of Japanese writers, the most prominent being Matsuo Bashō.

The allusions to and evocations of the Japanese poet known for his opus entitled *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* give us a concrete example of how Laferrière conceives a transnational literature outside the paradigms of national literature, cultural authenticity and identity politics. The narrator does not read Bashō as a source of Japanese culture: as he is told, the Japanese do not read him any more. Rather, when his Japanese admirers find out that he enjoys the 17th century poet, they begin reading Bashō as a means of better understanding the narrator! What the narrator finds appealing in Bashō's is a kind of esthetic and experiential affinity that can be observed in the way that Laferrière reworks, in the closing passage, the haiku that he first employs as the novel's epigraph:

[5] Alison Rice suggests that "Laferrière seems to be moving beyond a debate involving terms such as "colonial" and "postcolonial" in favor of an understanding of French as "transnational" … Laferrière shows in these textual reflections that he 'travels in French' … that this language accompanies him on his intercontinental journeys from his adopted American home(s)" (42).

Première leçon de style

les chants de repiquage

des paysans du nord.

These three verses, short as they are, indicate the essential of the ethics and aesthetics of the author's style. Firstly, we can see that it is the songs of the peasants that constitute the esthetic ideal, a kind of poetics of the people. However, it is specifically the songs of "repiquage" or transplanting that the poet valorizes, an activity that makes reference to the kind of intercultural fertilization that has nourished Laferrière's work since the debut of his career. In the contemporary Montreal that serves as the new habitat of both author and narrator, it is the howls and shrieks of the people along with the honking horns of cars that create a "musique urbain" analogous to the bucolic songs of the peasants that Bashō praised. Finally, we can understand how the voyage of his Japanese predecessor becomes emblematic of Laferrière's literary enterprise; throughout his career and in all of his texts since his departure from the southern reaches of the Americas and his arrival in Montreal, he has been searching for "la fameuse barrière que Basho fut si heureux de franchir pour prendre la route "étroite et difficile" qui mène vers les districts du nord" (264). The influence of Bashō on Laferrière's style became even more recognizable after the publication, one year later, of his prix Goncourt winning novel *L'Enigme du retour*, which, written in a style mixing poetry and prose, emulates Bashō's aforementioned masterpiece. This act of literary transplanting, this transposition of Bashō's verses into the urban context of contemporary Montreal indicates a unique understanding of transnational literature: it is only through the creation of a cosmopolitan style that formal and aesthetic elements from the roader textual world can interact. Transnational literature must take as its starting point a sense of

poetic and experiential affinity that transcends the paradigms of cultural authenticity and national affiliation.

Danticat and Laferrière: Two Literary Universalisms

At first impression, and despite the similarity of their biographies Danticat and Laferrière would seem to present diametrically opposed literary projects. Danticat embraces her role as a spokesperson for Haiti and the Haitian *dyaspora*, writing earnest portrayals of the contemporary Haitian and Hatian-American experience. Her novels, and in particular *The Farming of Bones*, participate in the postcolonial project of recuperating Caribbean history and exploring its untold stories. Her use of first-person narration "gives voice" to women like Amabelle Désir, whose testimony had been ignored by western historians and journalists. Beyond her novels, she frequently pens forwards and introductions for collections of essays on Haiti or for translations of the classics of Haitian literature. Although I stop short of suggesting that her work performs a kind of literary nationalism, it does purport, at least within the context of the American reading public, to present a culturally authentic window into the contemporary Haitian experience. In sharp contrast, Laferrière explicitly rejects the responsibility of speaking for his homeland. His portrayals of Haitian culture and society, dabble in folklore and cliché, cannot be taken at face value. His narratives elide direct representations of Haitian history, instead focusing on his personal experiences in and out of the country. His extensive and ironic use of stereotypes challenge the assumptions of his global readership, not in regard to the cultures he intentionally misrepresents, but rather what those readers expect from a black migrant author.

Despite these incontrovertible differences in their styles, agendas, and literary postures, Danticat and Laferrière have been read by postcolonial critics *in exactly the same* ways: that is, as transgressing binaries, challenging stable notions of identity, and calling into question the

continued validity of the nation-state. Ultimately, these kinds of interpretations ultimately tell us less about the works themselves than they do about the critical and theoretical *partis pris* of such scholars. Continued insistence on these tropes of postcolonial criticism will reveal nothing new about the work of Danticat and Laferrière and arguably distracts from more interesting and novel approaches to their work. In the preceding chapters, I have argued that the texts of these two authors indeed share a great deal, but that what they share is not adherence to a bland postcolonialism. Instead, I argue they both create narratives that both display the hallmarks of what I call the neo-universalist spatiotemporal imagination. Their works, by telling stories of migration and diaspora, explore the *relation* between the Caribbean and the broader world. Told through the subjective lens of the narrator-character, they do so within a reduced temporal scope that eschews the World-Historical for the personal. Both use their fiction to mitigate the consequences of the spatiotemporal rupture between the place of their past and that of their new lives in the North American metropole. They deploy history (Danticat) and memory (Laferrière) to reconnect with a sense of locality absent from the space-time of literary composition. Danticat and Laferrière, despite the fact that they are often read as postcolonial authors in the same vein as predecessors like Chamoiseau, Glissant, or Confiant, emblematize the new direction in Caribbean literature that emerged in the 1990s, a movement that, although unnamed and unconsolidated into a coherent literary school, nonetheless marks a partial return to the universalizing spatiohistorical narratological practices that characterized the anticolonial period. As such, their work indicates a greater level of continuity between the anticolonial and postcolonial periods than has yet been recognized by scholars. If we accept the Glissantian premise that Caribbean history, characterized by irredeemable ruptures, can never be fully recuperated, Caribbean literary history most certainly can.

Epilogue

One Tale, Two Plantations

In February 2017, I travelled up the Atlantic coast of Martinique. On a windy and overcast afternoon several days into the trip, I rented a kayak and paddled along the outer edge of the Baie du Robert until I came to the Ilêt Chancel, a small and undeveloped island along the Martinique's eastern shore. Beaching the kayak among the roots of the trees that descended right down to the waterline, I found the ruins of a plantation nearly swallowed up by vegetation. The site was impressive: the vestiges of at least a dozen buildings stretched out along the coast and the stone blocks that still suggested the emplacement of walls testified to the massive expenditure of labor required to erect them. Yet today, they are abandoned. The decay is such that the casual observer cannot tell one building from another nor conceive of the site's arrangement. The "habitation," the house that would have served the master of the plantation, has faded into oblivion as thoroughly as the humbler dwellings of the slaves.

For the other visitors to the Ilêt Chancel, the plantation was of little interest—rather, most had come to see the Lesser Antillean iguanas, an endangered species endemic to the island. The mostly French tourists largely ignored its history, or what little remained of it. Today, the ruins, far from the commercial bustle of Fort-de-France or the resorts and beaches of the southern end of Martinique, have faded into obscurity. Yet I could not but reflect on the fact that sites such as this plantation represented the raison d'être of the French colonial enterprise—the reason untold thousands of French soldiers and sailors died fighting native peoples, slave rebellions, and other colonial powers and the reason slave merchants brought millions of Africans to the Americas; all in order to keep the sugar, cacao, indigo, and tobacco flowing back to thirsty markets in

continental Europe. These sites also represent one of the matrices of the society and culture generated by the descendants of those slaves and sailors and have fittingly elicited much attention from scholars and philosophers of the Caribbean. How, then, does a site so important become so unknowable, so illegible? Had it been "forgotten" by history and collective memory, or, cut off from the social and economic networks in which it was once an important node, did it simply become irrelevant to contemporary Martinique? Unravelling the riddle of this particular place has not, in any case, been the object of my research. However, the mystery of the Ilêt Chancel points to another mystery more far reaching in its implications, concerning the relationships among space, place, memory, history, and narrative, concepts whose interrelations figure prominently in the literature and theory of Caribbean writers.

Roughly five miles north of the Ilêt Chancel, near the tip of the Presqu'île de la Caravelle, lie the ruins of another plantation. Physically speaking, it is hardly in better condition. Although some of the walls of the plantation house still stand, little remains of the other buildings beyond their foundations. Yet the pompously-named Château Dubuc has met a fate radically different from that of its southerly analog: whereas the latter lies nearly-forgotten and unknowable except to the archivist or archeologist, the former has become a tourist attraction, a protected historical monument maintained by the regional park service. The story of the Château Dubuc is well known: Louis Dubuc Galion, a Norman-born soldier who participated in the expulsion of the Carib tribes inhabiting the region founded the plantation in 1725. A 1772 inventory counted 373 slaves at the site, which produced primarily cacao, sugar, and coffee. Although the property remained in the Dubuc family until 1858, a succession of hurricanes and bad investments ruined Louis' descendants, and by 1797, the plantation had ceased operations. Visitors to the château learn of this history via a variety of media: an audio guide narrates the history of the site while maps and placards explain the layout and function of each of the

buildings. A part of the route of the self-guided tour even leads through the sugar production process itself: beginning with the animal-powered mill and continuing through the various sections of the sucrerie itself, it then proceeds to the remnants of the jetty where processed sugar would have been loaded onboard ships bound for Europe. There is even a scale model of the plantation as it appeared during its heyday, so that tourists can better visualize what a functioning plantation would have looked like. But the appeal of the site goes beyond the specifics of the historical record; its long association with clandestine tales of pirates and smugglers appeals to a distinctly literary kind of imagination. Evidently the Château Dubuc fascinates tourists: promotional literature commonly cites it as the third most visited historical monument in Martinique.

How can we explain the radically different fortunes of these two plantations, once part of the same social and economic system and at one point, owned by the same man, Pierre Balthazar Dubuc? Time and the elements have physically degraded and both plantations, but why did one become an important and popular historical monument, whereas the other faded into obscurity? The fact that the same historical forces, whether social, economic, or meteorological, acted on both sites suggests that history alone cannot explain the divergence of their current circumstances. Historical mediation and governmental support have reintegrated the Dubuc site into the new tourist networks that replaced those based on sugar production as a major source of Martinican economic productivity. Furthermore, its value as a historical site has been formalized by the *Comité Nationale pour la Mémoire et l'Histoire de l'Esclavage* (CNMHE), which has designated it as a "lieux d'histoire et de mémoire liés à la traite et à l'esclavage" to be preserved.[6] It was the creation of a coherent historical narrative and its subsequent

[6] "Musée du Château Dubuc." *Esclavage-Mémoire.com*, www.esclavage-memoire.com/lieux-de-memoire/musee-du-chateau-dubuc-15.html, accessed 4 Nov. 2019.

popularization through both site-specific mediation and the internet that allowed the Château Dubuc to avoid being lost in the obscurity of a long-dead past and instead become a salient part of the contemporary Martinican cultural landscape.

The divergent fates of these two ruined plantations provides a microcosm of the relationship between place, history, and narration as well as the discursive practices that impel the production of space and notions of chronological time. The rehabilitation of the Château Dubuc stems from the intervention that narrative performs: an imaginative, albeit historically-grounded, recreation of the past that attempts to remediate the decay of the physical site and the dissolution of the social and economic networks that enabled the plantation system. In other words, we have a historical and imagined narrative intervening in the spatially-derived problems of the site's present. What the Château Dubuc possesses that the Ilêt Chancel does not is a kind of spatiohistorical coherence or consistency that allows us to understand or indeed imagine the relationship between the physical place of the ruins, concepts of the locality and region in which it is situated, and the history that accompanied both the establishment and dissolution of the plantations themselves. In other words, the Château Dubuc participates in the elaboration of a universally-oriented historical narrative of plantation culture and its legacy in the present that extends beyond the shores of Martinique to encompass the whole of the Caribbean basin, including the plantation spaces of North and South America, whereas the Ilêt Chancel, whose history remains obscure and unmediated, represents a local enigma, a tantalizing mystery that does not extend beyond the waters of the Baie du Robert. Narrative, in both novelistic and historical forms, offers the possibility of breaking out of the perceived linearity of our experience of time, to return to a particular place at a different moment, and to comprehend the network of relations, both in terms of their historical depth and geographic extent, that link a particular place to others. The writers featured in the preceding chapters of this study all participate in the

decades-long project of preserving the Caribbean past through narrative. As I have argued, however, they approach this project in fundamentally different ways, all shaped by the vicissitudes of their own historical moments and ideological and aesthetic convictions.

In the first part of this study, I examined the historical narratives of two Caribbean historians, C. L. R. James and Léonard Sainville, who both work to resuscitate the local history of the Caribbean and to demonstrate the region's importance to world history. For C. L. R. James, the task of revitalizing Caribbean history was a crucial part of a larger story, that of the universal struggle against the systematic forms of oppression, injustice, and inequity that result from the capitalist mode of production. He was perhaps the first to posit the centrality of the Caribbean and its history to the development of global modernity, a concept that contemporary thinkers of the Caribbean take for granted. Léonard Sainville shared James' belief that understanding the Antillean was crucial to furthering the struggle against colonialism in the present. Throughout his career, his historical essays display a sophisticated conception of the interrelation of concepts of race and class that defy characterizations of anticolonial thought as dependent on binary logic. Both James and Sainville remained committed throughout their lives both to a political agenda that encompassed the globe and an intellectual project spanning the temporal scope of the modern period. It is precisely this openness to the extent of time and space that I see as fundamental to Caribbean spatiohistorical universalism.

In contrast with this willing embrace of the world, the writers and intellectuals of the subsequent generation turned away, if only temporarily, from the universalizing rhetoric of James and Sainville and engage with spatiohistorical particularism. Whereas their predecessors created chronologically linear historical narratives that served to demonstrate the key role of the Caribbean in the development of global modernity, these authors understand historical narrative as fundamentally discontinuous and fragmented. They turn away from the universalizing rhetoric

of Pan-Africanism and look toward the geographic and cultural specificity of their native Martinique. For Édouard Glissant, the past was fundamentally opaque, surviving only in snippets and whispers passed down through generations. The present and future were no less certain: for Glissant as much as for any other postwar Antillean intellectual, Martinique's non-postcolonial predicament augured only disappointment and cultural disintegration. His early-career commitment to the concept of *antillanité* signaled an ideological investment in local geographies. Vincent Placoly, despite his hostility to much of Glissant's theorizing, nonetheless shared this belief in the memorial power of landscape: in the face of assimilation and the perceived erosion of local culture. Placoly, a committed Marxist, certainly did not reject international aspects of a broader anticapitalist struggle, but his priorities were always particular, and his immediate concern, more so than Glissant, was the particular situation of Martinique.

My final section offers a reading of two Haitian authors, Edwidge Danticat and Dany Laferrière. These authors represent the literature of the second Caribbean diaspora, stories of individuals separated not merely from the "pays rêvé" that for Glissant designated the lost ancestral territory of Africa but also from the new creole homeland established in the Caribbean archipelago. These writers portray both the tribulations of the Antillean abroad in the continental Americas and those of immigrant writers, doubly constrained by both their society of adoption and the literary establishment within which they work. I read Danticat's fiction as eminently postcolonial, primed, as it were, to be read through its dominant theoretical paradigms. Correspondingly, Danticat seems to have accepted her role as a kind of spokesperson for the Haitian *dyaspora* in America. In contrast, much of Dany Laferrière's fiction seems to go against the grain of postcolonial expectations; in particular, his insistence that his works be read first as literature and not merely representative of his cultural background or identity challenges the postcolonial critic to approach his fiction in its specificity. As I argue, this challenge has often

gone unmet, and despite the myriad differences between these two authors, postcolonial criticism has read their oeuvres in much the same way.

The theoretical homogenization of Danticat and Laferrière is indicative of broader problem in contemporary criticism that I have, throughout this study, argued against: the homogenization of Caribbean letters within the literary-historical paradigm of the anticolonial and the postcolonial. Within this paradigm, either a text displays sufficient intellectual complexity to justify its inclusion in the ever-expanding postcolonial canon, or its binary logic relegates it to the merely anticolonial field. However I argue that if postcolonial theory is to remain a productive field of inquiry, it must do more than draw the same conclusions about different texts. Critical gestures such as the disruption of binaries and the overturning of stable identities were subversive and novel critical in the 1990s, but in the present moment they fail to address the narratological and ideological evolution of Caribbean fiction. The ideological and narratological heterogeneity of the field of Caribbean letters cannot and should not be subsumed into a singular theoretical enterprise; rather these texts deserve to be read and understood in the richness of their complexity and diversity.

This is why I have attempted in this study to stake out a third way between resolutely historicist and theoretical approaches to literature, between those that insist on the primacy of either materialist or cultural emphases. The analysis of the concepts of space and history transcends this seeming opposition, as it necessitates attending to both the material *and* discursive construction of space. As I have argued, the tendency to divide space into the "real" and the "imagined" is a pernicious symptom of the quarrel between culturally-oriented postcolonial critics and their traditional Marxist detractors, one that can no longer be sustained. Instead, I have worked to develop a conception of space and history that affirms the essential interconnection of their material and discursive aspects. It is my belief that my concept of the

spatiohistorical imagination will provide us a means of better understanding the relationships between the spatially and historically conditioned societal realities of the Francophone Caribbean and the rich and extensive literature and theory it has engendered.

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