Gardens in the Sands:
the notion of space in recent critical theory
and contemporary writing from the French Antilles

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ABSTRACT

Although space is one of the central elements of all literary fiction, the 'spatiality' of literary texts has not, until recently, been given the attention it deserves. This thesis aims to elaborate a reconceptualisation of space in literature and critical theory in parallel with what Soja has called 'the reassertion of space in critical social theory'. Drawing on the work of Lefebvre I outline a critique of a Western tradition which views space as neutral, universal or abstract. I pursue this critique through an analysis of postmodern, poststructural and postcolonial theory, which react against this universalising view of space in favour of a relational approach which simultaneously reasserts the notion of 'place'. I demonstrate the interconnectedness of these areas of contemporary discourse from a historico-theoretical perspective by arguing that there is a complicity between the evolution of Enlightenment 'modernity' and the practice of colonialism. This argument enables the development of a politics of resistance based on radical difference, but also characterised by hybridity, by an 'impure' philosophical discourse which proceeds through the deconstruction of static binary categories to focus on identity and culture as forms of the in-between. Based on this theoretical matrix, I proceed to focus on Francophone Caribbean texts in which space becomes not a theatrical 'backdrop', but a constituent part of being. I argue that the spaces of Francophone Caribbean texts - both formal and representational - are used to articulate a Caribbean epistemology as well as a baroque aesthetic derived from the conteur-tradition. In a reading of three recent novels (Condé's Traversée de la mangrove, Chamoiseau's Texaco and Glissant's Tout-monde), I examine in turn the notions of a 'contaminated' community, an alternative mode of history-making opposed to Western values and, finally, how spatial figures and terms come to figure a conception of identity and space as 'chaotic'.
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I dedicate this thesis to my parents, to my sister, and to the memory of my grandfather, musician and scholar.
‘I would give my life for a man who is looking for the truth. 
But I would gladly kill a man who thinks he has found the truth.’

Luis Buñuel, in Rushdie (1992: 422)

‘L’important n’est pas dans la réponse, mais dans le questionnement.’

Edouard Glissant (1981: 149)
INTRODUCTION
Space and the Contemporary Francophone Caribbean Novel

This thesis seeks to bring together two broad areas of enquiry: on the one hand what we might call a ‘philosophy of space’, and, on the other, the study of ‘postcolonial’ literatures, here focused around contemporary writing from the French Antilles. Its theoretical framework, broadly speaking, derives from a new engagement, in twentieth-century post-war thought, with questions of spatiality, which Edward Soja has called the reassertion of space in critical social theory. This emerges specifically as a critique of ‘abstract’, ‘neutral’ or ‘universal’ space, which can be seen as complicit with the ideology and practice of colonialism. In tandem with a ‘philosophical’ re-evaluation of space, however, this thesis also foregrounds and develops a new spatial mode of literary analysis. This approach to literary texts takes its cue from the idea, expressed by J. Hillis Miller in *Topographies*, that “every narrative, without exception, even the most apparently abstract and inward [...] traces out in its course an arrangement of places, dwellings and rooms joined by paths or roads” (1995: 10). Space is thus seen as a determining feature of the literary text and not simply an irrelevance subservient to more traditional elements such as character, language, viewpoint and plot. *Topographies*, however, chooses to concentrate on well-known figures such as Hardy and Henry James whose use of space is often implicit rather than a theme in itself. What I am concerned with here is a new direction in the literary treatment of space, the formation of a contemporary *spatial literature* in which space - landscape, the city - is no longer a backdrop, but instead becomes an explicit character or active player, a constituent part of being. Caribbean literature constitutes a prime example of these developments, a paradigm of sorts, and one of the aims of this thesis will be to demonstrate not only how a spatial perspective can inform a reading of *littérature antillaise*, but also what this mode of writing has to offer in the elaboration of a theory of space.

Space, of course, is a notoriously elusive and slippery concept. Nevertheless, if space is a kind of Kantian *a priori*, it may be impossible to think outside spatial concepts in the first place. Consequently a large portion of this thesis will be

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1 Soja (1989).
concerned with elaborating exactly what, for my purposes, is meant by the otherwise inchoate notions of 'space' or 'spatiality'. This will mean disentangling a few specific usages of the term and its related vocabulary, drawing a few distinctions between the concepts of 'place', 'location', 'geography' and so on. It will also require a clearly articulated general approach to the question of thinking about space, a set of theoretical parameters that is. How is this to be achieved? In chapter 1, I set out what I see as a philosophical approach to space characterised by the refusal of Cartesian or Euclidean-Newtonian 'abstract' space. In subsequent chapters I shall attempt to demonstrate how this can be related to various other forms of non-absolute thinking, specifically aspects of postmodernism (ch. 2) and both poststructural and postcolonial notions of the 'in-between' (ch. 3). In each case what will be highlighted is a relational or negotiational approach to space which will serve productively as an introduction to the problematics of Caribbean culture and identity.

In a methodological sense, too, the investigation of space becomes highly productive, precisely because of its very ubiquitousness. A nexus for a number of concerns, that is, the attention to space becomes necessarily interdisciplinary in nature. As a result this thesis will draw on elements of philosophy, architecture, urban-planning, economics and sociology (chs 1 and 2 especially), in addition to the more obviously aesthetic concerns which the literary thrust of my discussions might seem to suggest. In fact, as we shall see, such interdisciplinary eclecticism is suggested from within the very body of Caribbean writing I have decided to address. Patrick Chamoiseau's *Texaco* (1992a), for example, is informed in part by the theories of the town-planner Serge Letchimy, while many of the essays collected in Edouard Glissant's *Le discours antillais* (1981), covering such diverse topics as sociology, psychology, economics, art and history, were first presented as papers at the *Institut martiniquais d'études*, a multi-disciplinary forum co-founded by Glissant.

The interdisciplinary nature of 'space studies' invites and, in a sense, validates the approach adopted here, which should not be seen as an application of theoretical concepts to literary texts, but rather as a set of parallel concerns relating to the question of space. Although, structurally speaking, this thesis can be seen to fall into two sections, one broadly theoretical/philosophical (chs 1-3), the other predominantly literary (chs 4-7), discussions of theoretical issues are intended to

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provide a background to questions of literary and cultural import while my analysis
of the contemporary Francophone Caribbean novel explores a textual space in which
theoretical concerns are 'staged'. The reader will therefore detect resonances, returns
and echoes which make of the text a network of allusions.

In writing about space, I begin from the notion that, to quote Victor Burgin
"space has a history" (1996: 40). This statement suggests a dual process: on the one
hand, an evolution in the conceptualisation of space, a history of spatial thinking and,
on the other, an evolution of space and spaces, geographical, economic, cultural.
Both phenomena, and this will be a central tenet of this thesis, are necessarily inter-
connected; thus, thought 'produces' space and vice versa. In a sense, then, this thesis
will be about the mutual contamination of 'real' and 'imaginary' spaces, about the
idea that space changes and can be, in its turn, changed or produced. Fundamentally
it is based on the premise that it is possible to speak, for example, of a Renaissance
view (or representation) of space (as part of a harmonious order) which reflects, just
as it is reflected in, an identifiably Renaissance space, whether it be architectural,
geographical, political or cultural, and that, furthermore, this is radically different
from what we might call a modern or postmodern space. I examine many of these
questions in my first two chapters.

While thinking about space, in the philosophical sense, is a feature of writing
from all ages, it has tended to be marked, as Henri Lefebvre has indicated, by
disciplinary separation. The interactive view of space I shall be presenting is really a
feature of twentieth-century thought. Retracing some of these recent ideas will serve
both to outline a set of terms or general approaches and to demonstrate the
participation of Caribbean writing within a wider problematic of space. In order to
structure some of the ideas relating to this perspective, then - in which, as I have
already suggested, space is seen as non-absolute, susceptible to change - it is useful to
historicise the recent development of this mode of thinking. A starting point is
Gaston Bachelard's La poétique de l'espace (1972), which deals with intimate spaces -
rooms, cupboards, nests, attics - in terms of what he calls "l'espace qui est livré au
royaume de l'imaginaire" (1). Bachelard's phenomenological approach correctly
refuses to regard space as an inanimate object or thing, choosing instead to focus on
the way in which we interact with, imagine, inhabit it. It thus underlines an insistence,
central to my approach, on the active, rather than 'neutral', nature of space. This view
is a largely subjective one, however, whereas my concern here is with larger social and historical structures of space. For such an approach we must look elsewhere.

A common socio-historical reassertion of space has taken place in the context of city-studies, often inspired by nineteenth-century Paris. The attraction of such work lies in the way it seeks to explore the relationship between the built environment and various modes of representation, which was what led Wallace Stevens to suggest that we "live in the description of a place and not in the place itself." The key figure in this re-exploration of the city is Walter Benjamin, whose encyclopaedic Das Passagen-Werk (1982), published in French as Paris, capitale du XIXème siècle: le livre des passages (1989), sees him, to quote Susan Sontag, "à la recherche des espaces perdus". This spatial history of Paris focuses specifically on its radical transformation at the hands of Baron Haussmann in the nineteenth century, the new spaces which this process engendered (arcades, boulevards, squares) and how this relates to the development of modern capitalism. Benjamin shows how Haussmann, and nineteenth-century capitalism, can be seen to develop ideals of clarity - wide boulevards and urban grids - which are Cartesian in origin and which were exported to the New World (e.g. Brasilia or, more significantly for my purposes, Fort-de-France). This view of the city will inform my reading of Texaco as a resistance to the dominant order of the grid or line (ch. 6).

The ability to draw such conclusions is predicated on the fundamental idea, theorised by Henri Lefebvre, that space is produced and that, consequently, "l'espace n'est jamais vide; il a toujours une signification" (1974: 180). Lefebvre’s notion of a ‘produced’ space underpins the reading of space which this thesis undertakes. In particular, however, it is in terms of a critique of abstract or absolute space that Lefebvre’s analysis proceeds. This abstract space, as I shall demonstrate further in chapter 1, is characterised by the Cartesian or Newtonian-Euclidean notion of space as an empty container or absolute entity. Newton, for example, sees both space and time as “absolute, self-sufficient forms that are actually present in the world as

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3 A Bachelardian approach has been applied successfully to Glissant’s use of water, earth and fire imagery. Cf, for example, Ada Ugah’s unpublished doctoral thesis L’imagination créatrice dans l’œuvre romanesque d’Edouard Glissant. Essai sur la représentation de l’eau, de la terre et du feu (1984a), or her article ‘La Mer et la quête de soi: une lecture bachelardienne des romans d’Edouard Glissant’ (1984b). I am not interested in pursuing such a line here, however, preferring to concentrate on the collective thrust of contemporary Caribbean writing.


5 In her introduction to his One-Way Street, quoted in Keith & Pile (1993: 6-7).
realities in their own right [...] infinite, non-relational categories that precede and are independent of both objects and human perceptions" (Gross, 1982: 59). In a similar way, Descartes’ dualism between mind (Cogito) and matter (res extensa) seems to reinforce the idea of an a priori absolute space, independent of human agency, divinely ordained and infinitely immutable. The kind of dialogue between being and space which I see operating in the Caribbean novel, for example, stands in stark contrast to this view of space as an empty geometrical (Euclidean) grid or container, a view which, I shall be arguing, dominated philosophical thought from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.

The reassertion of space is also a resistance to linear time, though not a refusal of time per se. Before Einstein’s notion of the space-time continuum shook up the modern world, as both Soja and Foucault remind us, space and time were involved in a tussle for supremacy in which time generally took the upper hand. Kant, for example, as Glissant points out, located plurality in time not in space.6 Thus in the nineteenth century space was seen as “mort, figé, non dialectique, immobile” whereas time was “riche, fécond, vivant, dialectique” (Foucault, 1994 I: 34). This belief in the supremacy of time over space gave rise to another kind of fascination, in the Hegelian and Marxian emphasis on History. The recent revival of spatial thinking in critical theory aims to redress this imbalance, so that if history was the obsession of the nineteenth century, concerned with themes of “développement et de l’arrêt [...] de la crise et du cycle” (1994 IV: 752), a Foucauldian perspective sees our age as marked by simultaneity, juxtaposition, dispersal.7 Or as Henri Lefebvre puts it, “tout ce qui provient de l’histoire et du temps historiques subit aujourd’hui une épreuve [...] l’épreuve de l’espace” (1974: 478). This assertion thus underlines a central point, the importance of spatial thinking as an antidote to the temporal linearity which powers History and Progress, ideas targeted both by postcolonial theory and by the Caribbean writers I shall be studying. As such the choice of space as a theme embodies a certain politicisation which the notion of linear, teleological, time can be seen to obscure or omit.

Another thread of my investigation relates to theories of the postmodern. A reading of Fredric Jameson and Edward Soja brings out two central points. In the

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6 Glissant (1990: 229): ‘pour Kant, la pluralité a lieu dans le temps, non dans l’espace. Dans l’espace il y a de l’existence, qui ne semble pas se différencier en elle-même’.

first place, postmodern theory is seen as inherently spatial in outlook, hence Jameson’s assertion that “a certain spatial turn has often seemed to offer one of the more productive ways of distinguishing postmodernism from modernism proper” (1991: 154) or Foucault’s prophetic suggestion that “l’époque actuelle serait peut-être l’époque de l’espace” (1994 IV: 752). In the second, postmodern theorists identify a number of changes, often economically-produced, in the fabric of the post-war world and, in particular, in the spatial structuring of the city, which might constitute an ‘era’ of postmodernity. A certain decentring of the epistemological and sociological patterning of the urban, for example, is identified embryonically in Barthes’ L’empire des signes, in relation to Tokyo, or, in more classic postmodern fashion, in Soja’s writings on Los Angeles. This raises the question of whether there is such a thing as postmodern space and how this might inform our reading of the Caribbean. In chapter 2, I insist on a distinction between an aesthetic or philosophical postmodernism and an economic ‘condition of postmodernity’ (Harvey, 1990) which enables us to characterise certain elements of Caribbean aesthetics and thought - juxtaposition, non-linearity, polyphony - as resonant with postmodernism, while, at the same time, identifying Glissant’s critique of neo-colonialism as precisely opposed to postmodern (tertiary) industry, e.g. tourism. Another insight is drawn from Soja’s notion of third space, related both to a Foucauldian espace autre and Lefebvre’s spatial thirding, which combines both an element of resistance and the crucial idea that an oppositional ‘third space’ is not a binary opposition but the producer of a different kind of logic altogether.

This ‘other’ logic is a feature of much poststructural theory and of Jacques Derrida’s writings in particular. As will become apparent in due course, the kind of discursive space which interests me is precisely that which escapes rigid categorisation - the opposition of physical and mental space for instance - a kind of interstice or khôra, which Derrida defines as “le lieu [...] entre l’être et l’étant” (1993a: 45-6), one which would disturb “l’ordre même de la polarité, de la polarité en générale, qu’elle soit ou non dialectique” (22). Space, or khôra, thus becomes the very vehicle or expression of non-binary thinking, of thought as a form of in-between. Specifically, the notion of khôra as in-between refuses to recognise the classical notion of logical non-contradiction, the idea that we have to make categorical choices or that, spatially, two objects cannot occupy the same place. This equates to an insistence on either-or thinking, which is undone by the Derridean concept of a
‘double imperative’, a notion which will resonate throughout this thesis and which I believe can be usefully applied to the context of Caribbean cultures. The consequence of the ‘double imperative’ is that we do not have to remain trapped in the logic of binary oppositions; it is valid to maintain a negotiation between different positions or demands.

In chapter 3, I attempt to show how this in-between thinking can be connected to postcolonial notions of hybrid identity. This is supported by the idea that poststructuralism is, in many respects, postcolonial in origin, a thesis that I explore in greater detail in this chapter. It is also reinforced by an intertextual co-dependence, Homi Bhabha’s deployment of Derrida, for example, but also, conversely, a text such as Le monolinguisme de l’autre (1996) in which Derrida cites and develops Glissantian Relation. I focus, for example, on Bhabha’s formulation of hybridity as a process of negotiation which parallels the Caribbean notion of créolisation, in the sense that both refuse the synthetical drive of competing theories of cross-fertilisation. In terms of cultural and personal identity, as we shall see in chapter 7, the process of inter-relation must be seen as maintaining ‘stubborn chunks’, a degree of difference or opacity, despite the destabilisation of boundaries of all kinds. In addition I shall be arguing for Chaos-theory, as it appears in Glissant’s notion of le chaos-monde, as a theoretical model capable of articulating the ‘double imperatives’ of relational identity, in a process of dynamic negotiation.

The inclusion of Bhabha as a spatial theorist raises a central question here, namely my choice of postcolonial theory and literature as a major focus of this thesis. We need, in other words, to consider what it is about this body of work which necessitates a spatial approach and, conversely, what ‘space studies’ have to learn from the postcolonial. A first observation is that the socio-political conditions from which postcolonial theory springs can be seen as inherently spatial: as Edward Said puts it. “territory and possessions are at stake, geography and power. Everything about human history is rooted in the earth” (1993: 5). Space, after all, has a history, and history, as Foucault has demonstrated, is tied in with power. The history of colonialism, in particular, is necessarily spatial because it has to do with territorial expansion, with the occupation, division and control of territory. And if colonialism functions in terms of spatial domination, then postcolonial theory seeks to provide a critique in the same (i.e. spatial) terms, it operates within the system, that is. In later
chapters we shall see, for example, how the very notion of territory is questioned, in spatial terms, by Glissant’s insistence on a poetics of deterritorialised *errance*, together with a critique of *ataristic* societies whose claim to possession is legitimated by the process of rooted *filiation* and the creation of originary *mythes fondateurs*.

In the wake of Lefebvre and Foucault one common strategy has been to highlight the way in which economic and political power-relations are implicated in the production of space. As Neil Smith and Gindi Katz have indicated, for instance, the Cartesian notion of absolute space is tied up with “the emergence of capitalist social relations in Europe [...] which established absolute space as the premise of hegemonic social practices”; and, in particular, the process of colonisation. Spatial Cartesianism also forms the basis for the common-sense notion of an autonomous ‘real space’ which is so often contested by the postcolonial novel, in line with the realisation that, if space is produced, it can never be innocent. In Chamoiseau’s novel *Texaco*, for example, spatial zones are inextricably intertwined with power-struggles and the search for identity; the eponymous suburb is therefore seen as a “mangrove urbaine” (1992a: 336) opposed to the colonial town-centre’s “logique urbaine occidentale, alignée, ordonnée” (242).

This thesis thus contains a critique of abstract space not only on philosophical grounds but also, more importantly, because of its complicity with the colonial project. Cartesian geometry, for example, can be seen to support a process of colonial ‘translation’ because, as we shall see, it views space as smooth, infinitely divisible, interchangeable. This mathematical assumption equates to the notion that what holds in one place can be assumed to hold generally. In this way the practice of colonial occupation of territory comes to be justified in terms of universal Reason, absolute values, the self-evident validity of Western Progress with which other cultures have to ‘catch up’. Similarly, as postcolonial theorists have indicated, abstract space tends to favour universal notions of Progress supported by teleological-based History. Thus, as Homi Bhabha suggests:

the grand narratives of 19th-Century historicism on which its claims to universalism were founded - evolutionism, utilitarianism, evangelism - were also, in another textual and territorial time/space, the technologies of colonial and imperialist governance. (1994: 195)

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*In Keith & Pile (1993: 75).*
The ways in which linear History and its accompanying discourses come to dominate the multiple or diverging histoires of what Glissant calls "la face cachée du monde" (1981: 191) and how this is resisted by a new spatial history will be examined in chapter 6.

Another consequence of spatial abstraction, however, insofar as it supports notions of Universality, is the erasure of individual places, a loss of particularity, that is. If, as Descartes argues, an object does not impinge on the place it occupies and *vice versa*, then the particular, the located, is simply an example, or subdivision of a general space. Postcolonial criticism, on the other hand, and this underlines its value here, restores the emphasis on the particular, "le lieu est incontournable" as Glissant insists (1993a: 513). The urgency of postcolonial theory thus becomes a reaffirmation of difference and opacity opposed to universal similarity and transparence. In Bhabha's terms it necessitates the idea of a 'location of culture' (1994) and a theoretical distinction between 'space' and 'place'. At the same time this concentration on the local, the particular, also opens up the possibility of the mixed and the impure contained in the notions of hybridity and créolisation. The reality of cross-cultural interaction makes of space a relational system, not a collection of absolute singularities, the 'location' of culture is not fixed, but forever in-process.

Postcolonial theory and literature, it should be noted, are particularly well equipped to deal with these notions of relational identity precisely because the cultural processes of translation which give them birth - diaspora, migrations, inter-mixing - tend to undo fixed modes of thinking.9 Crucially, of course, they are all spatial processes. Above all, however, it is the relationship between centre and periphery which the unsettling of universal (unextended) thinking highlights. Thus, for Bhabha the periphery or margin becomes the "paradigmatic place of departure" (1994: 21). More specifically, as bell hooks argues, "marginality [becomes] a central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being" and which "offers the possibility of radical perspectives from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds" (1990: 149). This assertion, it seems to me, is also important because it validates the use of literature and the imaginary in general as a means of reaffirming a strategic marginality which in real terms can often constitute the vehicle of oppression and

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9 Similarly, anti-colonial discourse often displays a tendency towards the reaffirmation of atavistic nationalism.
exclusion. Space, therefore, once the stake of colonial expansion, becomes the primary weapon of postcolonial writing.

These reflections underline the congruence of spatiality and postcolonial theory or literature, but my concentration on the Caribbean requires further explanation. One reason for looking at Caribbean writing is that, as Glissant argues, the Caribbean archipelago is "un des lieux du monde où la relation le plus visiblement se donne" (1990: 46). In addition the peculiar political situation of Martinique and Guadeloupe which, together with French Guyana, have the status of French overseas departments (DOM), and thus constitute examples of what Glissant calls "une colonisation réussie" (1981: 155), goes some way to explaining both the sensitivity of French West Indians to the question of what Du Bois called 'double consciousness' and the intellectual climate which has produced a number of influential movements, from Négritude to créolité. The continued presence of French authority in the islands, accompanied by forms of linguistic and cultural alienation (detailed by Glissant in Le discours antillais (1981)) have made the issues of language (Creole vs French), space (neo-colonial economics) and identity (French and West Indian) evergreen topics of debate. Caribbean thinking, and that of the French-speaking islands in particular, the product of a culture marked by ethnic diversity and displacement, can thus be seen as particularly in tune with a spatialised, relational, approach to the problematics of postcolonial identity.

This is especially true of the literary production of the region; indeed, as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin have stated, "it is [...] the Caribbean which has been the crucible of the most extensive and challenging postcolonial literary theory" (1989: 145). What I want to suggest is that Caribbean writing should be seen, not just as an example of the postcolonial, but as a contribution to its development. The notion of créolisation, for example, is not simply a version of hybridity, but a productive reformulation of its terms, precisely because, as Robert Young has indicated, Creole theories of identity "preserve the real historical forms of cultural contact" (1995: 5). Now it goes without saying that not every example of contemporary Francophone Caribbean writing displays the same concern with space. However it is possible to argue that the most influential contemporary writing in the field - the novels of Chamoiseau, Condé, Confiat, Glissant and Pépin - owes its success, in part at least, to such an engagement with space and spatial categories of discourse.
In analysing examples of this literary re-engagement with space, then, I propose to focus on two related modes of ‘reading’ Caribbean literature: an attention to, on the one hand, the way in which texts represent space (the landscape, the city, the world), and, on the other, the spatiality of those texts themselves (in terms of typology, narrative viewpoint (i.e. a kind of conceptual reader-space) and narrative structure). In so doing I attempt to suggest a number of parallels between the two, how Chamoiseau, for example, uses a cyclical, polyphonic narrative as a correlative for the non-linear, diverse, view of history announced in Texaco (ch. 6).

Another important strategy for my approach, suggested particularly by Chamoiseau & Confiants’ *Lettres créoles* (1991), will be the construction of a kind of literary history within which to situate the contemporary French Antillean novel (ch. 4 especially). A few introductory remarks should serve to indicate the general direction I intend to take. In the first place, the writing of Condé, Chamoiseau and Glissant can be seen as a resistance to a kind of literary realism in which space is a backdrop to everyday activities. This latter technique, exemplified by Zobel’s *La rue case-nègres* (1974), for example, is undone in later texts by an overlayering of symbolic and non-realistic strategies. A concentration on the ‘real’ spaces of the Caribbean (volcanoes, tropical forests, mountains and motorways), which resists the alienation of exotic or *doudouist* modes of representation, is still an important goal, of course. Thus the authors of *Eloge de la créolité* define the writer as “un renifleur d’existence”, adding: “voir notre existence c’est nous voir en situation dans notre histoire, dans notre quotidien, dans notre réel” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiants, 1993: 38). Yet, in these later novels, space is no longer a neutral or inert element. Instead what emerges is a complex dialogue between space and being: “l’alentour est mon principal personnage” affirms Glissant (1993d: 112).

The repercussions of this view are several. If space is not inert then it can impinge on consciousness: Caribbean culture and identity are seen as somehow reflected in, or equally, *produced* by its characteristic spaces. Hence, for Glissant, the difference between a concentrating Mediterranean sea, suggestive of monotheistic religions and other *pensées de l’Un*, and the Caribbean sea which, as he argues, “diffracte et [...] porte à l’émoi de la diversité” (1996b: 14-15). Space, then, becomes a kind of text or palimpsest to be read or decoded, a notion summarised in Glissant’s insistence on a *poétique du paysage* (1981: 262). This also extends to another strategy, however, that of reading the past in terms of spaces of the imaginary: “notre paysage est son propre
monument [...] c'est tout histoire” says Glissant (21). We shall see how, in texts from *Le quatrième siècle* (Glissant, 1964) to *Texaco* (Chamoiseau, 1992a) the obscured histories of the Caribbean are revitalised through a reading of space which is performed either through the agency of the *quimboiseur* (Glissant’s Papa Longoué), visionary decoder of the landscape and relayer of oral memory, or through a new and enlightened understanding of the Creole city (in the writings of Chamoiseau’s *urbaniste*) (ch. 6). In this view, space is no longer simply the setting of an everyday reality, the décor in front of which a litany of contingencies are played out. Space is both sociologically and historically determined, and determining.

Just as space is a text, however, so text is spatialised: “la parole de mon paysage”, says Glissant, “est d’abord forêt qui sans arrêt foisonne” (1981: 255). Text-space thus becomes the means by which a Caribbean aesthetic is expressed and the tool with which the linearity of Western History, for example, in all its teleological splendour, is subverted. Consequently, the historical drive (associated, as we have seen, with colonial Progression) finds itself recoded in terms of space, recalling Fredric Jameson’s assertion that “history has become spatial” (1991: 374). In its collision with New World spaces - diffracting sea, archipelago, mangrove - what Walcott calls ‘the Sigh of History’ “dissolves” (1993: 7), replaced instead by the myriad fragments of a thousand relayed (related as well as narrated) histories (ch. 6). To quote Glissant once more, “des histoires défont l’Histoire” (1997c: 75), where *histoires* are both histories and stories. As I shall be arguing in chapter 2, however, we should not see this rejection of a Western aesthetic of linearity in purely oppositional terms, for it is simultaneously an act of recuperation. The rejection of teleological History, in the Caribbean, is also an affirmation of what I shall be calling a Creole *conteur-aesthetic* (ch. 4), which finds symbolic expression in the nocturnal space of the *conteur’s* circle, “un des lieux de la mémoire antillaise” (Glissant, 1990: 51).

The reconfiguration of history as diverse juxtaposition instead of teleological meta-narrative leads, as we have seen, to a conception of being as non-essentialised, in-between, hybrid. Returning to a Caribbean literary history, this shift can be characterised in terms of the development of spatial figuration, specifically through images of rooting. Thus while doudouist writing betrays an absence of rooting in its exoticised space of alienation, *Négritude’s* assertion of an essential ‘blackness’ is, conversely, figured in the image of the phallic (vertical) tree embodying a re-rooting in the mythical space of an originary Africa (chs 4 & 5). Against this evocation of
either non-rooting or the verticality of a racine unique, Glissant prefers the horizontal aesthetic “non pas de l’arbre mais de la végétation”.

Borrowing Deleuze & Guattari’s notion of the rhizome, Glissant proposes a hybrid view of identity which is both rooted and open to the Other, “l’identité non plus comme racine unique”, that is, “mais comme racine allant à la rencontre d’autres racines” (1996b: 23). Never an entirely free-floating system (a tendency of some postmodern thought), the rhizome also suggests a spatial system in which an awareness of the global must be allowed to exist side by side with an affirmation of the particular (ch. 7). Just as the rejection of History is never unmotivated, but simultaneously affirmative of a Caribbean baroque aesthetics, so the Caribbean assertion of plural identity springs from an inherent and relational cultural diversity. This double movement of Relation, elsewhere conceived as aller-retour or negotiation, makes of the Caribbean what Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant call “une spécificité ouverte” (1993: 27).

This opening-up of identity, but in the context of a new Caribbean solidarity, parallels an organisational strategy which structures the text-based chapters of this thesis (chs 5-7). This proceeds in terms of a progressive spatial opening, from the unravelling of the lieu clos of Rivière au Sel, through the urban space of Chamoiseau’s ville créole, to the global space of a Glissantian tout-monde. Additionally, however, each chapter has also been focused around a theme which reassembles, albeit provisionally, the scattered fragments of belonging, memory and identity. Thus I move from an investigation of the notion of community, concentrating on Maryse Condé’s Traversée de la mangrove (ch. 5), through an exploration of history, in which Chamoiseau’s Texaco is the central text (ch. 6), to a consideration of ‘chaotic identity’ in the late fiction of Glissant (ch. 7). In each case what is highlighted is a progression or opening which is simultaneously a movement of return, a negotiation, that is, capable of articulating the ‘double imperatives’ of an in-betweenness which is inescapably spatial as well as spatially expressed.

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CHAPTER ONE
The reassertion of space

‘tout converge dans le problème de l’espace’
Henri Lefebvre (1975: 223)

The approach adopted by this thesis starts from the premise that there is an indelible bond linking being and space. Such an approach typifies the thinking of Martinique’s Edouard Glissant who, in his Introduction à une poétique du divers, makes the following claim:

Je dis toujours que la mer Caraïbe se différencie de la Méditerranée en ceci que c’est une mer ouverte, une mer qui diffracte, là où la Méditerranée est une mer qui concentre. Si les civilisations et les grandes religions monothéistes sont nées autour du bassin méditerranéen, c’est à cause de la puissance de cette mer à incliner, même à travers des drames, des guerres et des conflits, la pensée de l’homme vers une Pensée de l’Un et de l’unité. Tandis que la mer Caraïbe est une mer qui diffracte et qui porte à l’émotion de la diversité. (1996b: 14-15)

In this opening chapter I will attempt to provide a framework for situating the kind of statement made by Glissant and relate it to other possible views of space, most significantly the abstract representation of space associated with the period from the Renaissance onwards which is characterised in the West by the rise of ‘scientific’ objectivity, culminating in the project of modernity and the age of imperialism (a conjunction which will be developed in later chapters). In opposition to this philosophical and cultural tradition I will make a case for a new conception of space which reflects contemporary concerns in political as well as theoretical circles and which can be taken as a starting-point for considering contemporary literary texts.

Much of the thinking of the Caribbean novelists I shall be focusing on rests on the assumption that forms of social and historical existence interact in complex ways with a third category, that of space. This intersection of the spatial, the social and the historical, I shall be arguing, forms the core of a radical revision of social theory in which Caribbean literature and thought participate. I will be drawing here on the work of Henri Lefebvre and, in particular, on his 1974 text La production de l’espace. Lefebvre, born in 1901, went on to become one of France’s most prominent Marxist
critics\(^{11}\) (he was a member of the Communist party from 1928 to 1958) before turning his attention, after World War II, to a study of everyday life \([\text{la vie quotidienne}]^{12}\) and, later, to the production of space, particularly in the context of the urban.\(^{13}\) Towards the end of his life, Lefebvre embarked on a study of what he called \textit{rythmanalyse}.\(^{14}\) Lefebvre’s writings, and above all \textit{La production de l’espace}, have been the inspiration for a whole generation of spatial writing and this chapter will examine both the nature of this revision, its place in Western thought, and how it can be related to literary production. The legacy of rational Enlightenment thought, I will argue, has tended to compartmentalise space and present it as inert or passive, a simple dimension in which we live out our daily existence. I hope to show, in what follows, how Lefebvre’s writings can be used to develop an alternative model of ‘spatial production’ which escapes common-sense, Cartesian, notions of space as neutral container (with the universalising implications this has for the local or the particular) and to use his analysis of urban space in particular as a means of contextualising the Caribbean representation of space.

The presence of geographical and spatial categories is, needless to say, hardly a recent phenomenon in literature. Journeys and quests of all kinds have been characteristic, even defining, features of fiction since ancient times, while the evocation of places both real and imaginary (cities, landscapes, buildings) is a commonplace of the novel, from descriptions of Paris or London in the so-called Realist novel (Balzac and Dickens for example) to the modernist urban landscapes of Joyce’s Dublin and Kafka’s Prague. Nevertheless space functions in strikingly different ways in different periods of literary production and between one writer and another. And although space is a central concern of the literary imagination in much early twentieth-century European writing, it is time more than space which is actively interrogated. One might point to Proust’s \textit{À la recherche du temps perdu} (1913-1927), Thomas Mann’s \textit{Der Zauberberg} (1924) and T.S. Eliot’s \textit{Four Quartets} (1935-1942) as prime examples of this modernist obsession with the temporal.

\(^{11}\) Cf \textit{Introduction aux moeurs choisis de Karl Marx} (1934); \textit{La conscience mystifiée} (1936); \textit{Le matérialisme dialectique} (1939); \textit{Le marxisme} (1948); \textit{Marx} (1964); \textit{La sociologie de Marx} (1966); \textit{La pensée marxiste et la ville} (1972).


\(^{13}\) \textit{Le droit à la ville} (1968); \textit{Du rural à l’urbain} (1970a); \textit{La révolution urbaine} (1970b); \textit{Espace et politique} (\textit{Le droit à la ville, II}) (1973); \textit{La production de l’espace} (1974).

This is not to say that the spatial is absent in this period: on the contrary, it is a recurrent feature. But although it is ultimately futile to separate categories of time and space, one can reasonably make a number of claims about relative trends. It is possible to argue, therefore, that whereas a certain bias towards temporal considerations permeates many prominent novels of the pre-war period, those in the post-war era are marked by a self-conscious re-awakening to the spatial. Likewise, while space and location are always given elements in any fiction, the trends I am concerned with emphasise the act of localising and differentiating within or against the grain of a genre, namely that of narrative fiction, whose organising principle is predominantly temporal. "After Lukacs and Proust", says Said, "we have become so accustomed to thinking of the novel's plot and structure as constituted mainly by temporality that we have overlooked the function of space, geography and location" (1993: 100-101). In the chapters which follow, then, I shall be attempting to promote the idea that recent novels from the Francophone West Indies are at the forefront of such spatialising trends, precisely because they touch on a number of areas of discourse (in particular those of postcolonial identity-politics and postmodern theory) which are intimately concerned with spatiality. For now, however, I shall content myself with the question of what Edward Soja has termed 'the reassertion of space in critical social theory' (1989) and the relevance of this trend in helping to define my own approach to the spatial.

"The spatial dimension of our lives has never been of greater practical and political relevance than it is today", Soja has claimed recently (1996: 1), echoing Foucault's earlier evaluation of the late twentieth-century as being "l'époque de l'espace" (1994 IV: 752). To promote the resurgence of the spatial in recent social criticism, as Soja does, implies that the contemporary, so-called postmodern, world is somehow particularly dominated by considerations of space and spatial relations. It also suggests that space, which is an important, even fundamental, feature of all human societies, has either been neglected, or worse, mishandled, in the thinking of previous eras. Thus, he points out, "we are becoming increasingly aware that we are, and always have been, intrinsically spatial beings, active participants in the social construction of our embracing spatialities" (1996: 1). A brief examination of some of the ways in which discussions of space have tended to fall short, therefore, will help to define the parameters of my approach here.
One such weakness concerns the (methodological) problem of disciplinary segregation: 'space' as a theme has often tended to be divided into categories which are assigned to conveniently separated fields of knowledge (mathematics, architecture, art/representation, geography). As Lefebvre remarks repeatedly, we tend to describe space in terms of tags - mental space, mathematical space, physical space - but we have no 'unitary' social theory of space capable of accommodating these diverse categories. To segregate different ways of conceptualising space in this manner usually leads to a process of mutual exclusion, occluding the more fluid areas of social existence where they come together. There is also a tendency for the abstract to neglect the everyday, the non-representational, in short what Lefebvre calls spatial praxis \textit{pratique spatiale} and which he is eager to reintroduce into his dialogic view of space.

For a long time space was the almost exclusive property of the abstract sciences\(^\text{15}\) (mathematics and philosophy) and, as Henri Lefebvre comments, rarely a legitimate feature of social analysis at all:


Lefebvre’s account of space, on the other hand, reacts against this constrictive intra-disciplinary approach: while not a totalising theory - "rien qui ressemble à un système" (485) - it can nevertheless be described as ‘unitary’ in the sense that it refuses to treat categories of space as though they were autonomous entities, fully-formed and self-sufficient. Lefebvre, then, sees the central problem of writing about space as the necessity of mediating between the abstract (the mental or representational) and the social (or concrete). He describes this challenge as follows:

Comment passer des espaces mathématiques, c’est-à-dire des capacités mentales de l’espèce humaine, de la logique, à la nature, d’abord, à la pratique ensuite et à la théorie de la vie sociale qui se déroule aussi dans l’espace? (9)

\(^{15}\) Not absolutely exclusive, one should add. Examples of a more integrated kind of spatiality are given by such ‘classical’ figures as Herodotus - whose 'historical' writings are firmly rooted in the geographical (and influence Glissant's \textit{Tout-monde} (1993a)) - and the Roman architect Vitruvius who elaborated an early 'code of space' which was to resurface in the Renaissance. Such figures still tend to leave out a great deal, though. Vitruvius, for example, neglects what Lefebvre calls 'l’effet urbain' (1974: 311): in this way the city, with its civic spaces, disappears leaving only a collection of public monuments and private houses.
Or in other words:

La recherche concerne l'espace logico-épistémologique, - l'espace de la pratique sociale, - celui qu’occupent les phénomènes sensibles, sans exclure l'imaginaire, les projets et projections, les symboles, les utopies. (19)

The rise of 'postmodern geography', 'la géographie culturelle', 'space studies' and 'urban studies' is, in part, a testament to Lefebvre's realisation of the interlocking, protean, nature of space.

The notion of hybridity (in its multifarious guises), as readers of postcolonial theory and literature will be aware, permeates contemporary discussions of identity. As well as forming the focus of a later chapter, this crucial notion will inform my reading of recent novels from the French Antilles (though it does need to be problematised, in part with reference to Caribbean theories of créolisation and créolité). Inherent to my theorisation of space, however, is an approach which could itself be described as hybrid or interstitial in the sense that it attempts to navigate a path between categories of space which, as I have indicated, characterise a major way in which thinking about space has been conducted in the West. In other words my approach to space conceives of itself as broadly interdisciplinary, or perhaps, to quote Soja, 'transdisciplinary' (1996: 4). This, it seems to me, is not only an appropriate or suggestive way of tackling an area (namely the Caribbean archipelago) which has come to imagine itself as intrinsically in-between, but also one which is somehow necessary. Moreover, the fact that Soja chooses the term 'Thirdspace', together with 'Thirding-as-Othering', to characterise the thinking of Lefebvre, which is so central to my own conception of spatiality, helps to open up this debate to the hybridity of postcolonial, and especially Caribbean, identities, which are often conceptualised precisely in terms of such 'third spaces'.

Lefebvre's perspective sees the study of space as exceeding the limits of any one discipline. A second, and related way in which it modifies traditional ways of thinking about space relates to a slightly different kind of theoretical separation, namely the use of binary terms, which has underpinned Western essentialist thought and what Derrida has termed a “une métaphysique de la présence” (1967a: 412). These binarisms (from Plato's dichotomy between the realm of ideal forms and that of the

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senses to the radical split, in Descartes, between mind and body, subject and object, reason and nature) exhibit one particularly dangerous tendency, which is that one of the terms almost invariably takes the upper hand. This privileging of one term over another is a common target of deconstructive, postcolonial and feminist criticism as well as the approach I am arguing for here.

So how does this polarising dichotomy, which I have identified as typical of the essentialist thought so inimical to Lefebvre’s approach, work in terms of space? In Cartesian thinking, for example, which epitomises the rationalist, abstract view, space is a mathematical reality: “le calcul règne dans la nature parce que coextensif à l’espace produit par Dieu” (Lefebvre, 1974: 327). In this schema the thinking subject (cogito) presides over the objects it contemplates; mind (res cogitans) dominates matter (which is equated with space, or res extensa). The cogito, then, which lies at the very heart of Cartesian subjectivity, is separated from the external world with little or no interaction between the two: the affirmation of this self-sufficient subject, in other words, can only be secured at the cost of the object world. The result? A view which sees space as neutral and a priori; “avec la raison cartésienne”, to quote Lefebvre, “l’espace entre dans l’absolu” (1974: 7). The fact that, as Püe and Thrift, two of the most prominent cultural geographers, suggest, “the field of subjectivity increasingly encompasses ‘the object world’” (1995: 11) is indicative of a resistance to Cartesianism in contemporary thought which accompanies the rehabilitation of spatiality I am outlining here.

A basic premise of this thesis, then, is that space can be contained neither within the confines of any discipline nor in either pole of any binary opposition; it is neither simply mental or physical (neither simply metaphorical or geographical), but a combination or interpenetration of the two. It is perhaps what Lefebvre, echoing Marx, calls a concrete abstraction, something which possesses both an abstract form and a material presence, a commodity for instance. So, far from being simply a function of geometric reasoning, a mathematical set of abstract coordinates, a grid or framework, spatial organisation is (also) a fundamental feature of social groupings, which both expresses and produces patterns of behaviour and thought, and as such

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17 The notion of "Third Space", which will be taken up in chapter 3 of this thesis, is most forcefully theorised by Homi Bhabha: cf, for example, (1994: 36-39) or his interview with Jonathan Rutherford, entitled 'The Third Space', in Rutherford (1990: 207-221).
enters into complex modes of interaction between the physical, the mental and the social. The first part of this equation, that is to say the idea that space 'reflects' or expresses patterns of thought, is summarised by Glissant when he says that "la pensée s’espace réellement au monde" (1990: 13). Similarly Lefebvre claims that no set of ideas can have any real impact unless it is expressed spatially: "qu’est-ce qu’une idéologie sans un espace auquel elle se réfère [...] que serait l’Eglise sans les églises?" (1974: 55) For Glissant, though, and this is what connects him to Lefebvre, places (and/or spaces) are not merely passively created objects, they simultaneously make ontological claims on the subject, or to quote Geneviève Beluge, "le lieu se présente comme constituant de l’être". In a more general sense, too, space is as much socially constituted (produced) as it is itself constitutive, or to quote Hillier and Hanson, "different types of social formation, it would appear, require a characteristic spatial order, just as different types of spatial order require a particular social formation to sustain them" (1984: 27).

Exactly how these interactive cycles of production and reproduction function is an important issue here and the analysis of space ('spatio-analyse') developed by Lefebvre (1974: 412), which has been so influential in recent social criticism (particularly since the appearance of Donald Nicholson-Smith's English translation of La production de l'espace), may help to elucidate this complex relationship. It is my contention that discussing theories of (social) space in the context of this thesis as a whole, whose focus is otherwise predominantly literary, should achieve two related things: it will both help to ground the poetical in a framework of material, social and historical process and simultaneously bring out the importance of art and representation in what Lefebvre calls 'the production of space'. For Lefebvre's model, with its emphasis on representation, is one of the few which is capable of accommodating both the aesthetic and the material. As such it both encourages, and in a sense validates, the study of literature alongside that of society and history.

Another reason for supporting the Lefebvrean approach, I would argue, is that, in its attempt to mediate between Hegelian idealism and Marxist materialism, it refuses to allow the dust to settle on spatial metaphors, which are increasingly common currency in socio-cultural theory. "L’espace", says Foucault, "est dans le langage

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18 Cf also Lefebvre's comment (1974: 36), 'le dessein se déploie dans l'espace'.
19 In her paper 'Du lieu incontournable à la Relation', delivered at the conference 'Les poétiques d'Edouard Glissant', held at the Sorbonne (Paris IV), 11th-13th March 1998.
d’aujourd’hui la plus obsédante des métaphores” (1994 I: 407), a potential pitfall which Althusser describes when he says: “le recours aux métaphores spatiales [...] pose un problème théorique: celui de ses titres d’existence dans un discours de prétention scientifique”. Thus, although this thesis makes no claims to operate on any kind of genuinely scientific basis, I am nevertheless keen to balance (as far as possible) the intoxicating vagueness of spatial metaphors which are ubiquitous in critical discourse, with an investigation of the tangible, yet simultaneously abstract, ways in which ‘real’ and ‘metaphorical’ spaces interact in social structures. It is not that these turns of phrase have nothing to say, or lack any usefulness; indeed, in a very real sense it may be impossible to think outside spatial categories expressed through language. Hillier and Hanson support this very Kantian notion, arguing that “in everyday life and language, it seems, the experience of spatial formations is an intrinsic, if unconscious dimension of the way in which we experience society itself” (1984: 27). And yet, left unsupported, these initially bright and seductive discursive figures tend to burn themselves out, and in doing so lose their power of suggestion. It is in the more unstable critical moment where matter and metaphor collide, I would argue, or in a model such as Lefebvre’s trialectics of the physical (perçu), mental (conçu) and social (vécu), that the most productive discussion of space can occur.

**Space and time**

‘Le temps en soi est une absurdité; de même l’espace en soi’

Henri Lefebvre (1974: 211)

Space, I have argued, has often been trapped in systems of binary thinking; in addition, however, it has also been forced to play second fiddle to a category of knowledge which, in the nineteenth century especially, became seen as its polar opposite. The (re)assertion of space, then, plays off a perceived, and stifling,

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dominance of time. In a set of lecture notes, published posthumously in 1984, Michel Foucault summarised this cultural sea-change in a formulation which, since its appearance, has been seized upon countless times:

La grande hantise qui a obsédé le XIXᵉ 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, grand surcharge des morts, refroidissement menaçant du monde. C’est dans le second principe de thermo-dynamique que le XIXᵉ siècle a trouvé l’essentiel de ses ressources mythologiques. 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, du côte à côté, du dispersé. Nous sommes à un moment où le monde s’érase, je crois, moins comme une grande vie qui se développerait à travers le temps que comme un réseau qui relie des points et qui entrecroise son écheveau. Peut-être pourrait-on dire que certains des conflits idéologiques qui animent les polémiques d’aujourd’hui se déroulent entre les pieux descendants du temps et les habitants acharnés de l’espace. (1994: IV, 752)

For Foucault space emerges as an important term of discussion because it acts as a corrective, countering what he sees as a nineteenth-century obsession with time (expressed in particular through the dominance of Hegelian and Marxian teleologies, Darwinian evolution and monolithic views of History-as-Progress which have come to represent the modernist project). “Est-ce que ça a commencé avec Bergson ou avant?” Foucault wonders, going on to explain that for such thinkers, “l’espace, c’est ce qui était mort, figé, non dialectique, immobile. En revanche, le temps, c’était riche, fécond, vivant, dialectique” (1994 III: 34). Foucault’s view of this temporal dominance in nineteenth-century thought is supported by a brief examination of a number of key thinkers. Bergson, for example, privileges time because, for him, it is part of the *élan vital* - life as “an unceasing, continuous, undivided process, a sort of cosmic movement of which we are expressions rather than parts”22 - and also because he views space as the fundamental category of the intellect (as epitomised by geometrising scientific discourse) which is inferior to intuition. Kant’s influential establishment of categories of thought sets up an opposition between time and space (fundamental filters through which we perceive and conceive a projected physical world). Although Kantian categorical thinking is useful in rejecting the possibility of an objective reality, the relationship between time and space which he sets up is not an equal one. As Glissant reminds us, “pour Kant, la pluralité a lieu dans le temps, non dans l’espace” (1990: 229). The consequence of this for the human sciences, to

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22 White (1955: 67).
quote Soja, was that “by the 1920s, putting phenomena in a temporal sequence (Kant’s *nacheinander*) had become much more significant and revealing [...] than putting them beside each other in space (Kant’s *nebenander*)” (1989: 36).

This implicit downgrading of space in favour of time has also be seen as an integral part of Hegelian philosophy, as David Gross points out:

> For Hegel, the Idea objectified itself in two dimensions: in space (as Nature) and in time (as History). Nature was the Idea in an inert state, petrified and frozen in matter. Spirit on the other hand, was the Idea as self-consciousness moving through time. (1982: 60)

Lefebvre for his part takes a slightly different line: historical time, for Hegel, engenders space - “le Temps donc se fige et se fixe dans la rationalité immanente à l’espace” (1974: 29), time is overwhelmed by an “espace immobile, lieu et milieu de la Raison accomplie” (30). It is not simply a question, however, of rejecting Hegel (or any other thinker for that matter) outright; Lefebvre seeks to modify Hegelian dialectics, to mediate between the latter’s idealism on the one hand and Marxist materialism on the other, in a movement which is itself dialectical or synthetic (though as we shall see, Lefebvre’s trialectics makes significant modifications to this notion).

Foucault also take pains to avoid a simplistic opposition of the categories of time and space, refusing to subscribe to either of the camps he identifies in his discussion of ‘espaces autres’, the ‘pieux descendants du temps’ or the ‘habitants acharnés de l’espace’:

L’utilisation des termes spatiaux vous a un petit air d’antihistoire pour tous ceux qui confondent l’histoire avec les vieilles formes de l’évolution, de la continuité vivante, du développement organique, du progrès de la conscience ou du projet de l’existence. Du moment qu’on parlait de l’espace, c’est qu’on était contre le temps [...] Ils ne comprenaient pas que, dans le repérage des implantations, des délimitations, des découpages d’objets, des mises en tableau, des organisations de domaines, ce qu’on faisait affleurer, c’étaient des processus - historiques, bien sûr - de pouvoir. La description spatialisante des faits de discours ouvre sur l’analyse des effets de pouvoir qui leur sont liés. (1994 III: 34)

We shall return to the Foucauldian treatment of the power-space equation in due course, but for now it is the interrogation of the temporal and the historical through a process of spatialisation that I should like to underline. In an age which is marked by simultaneity and by the subversion of linear teleology, Lefebvre argues, “tout ce qui provient de l’histoire et du temps historiques subit [...] une épreuve [...] *l’épreuve de l’espace*” (1974: 478). There is an obvious similarity here to the postmodern critique of
History (as what Lyotard (1979) calls a grand récit), which is accompanied by just such a process of spatialisation, culminating in Jameson's claim, already cited in my introduction, that "history has become spatial" (1991: 374). This dismantling of History, with a capital H, is also an important feature of the Francophone Caribbean novels I shall be introducing later, where the teleological thrust of a unified History dissolves in its collision with New World spaces. It is important to note here that there is no question of time somehow 'disappearing', though the fetishisation of space can sometimes give this impression; in other words, it is not the concept of time in itself which is questioned, rather the way in which its representation as linear 'clock-time', together with the associations such a notion has tended to bring with it (absolutism, the 'naturalness' of progress and evolution), has tended to smother spatial considerations. Soja expresses this crucial distinction in terms of the historical when he says that "it is the dominance of a historicism of critical thought that is being challenged, not the importance of history" (1989: 24).

Neutral space and the location of difference

The insistence on space and time as distinct, yet unequally weighted, categories, I have suggested, appears as a prominent feature of nineteenth-century thought. One of the consequences of this brand of thinking, which, as Foucault has indicated, privileges time, as "riche, fécond, vivant, dialectique", over space - "ce qui était mort, figé, non dialectique, immobile" (1994 III: 34) - has been to reinforce the existing notion of space as a passive container. This view is first put forward by Plato in his Timaeus, where he speaks of a 'receptacle' (hypodoche) which provides 'space' (chora) for all things. This 'receptacle of becoming' (1965: 67), or 'Space', he says, is "eternal and indestructible" (71), "a kind of neutral plastic material on which changing impressions are stamped by the things which enter it" (69). As we shall see in chapter

24 It is perhaps worthwhile to note, in passing, that we have traditionally had to resort to spatial representations (clocks, sundials etc.) to record the passage of time. The question of how the move from analogue to digital technologies (i.e. from linear to juxtapositional representations) might relate to the space-time equation is therefore an interesting one.
3, however, Plato’s view of space actually contains a number of ambiguities; Derrida’s reading of the text (1993a), for example, sees ‘Khôra’ as undermining the dichotomy which Plato sets up in the first place. Nevertheless the assumption that space constitutes a neutral or inert container, within which the more dynamic, or chaotic, process of becoming ‘takes place’, seems to be the thrust of the Timaeus and is subsequently taken up and reinforced in the Cartesian tradition. As Lefebvre asserts, “la thèse d’un milieu spatial inerte, où gens et choses, actes et situations n’auraient qu’à se loger, correspond à un schéma cartésien (la chose étendue comme «objet de pensée) devenu au cours des ages «sens commun» et «cultures»” (1974: 342).

An additional assumption, for Descartes, however, was that an object is the same wherever it is placed and that, inversely, the nature of a place is not altered by the objects which ‘occupy’ it.\(^{26}\) This view equates to the common-sense perception of space as a gap, (a ‘parking space’, ‘breathing space’, ) or a void\(^{27}\) (close to the vacuum of ‘outer space’) within which bodies (people and objects) are situated. It is also closely related to the development of Cartesian geometry, where not only is space ‘mapped out’ on rational (grid)lines, but the relation between points is an abstract one, independent of ‘place’. Significantly then, it is precisely in the affirmation of place - so prominent in recent social and postcolonial criticism, as well as Caribbean writing\(^{28}\) - that the notion of space \textit{en soi} begins to collapse. For places, despite Descartes’ affirmations to the contrary, can no longer be seen as interchangeable, nor as simple subdivisions of a larger, regularly extended space. Indeed places can be defined, perhaps, as precisely those locations which resist universalisation and the effacing of difference. One of the dangers of the current vogue for spatial metaphors, to which I referred earlier, is that it tends to obscure the importance of particular \textit{places} as indicative of difference. Pile and Thrift, for example, quote Pratt, who urges us to “recognise the limits of any metaphor and resist being seduced by

\(^{25}\) Cf in this connection Edward Casey (1992).

\(^{26}\) Cf Edward Casey (1992: 54-57) especially p55, where he quotes Descartes’ \textit{Principles of Philosophy} (1644): ‘When a stone has been removed from the \textit{space} or \textit{place} in which it was […] we judge that the extension of the place in which the stone was remains the same, although the stone’s place may now be occupied by wood, or water, or air, or any other body’.

\(^{27}\) Though as Casey points out (55), Descartes, by equating matter with extension (space), rejects the idea of a void.

\(^{28}\) Cf, for example, Carter, Donald, & Squires (1993), and Keith & Pile (1993). For an overview of the philosophical history of concepts of place, see Casey (1992). Postcolonial theory abounds with references to place, but one good example is Paul Gilroy’s ‘It Ain’t Where You’re From, It’s Where
geographical and spatial metaphors that are ultimately aspatial and insensitive to place" (1995: 374). The second of these criticisms, as we shall see in my next chapter, can be levelled at some versions of postmodernism, and I shall be arguing that one of the ways in which postmodern theory can be modified from a postcolonial perspective is precisely through the restitution of place as an important consideration. As Mathieu Béluse, a protagonist of Glissant’s Tout-monde, puts it, “le lieu est incontournable” (1993a: 513), a statement which echoes Lefebvre’s observation that “le local […] ne disparaît pas, absorbé par le régional, le national, le mondial lui-même” (1974: 106). An examination of the relationship between concepts of place and space (similar to Glissant’s lieu and étendue, which are themselves related to but not synonymous with the notions of enracinement and errance) will thus occupy a prominent part of my analysis of Caribbean texts.

Space, power and identity

‘l’hégémonie s’exerce par le moyen de l’espace’

Henri Lefebvre (1974: 18)

Edward Soja has called Lefebvre, with some justification I believe, “the incunabulum of postmodern critical human geography, the primary source for the assault against historicism and the reassertion of space in critical social theory” (1989: 41); yet he is not the first to have developed such an interest in space. A number of thinkers, many of them better known than Lefebvre, have attempted to adopt a spatial perspective, though few have come as close as Lefebvre has to elaborating what he calls a ‘unitary’ theory of space.²⁰

One such thinker, although he is described by Lefebvre as a victim of ‘topophilia’ (1974: 143), is Bachelard, to whom I referred in my introduction. In his descriptions,
exemplified by the painstaking and often dazzling explorations of intimate, domestic space in* Poétique de l’espace*(1972), we encounter the notion of an organic relationship between consciousness and nature. Thus shells and nests, for examples, are equated (through a kind of isomorphism) with the rooms and beds of our homes. An important conclusion to be drawn from Bachelard’s work is that, as I have been hinting, space (or surrounding) exerts a tangible influence on the individual. Another significant, but limited, point of reference, for our purposes, is the work of Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson, central figures in University College London’s space syntax group. Hillier and Hanson have been instrumental in developing an empirically-verifiable model of* the social logic of space*, along lines which, broadly speaking, overlap with Lefebvre’s view of space, and based on a “new definition of spatial order as restrictions on a random process” (1984: xii). However, because of the emphasis on empirical data and computer-generated models (as employed in specific, and usually local, case studies) rather than on wider cultural and historical issues, much of their work is of limited practical use here, though it does remain a close cousin of Lefebvrean spatiality.

One insight, drawn from anthropological theory, is worth retaining for future discussion, however. Spatial relations of the individual-group type, they tell us, seem to fall into two broad categories: those based on bounded groups or sets, that is to say “groups that have a spatial dimension through co-residence or proximity”, and those based on relations which “cross-cut such spatial divisions and [...] integrate individuals across space” (7), or ‘sodalities’. The former category best describes the territorial, or community-based group while the latter characterises more dispersed, though not necessarily less rigid, structures of group identification. This distinction is significant because it ties in with elements of postcolonial thought relating to territorial and diasporic patterns of social behaviour which escape the narrow logic of the local-global opposition. The second category in particular invites comparison with postcolonial images of migration and the Glissantian notion of* errance* [errancy], while a critique of the first fuels both Caribbean thinking and particularly Deleuze
and Guattari’s notion of *deterritorialisation* (1975). These twin modes of spatial relation are not, it should be pointed out, co-terminous with the place-space relationship though they are implicated in it. Nor are they the only way of representing social groupings; such a view would be a reductive and excessively schematic way of treating what are highly mobile and elusive relations. What they do suggest insistently, however, is the importance of spatial relations to the process of identification-differentiation, however one chooses to define this process.

The space-identity equation is not the only one at stake here though. Two thinkers in particular have been instrumental in setting out another crucial relationship, namely that between space, power and ultimately (though this is perhaps more a concern of Lefebvre and Jameson), economics. Benjamin’s unfinished study of Paris in the nineteenth century, published posthumously as *Das Passagenwerk* (1982), marks him out as one of the great analysts of socio-cultural space, a fact recognised by Susan Sontag who punningly referred to him as a writer “à la recherche des espaces perdus”. In it he shows how the arcades (*passage*) constituted ‘fantasmagorical’ spaces of commerce, their shops described as proto department-stores. Similarly the universal exhibitions (of 1835 and 1839) constitute “les lieux de pèlerinage de la marchandise comme fétiche” (Benjamin, 1989: 39). The changing face of Paris (its spatial reorganisation) thus goes hand in hand with the development of capitalism, which is also implicated in the consolidation (but also modification) of power-structures. Thus in Haussmann’s sweeping building projects (involving the destruction of much of medieval Paris and its replacement with boulevards, squares and so on), dubbed ‘embellissement stratégique’ (57, 898), “la fantasmagorie s’est faite pierre” (57). This radical transformation served “l’impérialisme napoléonien, qui favorise le capitalisme et le finance” (56), and proceeded, as Lefebvre has remarked, according to a definite division of space: “Haussmann a brisé l’espace historique de Paris au profit d’un espace stratégique, donc prévu et découpé comme tel” (1974: 360). Analysing urban space(s) in this way, therefore, foregrounds the strategic

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35 The connection between the two thinkers is not purely coincidental, of course. According to Perry Anderson, for example, Benjamin had read Lefebvre, cf Kofman & Lebas, ‘Lost in Transposition - Time, Space and the City’, an introduction to their translation and selection of essays by Lefebvre on
(counter-revolutionary) reconstruction of Paris in the service of commerce and political power, but it also (and no less importantly) relies on readings of Baudelaire and other poets who contributed (as well as reacted) to the development of (an image) of urban modernity, of which Paris, 'capital of the nineteenth century', forms the paradigm.

If Benjamin's work on Paris conjoins the aesthetics of modernity and early capitalism with a historico-political perspective, Foucault's works have always been concerned with the workings of power itself, focusing on the way this functions spatially: "la géographie doit bien être au cœur de ce dont je m'occupe", as he has said himself (1994 III: 28). For Foucault, then, "space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power" (1984: 252). It is important, for our purposes, to note that the normative systems of control and discipline outlined by Foucault (the prison, the mental asylum, the military academy and so on) involve spatial exclusion and containment - a marginalisation which is as real as it is metaphorical. The best-known symbol for such spatially-oriented controlling mechanisms is, of course, the Panopticon designed by Jeremy Bentham and described by Foucault in *Surveiller et punir* (1975). This observation-device, which (significantly perhaps) was inspired by a visit by Bentham's brother to the 'Ecole militaire' in Paris (Blanquart, 1997: 129), and which (in some ways) epitomises the idea of a surveillance state, brings together, "through spatial ordering, [...] power, control of the body, control of groups and knowledge [...] it locates individuals in space, in a hierarchical and efficiently visible organization" (Rabinow, 1984: 19).

The significance of the spatial analyses of Foucault in particular, as Soja has suggested, lies in the insistent probing of the mechanisms through which "space can be made to hide consequences from us, how the relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of human life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology" (1989: 6). Significantly, though, it is also the simultaneous desire and failure of such (conceptually absolute) mechanisms which is played out in spatial terms. Much postcolonial theory and writing (Caribbean or otherwise) rests on such a premise, suggesting once again that identity-politics is irreducibly and all-pervasively, though not exclusively, spatial. It is also perhaps fundamentally sexual, production and reproduction going hand in hand.

the urban question entitled *Writings on Cities* (Lefebvre, 1996: 11). Shields (1999: 25) confirms this, pointing out that Benjamin 'read and enthusiastically annotated *La Conscience mystifiée*.'
Space, in such a view, is gendered, a notion which sees power as complicit with masculine (phallic) spaces. Lefebvre, as we shall see, identifies phallicism as one of the defining features of what he calls ‘abstract’ space, while the gendering of spaces in the Caribbean is a recurrent theme; in his autobiographical Une enfance créole (1996a, 1996b), for example, Chamoiseau contrasts the maternal (Creole) space of the home with the dominating masculine (French) space of the colonial school.

Henri Lefebvre and the trialectics of spatiality

The approach outlined in Lefebvre’s work, we have seen, reacts against the dominance of a view of space as neutral entity or category. According to one strand of Western thinking space was an infinite container, both empty and a priori. Newton, for example, saw both space and time as “absolute, self-sufficient forms that are actually present in the world as realities in their own right […] infinite, non-relational categories that precede and are independent of both objects and human perceptions” (Gross, 1982: 59). Similarly, Spinoza (and Descartes to an extent) argued for space as a divine attribute, an absolute en soi. That this is not the only way, although a deceptively ‘natural’ one, of conceptualising space, should have become clear by now. Refuting the notion of neutral, empty space - what Lefebvre terms “le lieu passif des rapports sociaux” (1974: 18) - in favour of a relational, productive space which engages in both power-relations and identity-politics, lies at the very heart of the enterprise at hand. Michael Keith and Steve Pile, two of the most prominent exponents of spatial thinking in the UK, sum up this attitude when they argue that “space cannot be dealt with as if it were merely a passive, abstract arena on which things happen” (1993: 2). Or to quote Lefebvre, once again:

On sait que l'espace n'est pas préexistant, vide, doté seulement de propriétés formelles. La critique et le refus de l'espace absolu équivalent au rejet d'une représentation, celle d'un contenant que vient remplir un contenu, la matière, le corps. (1974: 198)

Cf also Julia Kristeva, ‘Woman’s Time’, Signs 7, 1, 1981 (Autumn).
For Lefebvre, space (as an ell-embracing and indivisible phenomenon) is not inert, independent of human agency, or somehow just 'out-there'; instead it is produced - "l'espace (social) est un produit (social)" (35). In one important, but general, sense, for example, the body can be seen as producing a space, both because it perceives space through the conceptual and sensory apparatus and because space only assumes any 'real' meaning through the relationship of bodies to one another, through their configurations and movements (De Certeau's discussions of walking and spatial narratives are relevant in this context). As Lefebvre has argued repeatedly, space is both produced and productive on a number of levels: perceptual, mental and material. But what exactly does Lefebvre mean by this and what are the consequences of such a notion?

Lefebvre's use of production as a concept is drawn from Marx and Engels, via Hegel, but as Rob Shields puts it, "the concept [...] is enlarged from its narrower, industrial, sense (production of products, commodities) to include the production of works in the built environment (œuvres) and of spatialised meanings and other codings of the social environment" (1999:159). Most obviously, the idea that space might be 'produced' flies in the face of the deep-seated notion of a pre-existing space which I have already attempted to undermine (Lefebvre, 1974: 22). Lefebvre sees social space as a product in the specific (Marxist) sense that it transforms a 'raw material' (Nature, which can only create, not produce) into an 'concrete abstraction', whose characteristic features are its reproducibility ("répétable, résultat d'actes répétitifs" (91)), the dissimulation of the marks of production (unlike the work, which often seeks to foreground them) and its entry into systems of exchange. In addition, however, Lefebvre sees social space as both a means of production (as land) and containing the social forces of production and reproduction (as space): "l'espace (sociale) [...] enveloppe les choses produites; il comprend leurs relations dans leur coexistence et leur simultanéité" (81). Social space is produced (in the physical sense of a built environment and through the modification of natural environments), but it is also itself productive, creating patterns of behaviour and governing both its own reproduction and that of individuals acting within it. Family and social structures, which determine and are themselves determined by reproduced patterns of interaction, are thus systematised normatively in space. In addition, images of male

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37 Cf De Certeau (1990), especially the chapter entitled 'La marche dans la ville'.
and female can determine gender rôles, expressed spatially, in ways which often bring exclusive social consequences. Shields gives an example of this in a footnote:

Two heterosexual parents, two-three children and a level of wealth sufficient to maintain two cars is assumed in the design of North American suburban houses, the layout of tract development and the poor provision of public transport. This model of housing and family interlocks with career patterns, which support this middle-class lifestyle, and is policed by inflexible planning regulations and the difficulty of obtaining mortgages for alternative types of housing. (1999: 148)

Space, however, can also become an object of consumption (as in the case of the Mediterranean as a touristic space of leisure). The interrelation of these factors thus performs a useful function in that it undermines the base-superstructure dualism with its hierarchical insistence on economic factors (modes of production) as generative, though the importance of such modes of production is not thereby negated (1974: 57-58).

Lefebvre's analysis of the production of space, we have seen, reacts against the philosophical tradition according to which space could only be created by God. It also reacts against the negative or static connotations of Space as opposed to concepts of (dynamic) History and Time. This he supports by reworking the dialectical materialism inherited from Marx and Engels (who themselves evolved their model from a critique of Hegel's Idealised dialectics), to include a spatial element previously neglected or else subsumed in the linear Marxist-Hegelian progression from *affirmation* (thesis) to *negation* (antithesis) to *negation-of-the-negation* (synthesis). Lefebvre, as Rob Shields tells us, "shifts the ground of dialectical materialism from time to space" (1999: 121) and in doing so opens up the synthetic drive of teleological dialectics (powered by Hegelian Reason) to a third stage of negation, which Soja (influenced by conceptions of alterity found in postcolonial and postmodern thinkers among others) has termed ‘Thirding-as-Othering’. Thus the ‘trialectic’, which Lefebvre himself refers to as “une dialectique de triplicité” (1974:

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38 Cf Lefebvre (1974: 72): ‘dans la pratique spatiale du néo-capitalisme, avec les transports aériens, les représentations de l'espace permettent de manipuler les espaces de représentations (ceux du soleil, de la mer, de la fête, du gaspillage et de la dépense’.

39 The thesis-antithesis-synthesis terminology, as Shields reminds us, was not used by Marx or Engels, but derives from Fichte, hence their parenthesisation here (1999: 119).

40 Shields (1999: 152) refers to Soja’s reading of Lefebvre’s trialectics as ‘a form that can only be called postmodern and whose roots would be found to lie not only in Hegel, Marx and Lefebvre, but also in the work of Emmanuel Lévinas’ ‘alterity’, Edward Said’s ‘Orientalism’ and Gloria Anzaldua’s ‘bordercrossing’ and in the work of others who have sought to piece together the logic of stories told ‘alongside’ official histories’.
48), takes on the form affirmation-negation-otherwise, where the third term does not lie (temporally) 'after', but (spatially) 'beyond' the other terms with which it engages. To quote Shields once again, "the result is a postmodernised, cubic dialectic in which terms are mutually dependent and relativise each other [see diagram below]. Lefebvre presents the possibility of fixing the dialectic as a counterposed assemblage of three terms that are mutually supporting and mutually parasitic for their status within the dialectic" (1999: 152-3). In this model, then, there is no possible binarism, nor is there a logical, closed or progressive synthesis, in the sense of Hegelian Aufhebung.

This theoretical model is developed by Lefebvre through his sets of related spatial triads, which he subsequently applies to his discussion of the history of space and which amounts to a 'unitary' theory of space. La pratique spatiale (which equates to physical space and espace perçu) is "the material expression of social relations in space" (Burgin, 1996: 27). It embodies the processes whereby specific places and spatial ensembles are produced/reproduced as well as the relationship of individuals and groups to these spaces, roads and the networks which make up what Lefebvre calls our "réalité urbaine". Représentations de l'espace (mental space or espace conçu) are dominant models (or explanations) of space, produced by "savants", "planificateurs"

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41 Cf Lefebvre (1974: 49): 'un rapport à deux termes se reduit à une opposition, à un contraste, à une contrariété; il se définit par un effet signifiant; effet d'écho, de répercussion, de miroir'.
and "urbanistes" (1974: 48). They are what Victor Burgin calls "those conceptual abstractions of space that may inform the actual configuration of such spatial practices [...] Cartesian geometry, linear perspective, le Corbusier's 'modular' or the Quattrocento painter's braccio" (1996: 27). Espaces de représentation (social space(s) or espace vécu) on the other hand, though the distinction is not always entirely clear, are made up of "l'espace dominé [...] que tente de modifier et d'approcher l'imagination" which "recouvre[n] l'espace physique en utilisant symboliquement ses objets" (Lefebvre, 1974: 49). This third category of space is, for Lefebvre, the most valuable and in a sense encompasses both la pratique spatiale and représentations de l'espace. It is 'inhabited' by artists, writers and (some) philosophers, and is the zone where "counterspaces" (Soja, 1996: 68) are produced, two crucial reasons for pursuing a Lefebvorean line of enquiry in the context of this thesis.

The three types of space introduced by Lefebvre interrelate in different ways in different periods (leading Lefebvre to establish a history of space), partly in terms of changing modes of production. The example of the Middle Ages (in Europe) is described briefly by Lefebvre in La production de l'espace to help illustrate his model. Spatial practice in this period embodied the network of roads linking peasant communities, monasteries and castles, but also those between towns and pilgrim/crusader routes. Representations of Space for their part were dominated by a Christian conception of the world based on a modified version of Aristotle and Ptolemy. This representation of the world, found in Thomas Aquinas and Dante's Divine Comedy, is characterised by a finite space diametrically bisected by the surface of the earth, with the fires of hell below and the Firmament (the realm of God and the celestial bodies) above. Medieval Representational Spaces on the other hand - village hall, church, graveyard, square and field - are lived places which define vicinities in terms of a cosmological (i.e. representational) model:

Ainsi la route de Saint-Jacques double sur la surface terrestre la Voie qui va du Cancer au Capricorne sur la coupole céleste, la Voie lactée, traînée de sperme divin où naissent les Ames, qui suivent la pente déclinante, tombent sur terre et trouvent si elles peuvent la voie de la rédemption: le pèlerinage qui les mène à Compostelle. (1974: 56)

The implication of this triadic, trialectic, model for representation is telling. Spaces are not simply (or self-sufficiently) physical, but overlaid with mythical, social and symbolic layers of meaning which feed back into spatial practice and the construction
of representations of space. It follows therefore that a description of physical space must always be accompanied by a consideration of the representations of that space and of social practice without which the very notion of an abstract physical space in the first place becomes meaningless. This approach incorporates the artist and writer as a part of the process of production, both at the level of representation of spaces and in the movement towards spaces of representation. As a form of representation and as a space of representation, therefore, Art participates in the production of space. A 1998 National Gallery exhibition of Canaletto’s paintings of Venice, for example, examined the way in which the artist combined, or distorted, viewpoints in order to create an image of a more-or-less perfectly geometrical Venice, producing images of the city “that we have come to consider as archetypal and canonic”. Despite his reputation for objective accuracy - Owen McSwiney, a contemporary of Canaletto’s, praised him for “painting things as they fall, immediately, under his eye” (Bomford & Finaldi, 1998: 6) - his views of Venice can be seen as artful constructs, exaggerating linear Renaissance perspective to supply idealised images of the city for the consumption of his (often foreign) clients. The Campanile, for example, which stands in the Piazza San Marco, was almost always painted by Canaletto as taller and more slender than was the case in ‘reality’ and thus, through what Bomford and Finaldi call a “rhetoric of persuasion” (12), contributes to a certain image of the city, which was itself partly constructed on the basis of just such a representation of what Lefebvre will term ‘abstract space’ (characterised by an emphasis on the visual, Euclidean geometry and phallic verticals such as the Campanile).

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42 Cf Lefebvre (1974: 140).
43 An idea pertinent to Chamoiseau’s *Tears* in which the description of lived spaces is of central importance.
One of the most important conclusions, for my purposes, to be drawn from Lefebvre’s notion that space is a social product, articulated through a trialegical process, is that it is possible, whether retrospectively or otherwise, to ‘read’ a culture, a society, a group through the way in which it has organised its space(s). Hillier and Hanson concur: “spatial order is one of the most striking means by which we recognise the existence of cultural differences between one social formation and another, that is, differences in the ways in which members of those societies live out and reproduce their social existence” (1984: 27). Consequently, the assertion of a cultural space (in a metaphorical-physical-social sense) is simultaneously an assertion of (cultural) difference.

But the possibility of ‘reading’ space does not extend to creating an isomorphic relationship between space and text (language). Lefebvre for one is quick to point out that although language is capable of describing space and ultimately situates itself both in and through space, space can never simply be reduced to (a) language. The notion of space as text must be treated with some caution. Thus, although he approves of the structuralist notion of text as texture, Lefebvre objects to its almost exclusive concentration on form, while semiology, with its quasi-scientific “aire de certitude” (1974: 156) is seen as dogmatic in the extreme.44 The application of semiology to space, as Hillier & Hanson explain, tends to proceed by separating out space into an inert material side on the one hand and an abstract social side on the other. Such an approach, which is symptomatic of much anthropological work (from Lévi-Strauss onwards)45 and characteristic of recent research at MIT,46 can be referred to as “the man-environment paradigm” (Hillier & Hanson, 1984: 9). The failure of such models stems from the fact that they both ignore the dialogic relationship between (concrete) materiality and (abstract) sociality and refuse to take on board the (non-representational) notion of practice and what Lefebvre calls le vécu. As he puts

45 Cf Hillier & Hanson (1984: 4-5).
it, "fruit défendu, le vécu fuit ou disparaît devant la réduction: le silence règne autour de la forteresse du savoir" (1974: 158). Philosophical (mental) categories, which are based on mathematical lines, are powerless to deal with praxis: "le concept de chien n’aboie pas" (1974: 345). Space, then, according to his way of thinking, while partially a discursive object, also marks the limits of representability and ultimately of knowledge. It also maintains, to the hilt, that space is as indivisibly social as society is necessarily spatial.

Lefebvre, then, while advocating a kind of 'reading', nevertheless rejects the model of space as a blank page, claiming that "cet espace a été produit avant d’être là" (1974: 168), and adding that "l’espace naturel et l’espace urbain sont surchargés. Tout y est brouillon et brouillé" (167). It is not simply a matter, as semiologists might have us believe, of decoding social ‘marks’ or ‘signs’ inscribed on a pre-existing natural space; instead ‘reading’ these spaces amounts to a kind of socio-cultural history which seeks to articulate the productive dialogue between spatial forms (and practices) and prevailing modes of thought - or what Foucault terms epistémès - based on Lefebvre’s assumption that "chaque société produit un espace, le sien" (40). Such an epistemic approach to spatial analysis characterises much of La production de l’espace and also Paul Blanquart’s “stratification du passé en différentes «épistémés»” (1998: 149), although, as a strategy, it has not always met with favour with critics. Shields for one argues that in choosing to historicise space as he does, Lefebvre “turn[s] to a stereotypical, linear, Eurocentric modelling of historical progress” (1999: 170), going on to call it “by far the least credible aspect” of La production de l’espace. In particular he accuses Lefebvre of essentialising space by classifying periods in terms of modes of production. What emerges, then, in Shield’s view is an undialectical succession of spaces which reinstalls historical time as the master narrative and conflicts wildly with Lefebvre’s own professed commitment to a ‘trialectical’ analysis of space.47

As Lefebvre is at pains to point out, however, his history of space is by no means an orthodox history; it is not coterminous with any convenient series of dates.48 Moreover, he argues that different spatial systems or grids - real and unreal (utopias for example) - inevitably coexist: to privilege only one is to eliminate "les contradictions, faire apparaître une cohérence, réduire le dialectique au logique"

47 Soja also suggests that the classification of absolute, historical, abstract and contradictory spaces which Lefebvre undertakes in La production de l’espace may be flawed, especially when seized upon ‘to the neglect of the keynote triad’ (1996: 66).
I propose that we view Lefebvre's historical schema as a sketch of different types of space which have come to dominate certain (very broad) periods, but which nevertheless remain in dialogue with other spaces, rather than as a watertight (or logically necessary) universal chronology:

Cette histoire de l'espace ne coïncide ni avec l'inventaire des objets dans l'espace (ce qu'on a depuis peu appelé: la culture ou civilisation matérielle), ni avec les représentations et discours sur l'espace. Elle doit rendre compte et des espaces de représentation, et des représentations de l'espace, mais surtout de leurs liens entre eux ainsi qu'avec la pratique spatiale. Elle a ainsi sa place entre l'anthropologie et l'économie politique (138)

Seen in this way the historical schema criticised by Shields retains some force, especially in the context of the production-representation of space in the Caribbean and my discussion of postmodern space (ch. 2). In particular it lends theoretical support to the practice of 'reading' spaces (urban, natural or otherwise), a practice which is a recurring feature of contemporary Francophone Caribbean writing, both as an implied reading strategy (in line with what Glissant (1981: 262) calls la poétique du paysage) and as an activity which is practised within the texts themselves (Papa Longoué's description of landscape in Glissant's Le quatrième siècle (1964), or the urbaniste's notes to the author about Texaco, in Chamoiseau's novel of the same name). It also supports the notion of space as expressive of cultural difference, a characteristic of Glissantian thinking, while opening up a debate about globalisation with which Glissant engages in his ambitious "roman éclaté", Tout-monde (1993a).

It must also be remembered that although my use of Lefebvre here concentrates on his discussion of spatiality, his notion of rythmanalyse, which attempts an examination of the elusive space-time relationship specifically, was equally important to him and was in fact to occupy him increasingly in later life. The notion of rythmanalyse is mentioned in La production de l'espace, but is more properly addressed in his Eléments de rythmanalyse: Introduction à la connaissance des rythmes (1992).

On reading space cf also pp20-21 and pp259-262.

Space and the urban

Lefebvre’s writings about space develop out of a dialectic between urban and rural spaces. Indeed his most celebrated writings (on space), including *La production de l’espace*, relate mainly to the question of the urban. What follows, then, is an account of the history of space, focusing on the development of the Western city (as illustrated by Lefebvre and Blanquart), in relation to concepts of space as part of a Lefebvrean trialectic. Specifically I shall use this spatial analysis of city-spaces as a prelude to a discussion of the colonial city and its peripheral areas, the explicit theme of a novel such as Chamoiseau’s *Texaco*.

If space, as Victor Burgin argues, “has a history” (1996: 40), so does thinking about space. These two notions are of course ultimately indissociable: the theoretical reawakening to space, as I have indicated, is generally predicated on the assumption that historical, social and cultural differences are and can be registered spatially, and usually involves an analysis of these processes of spatial transformation. Lefebvre’s historicisation, then - with its movement from ‘absolute’, through ‘sacred’, then ‘historical’ to ‘abstract’ and finally, so-called ‘contradictory’ or ‘differential’ space - amounts to a typology of different spaces, none of which is ultimately exclusive of others, though their relative presences differ throughout the history of human societies. This movement is also a history of the relationship between socio-economic structures, including the development of capitalism, and spatial forms; in this model, therefore, Lefebvre’s trialectic is related to changes in the mode of production and rightly so, for as Hillier and Hanson argue:

The most far-reaching changes in the evolution of societies have usually either involved or led to profound shifts in spatial form, and in the relation of society to its spatial milieu; these shifts appear to be not so much a by-product of the social changes, but an intrinsic part of them and even to some extent causative of them. The agricultural revolution, the

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52 Later he published a four-volume study of the State, which involved the idea of planetary space and examined the waning of state-structures in the face of the increasing power of global capital and exchange networks. Cf *De l’État, I: L’État dans le monde moderne* (1976a); *De l’État, II: Théorie marxiste de l’État de Hegel à Mao* (1976b); *De l’État, III: Le mode de production étatique* (1977) and *De l’État, IV: Les contradictions de l’État moderne; La dialectique et de l’État* (1978).

53 *Le droit à la ville* (1968); *Du rural à l’urbain* (1970a); *La révolution urbaine* (1970b); *La pensée marxiste et la ville* (1972); *Espace et politique* (*Le droit à la ville II*) (1973); culminating in his *La production de l’espace* (1974).

54 Burgin, seems to be paraphrasing Foucault’s comment that ‘l’espace lui-même, dans l’expérience occidentale, a une histoire’ (1994 IV: 753).
formation of fixed settlements, urbanisation, the early development of the state, industrialisation, and even the growth of the modern interventionist state, have been associated with changes in the morphology of society in which social and spatial changes appear almost as necessary dimensions of each other. Different types of social formation, it would appear, require a characteristic spatial order, just as different types of spatial order require a particular social formation to sustain them. (1984: 27)

Lefebvre's first two categories of space, absolute and sacred, describe early human societies and are close cousins. Absolute space is composed of fragments of nature (caverns, springs, rivers) which are socially 'marked', though this does not necessarily equate to a naïvely pure 'natural' space. The first societies, (paleolithic) hunter-gatherers, as Paul Blanquart informs us, left tombs on their nomadic wanderings which served to establish fixed points according to quasi-religious impulses: "dans l'horizontal indifférencié de la divagation nomade, ces jalons introduisent une verticalité qui fait d'eux des lieux de force" (1998: 11). Thus, he says, "l'espace se crible [...] de points sacrés" (12), adding that in these early groups "par le sacré, le chaos se transforme en cosmos" (14). This kind of fixing, or racination, introduces an opposition between the sacred and the profane, which makes of these societies and the settlements which superceded them, analogical spaces. Shields, summarising Lefebvre's analysis of these early farming villages states that, here, "space was [...] visualised through an anthropomorphism that shaped the mental representation of space, the discourses on space. Thus physiological and mental 'frontiers' (the separation of the natural and the supernatural) are reproduced in the village and in the surrounding environment" (1999: 172). Absolute space, therefore, embodies an organic, anthropological, coherence.

The subsequent birth of Greek (and Asian) city-states involved a politicisation of this earlier form of space: "l'espace-nature se peuple de forces politiques" (1974: 59), as Lefebvre puts it. In this process, absolute space is "subdued and displaced" (Shields, 1999: 174) rather than destroyed. Thus in addition to the Acropolis (religious centre) we find the agora, "centre de l'espace politique laïcisé" (Blanquart, 1998: 45), introducing, as Blanquart argues, a tension between the realm of the beyond (daimon) and that of political morality (ethos). The city-state is characterised by desacralisation, then, with cemeteries relocated outside the city-walls. The city performs a territorialisation (analysed in similar terms by Deleuze and Guattari in their discussion of the Urstaat56 of a sacred space in which we witness an increase in

56 Cf Deleuze & Guattari (1976).
rectilinear structures in place of the earlier, circular forms (the neolithic village was arranged concentrically: store-houses in the centre surrounded first by a ring of huts and then by a pallisade). As for representations of space, Plato's view of the city, "à la fois rationnelle et enracinée" (Lefebvre, 1974: 55), introduces a homogeneity which makes unity of diversity and whose ontological intransigence is reflected in the centrality of the agora, geometric thinking and architectural orders (of columns, for example).

While the Greek city (within this process of politicisation) tended towards a (religious) absolute - Greek temples, after all, with their unity of form and function display a unity of Logos and Cosmos - the development of the Roman urbs marks the movement to a relativised, productive space marked by circular forms (vaults, arches, circuses). But this 'historical' space was also a space of power, of empire, complete with rectilinear structures (military camps and straight roads). It is marked by "private accumulation, the separation of production from survival and reproduction as labour" together with "an increasing primacy of patriarchy and empire over subterranean powers of desire" (Shields, 1999: 175). Rome after all saw itself as centre of the civilised world, with the Pantheon an imago mundi.

Europe in the early Middle Ages witnesses developments in urban life, in reaction to the increasingly dangerous communication routes: thus fortifications appear in towns where in the Roman urban model there had been none. A largely rural population is grouped locally, or punctually; "le paysage est ainsi fait d'un piquetage de lieux habités, sédentaires" (Blanquart, 1998: 66). Life is organised in terms of a common, Christian horizon; thus the sacred-profane separation tends to disappear, while abbeys bring communities together outside town walls. Faced with the perils of day-to-day existence, nostalgic, dogmatic systems of thought take the upper hand:

De même que l'on se recroqueville à l'intérieur des vieux murs sous la protection de l'évêque, de même toute la vie intellectuelle et morale repose sur des façons de penser et de faire qui valorisent l'ancien, l'indiscutable. (67)

In the late Middle Ages, however, with the development of the unified town, space becomes increasingly divided up into sectors (rather than polycentric, as in an earlier phase). The growth of the professions and the birth of independent universities leads to corresponding zones springing up in towns. Paris, for example comprised three main areas, the episcopal civitas, a merchant faubourg and the (left-bank) student quarter (71). This diverse collection of autonomous zones is nevertheless articulated
in relation to (though not necessarily around) a religious centre (the Cathedral spire).

This new urban space is characterised by narrow, winding streets, surprising perspectives and a general absence of formal unity or classical perspective. Significantly the medieval market-place forms a commercial centre of sorts, and indeed this period will see the consolidation of exchange, commerce and commodities, the bedrock of capitalist economy. Still, generally speaking, the urban space is more geared towards spectacle and meeting than the rapid circulation and passage typical of the post/modern. It is important to note in passing that Lefebvre's presentation is also a critique of capitalism, whose onset in the Middle Ages is manifested and influenced by the destruction of feudal social relations and the increased proletarianisation of much of the population, hand in hand with the process of urbanisation.

With the advent of the Renaissance, however, a broad shift makes itself felt, geared towards the primacy of abstract space, which is not homogenous, though homogeneity is its goal. "Renaissance", remarks Shields, "marks for Lefebvre the transition from a sacred to a secular social order. Humanism as a unifying code allows the organisation of harmonious built spaces (e.g. Siena)” (1999: 175). Like most forms of space, then, abstract space is in reality plural, but it does express "une certaine violence inhérente à l'abstraction" (Lefebvre, 1974: 333) in its privileging of the conceived over the lived. Abstract space, in Lefebvre's analysis, is characterised by three main elements: geometry (Newton, Galileo), visuality (sight, for Descartes, was the noblest of the senses, leading to a concern with surfaces (façades), perspective and spectacle), and phallicism (a metonym of male violence). This last point, which is to emerge particularly in modern capitalism, in the upward thrust of New York sky-scrapers, is described in these terms:

L'orgueilleuse verticalité des maisons-tours, des édifices publics et surtout des bâtiments étatiques inclut dans le visuel une arrogance phallique ou plutôt phallocratique; elle s'exhibe, se fait voir, mais pour qu'en elle chaque spectateur aperçoive l'autorité. (117)

In Italy, the arrival of anthropocentric rationality of (quattrocento monocular) perspective sets up a correlation between the space produced and a representation of

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56 Cf Lefebvre (1974: 306): 'La révolution médiévale fait entrer le commerce dans la ville et l'installe au centre de l'espace urbain transformé. La place du marché, différente de l'agora comme du forum, libre d'accès, s'ouvre de toutes parts sur le territoire environnant (que la ville domine et qu'elle exploite) sur le réseau des routes et chemins'.

space along classical lines. The reorganisation of Tuscan countryside, starting in the twelfth century, bears witness to the primacy of produced space over a less technological, anthropologically determined, rural space. The production of space, that is, causes the receding of nature. Later, abstract space is also controlled by the rationalism of Cartesian thought, which looks precisely to architecture for order and which influences the development of French towns in the seventeenth century, for here "la relation entre la raison et la ville est réciproque", says Blanquart (1998: 90). Significantly, for my purposes, this era coincides with the development of colonies in the New World (Martinique became a French possession in 1635, for example) and, as we shall see shortly, the creation of colonial towns along rational, geometric, lines.

This new rationality relies on four socio-economic factors for its translation into social reality: the rise of a new merchant class, the centralisation of political power, the mechanisation of nature and the homogenisation of territory through war, which Lefebvre, for his part, describes as the "berceau du capitalisme" (1974: 318), producing Europe as a space of history leading to accumulation and then to Empire. The importance of the Caribbean in this context, as Antonio Benítez-Rojo argues, is that from the seventeenth century onwards it becomes the target of the slave trade and the motor, through its provision of cheap labour, of capitalist accumulation:

Without deliveries from the Caribbean womb, Western capital accumulation would not have been sufficient to effect a move [...] from the so-called Mercantilist revolution to the Industrial Revolution. In fact the history of the Caribbean is one of the main strands in the history of capitalism, and vice versa. (1996: 5)

A number of factors come together here: the geometrisation of military space (practised in architecture, for example, by Vauban) conspires with a Cartesian rationalism and the expansion of Empire (which is often justified by the same claims to rationality) to create a space unified and hegemonised, born of violence, in the service both of political and economic power.

Before we go on to look at the colonial town, however, I want to consider briefly the arrival of modernism as a development of that abstract space against which postcolonial 'counterspaces' construct themselves. The dominance of abstract space,

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59 Together with merchant towns such as Venice.
as we have seen, is the defining feature of classical capitalism. But in the modern era it assumes a radically different cast: Picasso’s *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon* (1907) and Bauhaus architecture announce the shattering of classical perspective and the heightening of the contradictions inherent in abstract space:

Vers 1910 l’espace commun au bon sens, au savoir, à la pratique sociale, au pouvoir politique, contenu du discours quotidien comme de la pensée abstraite, milieu et canal des messages, celui de la perspective classique et de la géométrie, élaboré depuis la Renaissance, à partir de l’héritage grec (Euclide et la logique), à travers l’art et la philosophie de l’Occident, incorporé dans la ville, cet espace s’ébranle [...] l’espace euclidien et perspectif disparaît comme référentiel, avec les autres lieux communs (la ville, l’histoire, la paternité, le système tonal en musique, la morale traditionnelle, etc.). Moment crucial. (Lefebvre, 1974: 34)

This ‘new’ space is both homogenous and fragmented at the same time. The principle of private property as an economic norm, together with increasing commodification peform this contradictory dualism. At the same time as homogenising space through an expansion of the global market-place, this ‘contradictory space’ sees an increase in subjectivity, and in the carving up of urban space, which Lefebvre sees as beginning with Haussmann. The process of centralisation also forces an increasingly polarised process of spatial organisation (the tension between globalisation and localisation for example), and in particular sees the formation of ghettos and other peripheral zones, a fact which both denies and suggests the importance of a projected ‘differential space’:

L’hypothèse se prononce contre l’homogénéisation par l’Etat, par le pouvoir politique, par le marché mondial et le monde de la marchandise, l’homogénéisation qui se traduit pratiquement par et dans l’espace abstrait. L’hypothèse implique la prise en charge des différences, y compris celles venues de la nature et qu’accentue isolément l’écologie (régimes, pays, sites, ethnies, ressources etc.). (77)

Perhaps, then, as Lefebvre suggests, “la lutte des classes, [...] plus que jamais, se lit dans l’espace” (68).

This latest stage in the history of spatialisation furthermore privileges the nostalgic and the image as commodity, what Lefebvre calls “la partie scripturaire et imagée” and which brings with it “l’abstraction dotée d’une terrible puissance réductrice du «vécu»” (64). It is perhaps no coincidence that Jean Baudrillard worked as Lefebvre’s research assistant, nor that he had influential meetings with both Jameson and Soja. The links between Lefebvre’s work and postmodernism are strong, though they cannot, or should not, be conflated uncritically: Lefebvre seems sceptical about these
latest developments, often nostalgically harking back to more communitarian forms of social existence. My next chapter will thus focus on the appropriation of Lefebvre by postmodern theorists as well as the development of so-called postmodern spaces in general, their characteristics and relevance for the Caribbean and Caribbean literature.

The schematic narrative as I have presented it here is, of course, partially reductive; Lefebvre’s discussion is far more nuanced (although not immune to accusations of Eurocentrism, for example). As Blanquart has shown with reference to Athens, the Greek city was not a monolithic entity, but underwent many subtle transformations, leading ultimately to decentering and the decline of the city in the West, only to be revived in the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, this historicising stratification does illustrate some of the general precepts of Lefebvre’s view of space and spatial transformations, in particular those of relevance to the Caribbean, namely the relationship of space to power, Empire and the development of capitalism. Lefebvre’s analysis, as I have already suggested, rests on the Marxist notion of modes of production, which are expressed and produced by space. Jameson, as we shall see in the next chapter, uses this model together with Mandel’s concept of Late Capital to help define the postmodern and give it some grounding in the material. However Lefebvre’s analysis of space is more than just that, it is also (and unavoidably) a (Marxist-influenced) critique of capitalism. It is thus entwined with economics: “l’argent et la marchandise [...] n’apportaient pas seulement une «culture», mais une espace” (Lefebvre, 1974: 305). Furthermore it is simultaneously retrospective and prospective: at the same time as considering the past it proposes a way of heightening the differential, the power of Other-spaces evoked in Foucault’s essay of the same name, and which are an important strategy in postcolonial writing.

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As we have seen, space can (provisionally) be read as an expression - on the ground - of (vertical) hierarchies: that is, it translates power structures into forms of spatial distribution. This is the conclusion to be drawn from my reading of Lefebvre and Foucault. The colonial town in Latin-America, which, crucially, tends to be founded at the time of the Renaissance in Europe, is a case in point. Here, then, as Lefebvre informs us, urban space is generated, "selon un véritable code" (1974: 76) in accordance with the rubric "découvrir, peupler, pacifier" (177). The result? A controlling (panoptic) grid (quadrillage) centred around a Plaza Mayor which, in its stifling regularity, recalls both the homogeneity and the functional segregation of Cartesian urban spaces (from Haussmann's reconstruction of Paris to Le Corbusier). Despite the prominence of baroque features in Latin-American architecture, therefore, which suggest the subversion of classical order, the organisation of urban spaces reflects "la production d'un espace social par le pouvoir politique: par une violence à but économique" (177). In the Caribbean a similar pattern can be observed. Fort-de-France, for example, the present capital of Martinique, owes its location to a military Fort (from which the town obtained its original name of Fort-Royal). In 1677, following the draining of the adjacent marshes, the town was laid out, in a frenzy of Cartesian rationalism, by the comte de Blénac, governor of the French Antilles. Thus the town-centre forms a geometric grid, which is connected to the Fort by a square expanse of grass and palm trees known as La Savane and which for many years was divided into a park and a training-ground (this historical fact highlighting the complicitous relationship between the social and the military).

Footnotes:

43 It is worth noting that Lefebvre criticises Foucault heavily, branding him, as Kofman & Lebas have put it, 'the ideologue of the system', (Lefebvre, 1996: 25). Nevertheless, Lefebvre does not really engage in Foucault's work on space and the urban which, in many respects, points in the same directions as Lefebvre's own (26).

44 Originally called Fort-Royal, after the fort to which it owes its founding, the town was known as Ville-République or Fort-de-la-République from February 1793 until March 1794, when it recovered its original name. The name Fort-de-France was first used between 1802 and 1809 (before reverting once again to Fort-Royal) and was finally settled on after the revolutions of 1848, which also precipitated the definitive abolition of slavery. However, up until 1902, when it was destroyed by the eruption of Mount Pélée, the town of Saint Pierre, on the North-West coast of Martinique, was the island's capital. Cf Gleizal (1994: 184).

I have already mentioned the exclusive, homogenising, desire of abstract space, evoked by Lefebvre when he says that “l'espace abstrait tend vers l'homogénéité [...] il réduit les différences (particularités) existantes”, to which he adds that “l'espace nouveau ne peut naître (se produire) qu'en accentuant les différences” (1974: 64). This drive towards homogeneity, one might argue, perhaps provokes resistance precisely because it is exclusive of difference, though more often than not, it must be added, this resistance is neutralised by the homogenising effects of power:

Les différences se maintiennent ou débutent en marge de l'homogénéisation, soit comme résistances, soit comme extériorités (le latéral, l'hétérotopique, l'hétérologique). Le différent c'est d'abord l'exclusion des périphéries, les bidonvilles, les espaces des jeux interdits, ceux de la guérilla et des guerres. Tôt ou tard cependant, la centralité existante et les puissances homogénéisantes absorbent ces différences, si elles restent sur la défensive et ne passent pas à la contre-attaque. (430)

In Latin-America and the Caribbean particularly, though not uniquely, therefore, the formation of vast and sprawling shanty-towns on the periphery of the town-centre (which is also the centralised locus of power) reflects this process, which Lefebvre articulates in terms of domination and appropriation. “L'espace dominé”, he says, “est généralement clos, stérilisé, vidé. Son concept ne prend son sens qu'en s'opposant au concept inséparable de l'appropriation” (191). Consequently, if the domination of space is the means by which authority exerts its power and controls its subjects, the reappropriation of this same space - or the construction of an alternative, differential, space - by those same individuals is also the means by which power is contested and ultimately broken.

The vexed question of the peripheral, as expressed in the socio-spatial phenomenon of the ‘shanty-town’, gives rise, then, to a ‘politics of difference’. Here the periphery becomes a radically alternative spatial proposition. “Lefebvre”, observes Shields, “detected this in his Latin American travels and stays in the slums and favelas of Brazil, which appeared to be moments in which alternative local spatialisations were brought into existence” (Shields, 1999: 183). It is perhaps worth remembering, in this context, that Haussmann's attempts to demolish slums in central Paris only led to other slums springing up elsewhere, particularly in suburban districts. Consequently, the perspective offered by Lefebvre - who describes himself as “Occitan, c'est-à-dire périphérique - et mondial” (1975: 60), provides a fruitful, not

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66 Cf Prendergast (1995: 8).
to mention apposite, way of conceptualising and expressing radical difference and Otherness in spatial terms. It also provides a highly relevant tool with which to examine a novel such as Chamoiseau's *Texaco*, in which we witness the coming into existence of just such an “alternative local spatialisation” - or what Foucault might have called *un espace autre* - in the shape of the eponymous *quartier populaire*. Finally, through its description of the way in which the power of abstract space to silence difference is resisted or subverted, this perspective points towards the idea of hybridity, which Nikos Papastergiadis, glossing Bhabha, has neatly described as “the process by which the discourse of colonial authority attempts to translate the identity of the Other within a singular category, but then fails and produces something else” (Werbner & Modood, 1997: 279), or what Bhabha calls a ‘third space’. This notion of a third space, which one can see as both emerging from and engaging in Lefebvre’s trialectic, is one which I should like to retain for use in later chapters, especially in its reworking by Soja, as ‘Thirdspace’. If Soja sees Firstspace (*pratique spatiale*) as relating to the ‘real’ or physical world, and Secondspace (*représentation de l'espace*) to the imaginary representations of space(s), Thirdspace (*espace de représentation*) is that area where they converge to give “real-and-imagined places” (1996: 6), which embody a ‘both-and’ rather than an ‘either-or’ logic and which I feel can contribute productively to our understanding of Caribbean spatiality.
CHAPTER TWO
Postmodern Space, or the
Spaces of Postmodernity

'Nous sommes à l'époque du simultané, nous sommes à
l'époque de la juxtaposition, à l'époque du proche et du
lointain, du côte à côte, du dispersé.'

Michel Foucault (1994 IV: 752)

“All vogue words tend to share a similar fate”, observes Zygmunt Bauman in his study of globalisation: “the more experiences they pretend to make transparent, the more they themselves become opaque” (1998: 1). This chapter seeks to explore the implications of one such ‘vogue word’ and negotiate a path through the often polarised positions it has generated, while at the same time relating it to Francophone Caribbean literature. I shall be attempting here both to develop the Lefebvrian approach to space, explored in chapter 1, in relation to a spatial postmodernism, and to confront the two. The debates surrounding 'postmodernism' have attracted both dismissive contempt and brazen eulogy to an unprecedented degree. Rarely, it seems, has a term been applied by so many people to so many different fields (a situation which the emphasis of postmodernism itself on diversity and eclecticism has only served to exacerbate). Nevertheless, such a state of affairs does not in itself negate the usefulness, or, dare one say, validity, of the claims of postmodern theory/criticism (insofar as it is possible to agree on what these might be). Both because of the ubiquity of postmodern criticism, theory and art and because of the wide range of responses it has produced, it seems to be a term with which, in the context of this thesis at least, one must grapple at some point. It is in this sense, and particularly in regard to the problematics of space, that I would agree with Jameson when he says that “we are within the culture of postmodernism to the point where its facile repudiation is as impossible as any equally facile celebration of it”.

This chapter presents those aspects of postmodernism which I consider to be most relevant to contemporary writing from the French Antilles. I shall move from a

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more general consideration of what a postmodern space might be to the more specific question of how this relates to so-called ‘postcolonial’ societies, and the contemporary Caribbean in particular. In doing this I have attempted to point out some of the shortcomings of postmodern thinking, not to mention the danger of ‘applying’ theory to Caribbean writing in the first place, and especially the problematical nature of its discursive position within an academic world which must increasingly be seen as complicit with the capitalist enterprise.

By way of a counterbalance to these and other theoretical dangers, I have simultaneously attempted to indicate ways in which a perhaps more fruitful, politicised, approach might be developed out of postmodern thinking, particularly with reference to urban form. Indeed one of the most interesting ways of looking at the late twentieth-century city, it seems, is precisely through this kind of composite approach. This is a view shared by Gibson & Watson, who argue, in the introduction to their collection of essays on *Postmodern Cities and Spaces* that “it is from the perspective of the ‘periphery’ and postcoloniality that some of the more positive insights into what postmodernism brings to contemporary urban politics can be gained” (1995: 8). The question of the urban, then, emerges as a crucial nexus in the context of postmodern and postcolonial issues (decentred structures of knowledge, the politics of resistance, patterns of communication, ethnicity and so on). The decision to make use of such theories, in spite of potential difficulties, is further motivated by the relative paucity of postmodern (and postcolonial) theoretical discourse within the field of Francophone literary criticism; the high priests of postmodernism (Baudrillard and Lyotard to name but two) may themselves be French but their impact in literary studies has been felt primarily in the English-speaking world. There is thus an attempt implicit in my work to effect a cross-fertilisation of all too often disconnected fields, to see what may be gained from performing a postmodern ‘reading’ of Francophone writers, for example, while at the same time using these same writers to highlight difficulties, limitations, or possible developments within theories of the postmodern.

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68 On this point, see Gyssels (1998: 87): ‘un grand vide existe quant à la théorie de la littérature dite «postcoloniales, qui contraste avec l’abondante bibliographie en la matière côté anglophone’. Pioneering work by Christine Chivalon (1997b) has attempted to bridge this divide, followed more recently by Jean-Marc Moura’s *Littératures francophones et théorie postcoloniale* (1999).
So how are we to set about deploying postmodern theory here? Gibson & Watson (1995: 1), make a crucial distinction between three areas of investigation within what is more broadly termed 'postmodernism': a postmodern aesthetic, a postmodern paradigm of knowledge (strongly influenced by French poststructuralism), and a socio-economic condition of postmodernity. While each of these versions of postmodernism bears a close affinity to the others, there are important differences of application and it is helpful, I feel, to bear this distinction in mind, however provisionally. In what follows, then, I shall attempt to develop a postmodern reading (albeit problematised) of the Caribbean in terms of aesthetics (i.e. literary forms), the critique of singular/linear thinking (e.g. History as both grand récit and colonial meta-narrative) and a changing economic world (dis)order (within which the Caribbean, as a primary site of postmodern tourism, situates itself). In each case the discussion will be focused around the overarching problematic of space with which this thesis is concerned: I thus move from a consideration of epistemological postmodernism (as resistance to the space of Enlightenment modernity) to an exposition of postmodern textual space, and from an analysis of some economic features of the postmodern 'condition' to an examination of postmodern cities. I conclude with an attempt to show how the ambivalent relationship of Caribbean writers to such notions, despite a number of affinities, necessitates a concept of negotiation which will inform chapter 3 of this thesis.

Postmodern geography

In my discussion of Lefebvre I attempted to demonstrate how the 'reassertion of space' is both a re-evaluation of space as concept and an awareness of the Protean, changing, nature of what we have called the 'history of space'. In this context it is perhaps significant that the most vocal assertions of a new conceptual age based on space have come from postmodern theory (partly channeled through what Soja, in his book of the same name (1989), has called 'postmodern geographies'). Thus, whereas modernism can be seen as temporally-oriented, postmodernism is inherently spatial in perspective. Jameson, for one, has claimed that "a certain spatial turn has often
seemed to offer one of the more productive ways of distinguishing postmodernism from modernism proper” (1991: 154). Moreover, he suggests, this ‘spatial turn’ is somehow a tangible factor in everyday existence in the late twentieth century:

I think that it is at least empirically arguable that our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages, are today dominated by categories of space rather than categories of time, as in the preceding period of high modernism. (16)

The post-war era, then, is arguably a space-age in more ways than one, an age in which the fabric of our world - as well as our view of it - has been revolutionised by the advent of new forms of social and economic exchange and by far-reaching developments in communication and information technologies. The recognition of the spatial nature of such changes is an intrinsic part, as well as a validation, of the rehabilitation of space within social theory. But equally important, as we shall see in due course, is the possibility of spatial transformations as a means to (revolutionary) social change or as a tool of resistance. The oppositional strategies offered by a postmodern take on spatiality, or the construction of postmodern space(s), can be well illustrated by a reading of some recent examples of littérature antillaise. But what do we mean by a ‘postmodern’ view of space, and how might it differ from a ‘modern’ one?

In chapter 1, I sketched a critique of the kind of abstract Cartesian space which has dominated Western thought and society for centuries and which can be related to the rise of capitalism and a certain ‘production of space’ in the West. I should now like to suggest (along with Soja and others) that such a critique can in many respects be termed a postmodern one, postmodern because it equates the dominance of this abstracted, geometric, space with the birth of the Enlightenment subject, with Renaissance monocular perspective (together with the claims of objectivity this implies), with the separation of science and nature, in short with that socio-philosophical phenomenon which has come to be known as modernity. In other words, then, the critique of neutral, abstract, space is at the same time a critique of what Habermas calls ‘the project of modernity’ (Docherty, 1993: 103), it is a postmodern critique.

First and foremost this postmodern critique targets the universalising tendencies of ‘abstract’ space, the implicit suggestion that one portion of space can be translated transparently to another, just as colonising nations in the Caribbean transplanted their production of space to the tabula rasa which was the New World. The
Newtonian belief that places are interchangeable, when viewed from a Glissantian perspective, for example, amounts to an attempt to reduce difference (le Divers) to sameness (le Même) (Glissant, 1981: 190-192). The Enlightenment representation of space, well documented in maps of the period, likewise proceeds from a rational system which underlines the relationship of individuals to territory and implies seeing the whole world as a “knowable totality”; furthermore, as David Harvey remarks, “it seemed as if space, though infinite, was conquerable and containable for purposes of human occupancy and action” (1990: 246). The postmodern challenge to this mode of representation resists both the implication that there is a single correct view of what space is in the first place, but also the rational and universalised view of an abstract space around which the Enlightenment project, and thus the program of colonial expansion, could be based.

The political subtext of apparently ‘innocent’ colonial appeals to the universality of space (which is resisted by Glissant’s insistence (1993a: 153) that “le lieu est incontournable”) is thus uncovered by a politically-informed postmodern critique. As Bhabha reminds us, a point already made in my introduction, “the grand narratives of 19*^-Century historicism on which its claims to universalism were founded - evolutionism, utilitarianism, evangelism - were also, in another textual and territorial time/space, the technologies of colonial and imperialist governance” (1994: 195). We should also bear in mind Soja’s Foucauldian assertion that “disciplinary power proceeds primarily through the organization, enclosure, and control of individuals in space” (1989: 63). Thus, as I mentioned in chapter 1, it is no coincidence that colonial towns, which we predicated on the desire to survey and control, were constructed in a way which expressed the same logic of Enlightenment thought (rational order, geometric patterning, the subjugation of nature to culture).

Glissant’s use of terms such as ‘modern’ is a little confusing. It is noticeable that he never uses the term ‘postmodern’ himself, preferring instead to speak of ‘modernity’, e.g. ‘la modernité serait ici le jeu, à chaque fois recommencé, de cette différence et de cette mutation’ (1997e: 196). On the other hand he has also thrown into doubt the very status of this term (1981: 258): ‘Sur la notion de modernité. Elle est contesté. Toute époque n’est-elle pas moderne par rapport à celles qui l’ont précédée? Il semble qu’au moins une des composantes de notre modernité soit la généralisation de la conscience qu’en on a. La conscience de la conscience (le double, le second degré) est notre richesse et notre tourment’. I choose here not to engage in a debate over the distinction between Glissant’s use of modernity and a postmodernity he might or might not espouse, for it seems to me that this is a distinction which does not particularly interest him. It is, of course, also possible to view postmodernism as an extension or subset of modernity. For my purposes here I shall treat Glissant’s concept of ‘modernity’ as broadly-speaking commensurate with postmodernism, while at the same time I would also agree with those of Glissant’s commentators (Bongie, 1998; Britton, 1999) who see an increasing tendency towards postmodern themes in the trajectory of his work.
which justified such a process in the first place. In other words, it is possible to observe a certain complicity - not necessarily conscious it is worth noting - between a modern conception of world-space there for the taking, an abstract approach to the mapping (representation), division and nature of space per se and grand narratives of universal History and Progress. Inasmuch as these grands récits, which supported the colonial enterprise and forced other narratives to the periphery, can be termed modern, then, the peripheral micronarratives which characterise contemporary Caribbean writing appear largely postmodern. This claim can be supported by pointing to Glissant's repeated attacks on linear (Hegelian) History, which together with the notion of filiation and a sectarian approach to space, he sees as legitimising the claims to territory of atavistic societies, and which he counters with the vision of a rhizomorphic tout-monde, that relational and, in many respects, postmodernised world-space. I consider these questions in greater detail in chapter 7.

Another characteristic feature of ‘modern’ approaches to space is the utopian nature of the Enlightenment project. Harvey cites Baudelaire’s definition (1990: 467) of modernity, in ‘Le peintre de la vie moderne’, as a tension between “le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent”, on the one hand, and the eternal and immutable qualities of art on the other. Modernity is thus a response to chaos, an attempt to put a stamp on the “maelström of perpetual disintegration” (Berman, in Harvey, 1990: 11); it is also “hugely optimistic” (13). It is in this sense, then, that Lefebvre is able to find continuity within what he calls ‘abstract space’, a continuity which brings together architects from the Renaissance to Haussmann and members of the ‘international style’ movement such as Le Corbusier. For what these planners and designers have in common is a utopian belief in the power of spatial restructuring to transform society for the better.

Such idealism was, inevitably perhaps, doomed to failure. “The twentieth century”, says Jürgen Habermas, “has shattered this optimism” (Docherty, 1993: 103), confirming Harvey’s assertion that “the moral crisis of our time is a crisis of Enlightenment thought” (1990: 41). The rise of postmodernism, then, coincides with the perceived foundering of modernist grand narratives of emancipation on the rocks.

70 Cf, most obviously, Glissant (1981: 130-134) and (1997e: 193-197).
71 Cf Walter Gropius, Bauhaus Manifesto (1919), in Appignanesi & Garratt (1995: 26): ‘Together let us desire, conceive and create the structure of the future, which will embrace architecture and sculpture and painting in one unity and which will one day rise toward heaven from the hands of a million workers like the crystal symbol of a new faith’.

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of the twentieth century. Equally it constitutes a crisis of representation,\footnote{Hence Lyotard’s insistence that the postmodern is a form of the sublime.} which contests Enlightenment schematism; hence Glissant’s assertion that “notre planète est un chaos-monde, une réalité sur laquelle on ne peut plus tirer des plans au cordeau comme au siècle des Lumières” (1993d: 112). In architectural (that is spatial) terms the break from utopian modernism can be dated conveniently to 3.23pm on 15th July 1972, when the Pruitt-Igoe housing development in St Louis was dynamited. (Harvey, 1990: 39). The failure of this development, a version of Le Corbusier’s ‘machine for modern living’, embodies what thinkers such as Lyotard see as the failure of the Enlightenment project and, in particular, its attempt to develop a universally-applicable model for living from scientific, rational principles. Richard Edlin (1994) has shown how much Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd-Wright owe to Enlightenment architects such as Boulée and Ledoux, especially in terms of their geometric idealism. Likewise, he points out:

By giving voice to a clear vision of the well-ordered, commodious, beautiful, urbane, and salubrious city, eighteenth-century architects and other enthusiasts created the intellectual model that would be realized piecemeal over the course of the next century until, through concerted action, it crystallised into the Paris of the Second Empire, the Vienna of the Ringstrasse, and the City Beautiful movement in the United States. (Edlin, 1994: xviii)

According to the Lyotardian school of thinking, the Enlightenment philosophy which underpins these grand projects, far from bringing about the universal happiness it promised, has led instead to death and disillusionment. Indeed as Horkheimer and Adorno argue in Dialectic of the Enlightenment (1972), Enlightenment rationality becomes the very logic of domination and oppression (Harvey, 1990: 13), with two World Wars and the Holocaust as its logical outcome. As we have seen, therefore, the discrediting of Enlightenment philosophy by postmodern thinkers stems from the perceived failure of the ‘project of modernity’. Postmodern architecture thus becomes defined by “the disappearance of the close bond that once linked the project of modern architecture to an ideal of the progressive realisation of social and individual emancipation encompassing all humanity” (Lyotard, in Docherty, 1993: 47).

It is, of course, possible to argue, as Habermas does, that the ‘project of modernity’ is still worth fighting for. One can also argue that the current vogue for postmodernism arises in part from a conflation of a glossy aesthetics and something
far deeper-rooted, namely the socio-economic condition of postmodernity (a theme to which I shall return in due course). To point to a logical confusion of this kind is one way of guarding against some of postmodernism's more extravagant pronouncements, but not I think an invalidation of postmodernism per se. In a conversation with Gayatri Spivak, John Dunn makes the following point: "it's a false claim", he says, "that the project of attempting rationally to understand human societies commits people to any form of practical political co-operation in any determinate form of oppression. I see no such link", no "link of necessity" (Spivak, 1990: 29). By the same token, however, just as relativising does not lead inevitably to relativism, being influenced by postmodern theory does not commit one to a wholesale repudiation of humanist ideals. Gibson & Watson, for example, remark that, despite his self-imposed status as a leading proponent of 'postmodern geography', Soja displays a "pre-postmodern hankering for a way of seeing which does not abandon emancipation, political commitment and the deep need for communication" (1995: 3).

One of the points I shall be making, then, is that there is nothing really contradictory about Caribbean writers often seeming to uphold (quasi-modern) ideals of emancipation while using apparently postmodern forms to express them. The theoretical 'purity' (if it ever existed) of postmodern discourse is almost always muddied, and necessarily so, by the strategic exigencies of the postcolonial situation, where conceptual and aesthetic considerations can no longer exist in a theoretical vacuum. Spivak makes this point, for example, when she says of deconstruction that "none of its examples can match its discourse. If I can't keep my hands theoretically clean anyway, why not take the centre when I'm being asked to be marginal" (1990: 41). In other words it seems as though being theoretically incorrect is strategically irrelevant; and if Caribbean literature can be termed postmodern in any meaningful sense it is clearly not an abstract postmodernism we are dealing with, but one which is 'contaminated' with the concrete problems of existence in an area which still bears the scars of recent colonisation.
In order to get an idea both of the way in which the postmodern paradigm shift might express itself spatially and how this relates to literary form, I should like to turn briefly to Roland Barthes and his 1970 book *L’empire des signes*. I shall be returning to this text later in relation to the question of the postmodern city; here, however, I intend to focus on Barthes’ Japan as an example, or precursor, of a postmodern textuality expressed spatially. In his self-consciously fictitious account of Japan, Barthes prefigures one of the most important ingredients of the postmodern aesthetic, a playful attempt to escape original meaning through the utopian space of the text. This kind of utopia, it should be stressed, is a far cry from the utopias which characterised modernist discourse. Rather than seek to impose a new meaning on a disordered magma, that is to create ‘originality’ enshrined in what Benjamin calls the ‘auratic’ work of Art (1992: 215), the Barthesian textual utopia constitutes a realm of ‘post-meaning’ (Knight, 1997: 7). For Barthes, we should remember, modernism cristallises around 1848, a socio-economic crisis with cultural consequences. “Entre la troisième personne de Balzac et celle de Flaubert”, Barthes writes in *Le degré zéro de l’écriture* “il y a tout un monde (celui de 1848)”, adding that “la modernité commence avec la recherche d’une littérature impossible” (1964: 36). Or as he declares later, “la Littérature devient l’utopie du langage” (76). Barthes’ writing, which extends this utopian tradition of modernist literature, thus prefigures postmodernism in a number of ways, even though he does not use the term himself.

In *L’empire des signes* Barthes’ specific target is the supposed objectivity of hierarchical meaning; his zen-like goal is a place beyond logic itself. In a text which exhibits strong postmodern tendencies, then, Japan becomes a “fantasmatic construction” (Knight, 1997: 146), a “network of shifting [...] meanings”, which “can never be grasped as a totality” (147). Barthes is a particularly important figure for my purposes because he straddles the transition from a confidently modern structuralism which he himself once espoused to more uncertain poststructural forms of knowledge, discussed in chapter 3, and which can be seen to resonate with
postmodernism. His descriptions of a proto-postmodern space in *L'empire des signes* are perhaps less concerned with the non-linearity of dynamic flows found in chaotic systems which will characterise a certain kind of Caribbean postmodernism, but they do focus on another central theme, namely the explosion of centred structures of knowledge. Here is how Barthes describes Japanese food for example:

Aucun plat japonais n'est pourvu d'un centre (centre alimentaire impliqué chez nous par le rite qui consiste à ordonner le repas, à entourer ou à appeler les mets); tout y est ornemment d'un autre ornemment: d'abord parce que sur la table, sur le plateau, la nourriture n'est jamais qu'une collection de fragments, dont aucun n'apparaît privilégié par un ordre d'ingestion: manger n'est pas respecter un menu (un itinéraire de plats), mais prélérer, d'une touche légère de la baguette, tantôt une couleur, tantôt une autre [...] il n'a plus de moments ou de lieux distinctifs: il devient décentré, comme un texte ininterrompu. (1970a: 33-34)

What particularly interests me about Barthes' description is his insistence on the spatial quality of this democratisation of meaning. Here, the hierarchies present in Western cooking (an order of consumption or ‘itinerary’, the relative importances of dishes and so on) become a decentred ‘collection of fragments’. We shall see a little later how this epistemological and aesthetic decentring-through-fragmentation is related by Barthes to the structure of (post)modern Tokyo.

Now fragmentation, as Lefebvre's discussion of Picasso confirms, is not an exclusively postmodern phenomenon; however, whereas modernist painting, for example, tended to fragment space as a means to creating a new kind of order, postmodern space of the kind Barthes seems to be describing, is deliberately, perversely, unordered. Modernist Art - such as Cubism, for instance - sought to reinstate meaning in a different form, despite its superficial anarchy; rather than renouncing claims to truth, that is, it purported in many ways to be more true to life (less static for instance) than the forms that had preceded it. This is where its modernity lies. What fascinates Barthes about the construct which is ‘his’ Japan, on the other hand, is the very absence of hierarchy, the absence of ‘centred’, original, meaning. This deliberate opposition to hierarchical order is familiar from other ‘late’ texts by Barthes, such as *Le plaisir du texte* (1973), *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (1975) and *Fragments d’un discours amoureux* (1977), where repeated use is made of the alphabet as an ‘arbitrary’ ordering structure. The presence of fragmentary, cyclical, forms such as these also plays a crucial role in terms of textual organisation in the

73 Barthes’ concerns are evidently congruent, in many respects, with the kind of postmodern textuality exemplified by writers such as Fowles, Pynchon and Tournier, though I am not interested
novels I shall be examining. Diegetically they are related to a whole host of strategies which aim at undermining the predominance of a single, unified narrative voice (in the mould of the modern, Enlightenment, subject). Here linear narration is also decomposed into a splintered and cyclical (orally-influenced) assemblage of repeating elements, which is thematic rather than teleological. Glissant's *Tout-monde* (1993a) is perhaps the best example of such 'chaotic' techniques, expanding on his earlier 'cyclonic' mode of narration, seen in novels such as *Malemort* (1975).

Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove* (1989a), on the other hand, deploys what looks like a cubist tactic of shifting narrator every chapter to build up a composite picture of the one character who remains voiceless, Francis Sancher, found dead in the eponymous mangrove swamp. In this novel, however, fragmentation does not presuppose a unified origin, nor a whole character who can be reconstructed; instead, as we shall see in chapter 5, it serves to throw into question a notion of community predicated precisely on homogenous 'wholeness'. Chamoiseau, for his part, makes persistent use of two related decentring techniques: polyvocal and heteroglossic narration on the one hand and a collage technique (involving the juxtaposition of temporally disparate sections) on the other. This is a characteristically postmodern strategy and one which Chamoiseau, in *Texaco* for example, has made his own. Postmodern also because, in humorous fashion, it self-consciously calls into question its own narrative status. In *Tout-monde*, meanwhile, Glissant multiplies narrative voices and writer-figures (*commentateur, départeur, romancier, poète, chroniqueur...*) indeterminately. Indeed the question of the author, which has a long history in French literary criticism, seems to me to be a central feature of contemporary Caribbean literature and one around which a variety of issues can be focused. I shall examine this question later in this chapter as a means to problematising the relation of Caribbean literature to Western 'theory'.

What these textual strategies suggest is the impossibility of constructing unified or centred systems of meaning. Textually, as we shall see, this is figured in Caribbean writing by a subversion of legible or originated narrative authority. Postmodern resistance to legibility, for example, is taken up in Antonio Benitez-Rojo's seminal postmodern reading of the Caribbean, *The Repeating Island*, where he states that "the

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in applying such labels here.

'Malemort' we should remember is taken, along with Frankétienne's *Décollé* (1975), as a key text in Caribbean writing by the créolité movement: cf Chamoiseau & Confiand (1991) and Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiand (1993).
spectrum of Caribbean codes is so varied and dense that it holds the region suspended in a soup of signs" adding that the Caribbean archipelago is a "discontinuous conjunction [...of]: unstable condensations, turbulences, whirlpools, clumps of bubbles, frayed seaweed, sunken galleons, crashing breakers, flying fish, seagull hawks, downpours, nighttime phosphoresences, eddies and pools, uncertain voyages of signification; in short, a field of observation quite in tune with the objectives of Chaos" (1996: 2). Now the importance of Chaos - the epitome of 'postmodern science' - for conceptualising the Caribbean has yet to be fully explored and is a theme to which I shall return in chapter 7, specifically as a tool for my reading of Glissant's Tout-monde. The impact of Chaos-theory, I will be arguing, draws its strength from an opposition to the totalising claims of 'classical' science (already identified with the project of modernity); it substitutes fragile unpredictability for stability and regularity, fluid dynamism for fixed structures. Its very methodology is predicated upon the interrogation of absolute or predictable meaning. Above all, however, it dares to tackle global problems by examining the way elements are related within complex systems and thus articulates the relationship of the global to the local (a quintessentially Glissantian notion). In chapter 7, I shall be arguing for chaos as the theoretical tool best capable of articulating the 'double imperatives' which I see operating in Francophone Caribbean fiction and Glissant's work in particular.

One of the major impacts of postmodernism on literary-cultural space, as the example of Chaos illustrates, has been the emergence of a shift from homogenous and fixed spaces to more fluid modes of spatial relation. Glissant, for example (1997e: 193-197), develops a critique of fixedness in terms of territory, preferring mobile forms of cultural identification suggested by wandering (errance) or nomadism (1990: 23-34). The spatial intransigence of racinated forms of social existence is also challenged by Glissant (e.g. 1996b: 59-60) through his application of Deleuze & Guattari's concept of the rhizome (1980: 9-37) to questions of identity. Postmodern space of the kind Glissant evokes is thus heterogeneous, mobile, relational and composed of multiple rather than single nodes and roots.

The deconstruction of origins, of 'reality', and of textual mimesis, which find their more extreme manifestations in theories such as these, have nevertheless had an impact on postmodern narrative in ways which parallel developments in the Caribbean and alter both the nature of textual space and the representation of space and spaces within those texts. In this way the self-sufficient space of the 'classical' realistic novel, or at least the illusion of such, undergoes a mutation in this multi-relational space of the Americas where, to quote Glissant, "le baroque est naturalisé" (1997e: 116). Glissant's approach to literary space can thus be characterised as a baroque undermining of depth (representational and epistemological) as well as of the authenticity of origins, which leads him to make one of his most postmodern pronouncements, speaking about "une démesure de la démesure qui [lui] paraît être la vocation de la littérature aujourd'hui. Démesure non parce que c'est anarchique, mais parce qu'il n'y a plus la prétention à la profondeur, la prétention à l'universel, il n'y a plus que la prétention à la diversité" (1996b: 94, emphasis added). This concern with surfaces suggests a kind of Baudrillardian postmodernism, though I would be unhappy to bracket the two together unproblematically: whereas, for Baudrillard, reality is no longer truly accessible, but is necessarily mediated, to the extent that the sign "bears no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum" (1981: 10), Glissant's thinking tends to keep a tighter grasp on the real. There is a characteristic reluctance among exponents of postcolonial writing to stray too far down the path of apocalyptic postmodernism, in the manner of Baudrillard, or even Paul Virilio, whose explorations of prosthetic and remote forms of existence (e.g. 1995) paint a nightmarish, dystopian, picture of the future.

As I have been at pains to point out, this thesis, while literary in focus, aims to conjoin aesthetic and socio-economic perspectives on space as well as a discussion of the changes in socio-economic space itself. My discussion of postmodernism is a case in point, for any analysis of the evolution of space in textual and epistemological terms needs to be augmented by some consideration of the concrete spatial praxis (Lefebvre's pratique spatiale) which both influences and is influenced by such forms. Space in the late twentieth century is determined by the development of new forms of economic, technological and social relations, which can be articulated in terms of two specific areas: late capitalist global economics and the development of the postmodern city. I shall consider these two phenomena in turn.
Space and the 'condition' of postmodernity

So far I have presented postmodemism as predominantly an attitude, as either a departure in aesthetics (which organises space in new, de-centred, ways) or as a critique of Enlightenment knowledge (which supported the colonial enterprise and its rationalist compartmentalisation of a projected universal world-space). However, as I have already hinted, there is another way of conceptualising the postmodern, namely as a distinct economic era, produced by and producing changes in the spatial organisation of relations of capitalist exchange. The theoreticians of this approach to the 'condition' of postmodernity are generally Marxist in inspiration and invaluable because they also provide a critique of the very system they describe. Marxist economics therefore, in addition to supporting my claim that Caribbean 'philosophy', for want of a better word, participates in a mutation of twentieth-century culture, also introduces critical perspectives which resonate with Caribbean attacks on colonial and neo-colonial impositions. This enables me to suggest another way of negotiating, if not of reconciling, the contradictions surrounding postmodern theory; it seems to me not inconsistent therefore to say that Caribbean writers deploy postmodern aesthetics and structures of knowledge while simultaneously criticising some of the political and economic manifestations of postmodern culture (the effects of the tourist trade for instance).

One of my basic claims in this thesis, then, relates to the establishment of a distinct cultural, social or economic 'era' which the Caribbean literature I shall be examining either participates in or resists. This postmodern 'era' embodies both Harvey's 'condition of postmodernity' and Jameson's 'cultural logic of late capitalism', two complementary versions of the late twentieth century world which lend economic support to the notion of this time-period as distinct. David Harvey, in his seminal *The Condition of Postmodernity*, sees postmodernism as a "sea-change", but not an entirely new kind of society (1990: vii), echoing Jameson's assessment of postmodern economy as a "purer" form of capitalism. Because the potential for a move towards 'fictitious' late capital is inherent in the system itself. As Marx himself pointed out, under capitalism, exchange value takes precedence over use value, or as Harvey puts it, 'money becomes the real commodity' (1990: 100).
organises itself in space. So how has this change come about and what its consequences?

Jameson (in his *Postmodernism, or: the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*) follows Ernst Mandel's theorisation of 'late capital', carving up Western economy into three main eras corresponding to three different modes of production, but he also relates these to periods of artistic and cultural production. The early and mid nineteenth century, he states, was the era of steam-driven motors, constituting the age of classical or 'market' capitalism, which was dominated by the homogenous Enlightenment logic of the grid; in literature and painting this was the time of Realism (410). From about 1890 onwards, with the advent of electric and combustion motors, Western society entered the age of monopoly capital, and what Lenin famously called the 'age of imperialism' (410); the dawning of the modernist period in the Arts, meanwhile, coincided with a tension between this economic structure and lived experience; the colonies, for example, although the source of much income, remained inaccessible to most (411). The third stage in this evolution of capitalism comes in the 1940s with the move to electronic and nuclear-powered apparatuses. This late capitalist period, which is basically that of postmodern production in the arts, is characterised by increasingly transnational business, a new international division of labour, new dynamics in international trade, new forms of media interrelationship, computers and automation, all within an "enormously complex new international space" (413).

Harvey's analysis, for its part, focuses on the rise of postmodernity as a move from Fordist mass-production towards more flexible processes of capital accumulation, echoing and supporting the Caribbean penchant for mobile or fluid systems mentioned above. He also focuses on these changes as produced by and producing what he calls rounds of 'space-time compression', each signalling the shift from one kind of production system to another. The 'heroic modernism' typical of both Bauhaus and Le Corbusier, which saw space as "something to be shaped for social purposes" (Harvey, 1990: 66) was adopted in the US (as well as parts of Europe) in the 1950s, in an economic system which favoured Fordist-Keynesian policies of mass-production (mass-consumption) and massive state-intervention. Ford's innovatory production-line manufacturing, introduced as early as 1914, had functioned by breaking work down into fragments, rationalising them and thus speeding up the whole process (128). This policy created a "new kind of rationalized, modernist, and populist democratic society" (126), built on centralised - and largely
state-controlled - capital. This Fordist regime of accumulation enjoyed stable economic growth until about the late 1960s when the contradictions inherent in the system, felt particularly in the exploitation of the Third-world and various ‘minority’ groups, exploded in a wave of inner-city riots (138-139), which shook the system and, combined with other world-wide crises (Vietnam, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and a property-market crash, for instance), prompted the shift to postmodern accumulation, which is characterised by:

Flexibility with respect to labour processes, labour markets, products, and patterns of consumption [...] by the emergence of entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets and, above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation. (147)

Flexible accumulation also involves a more flexible workforce (often in peripheral urban areas), but it is above all characterised by a growth in tertiary, or service, industries (such as tourism) and, with the advent of electronic banking, by an explosion of ‘fictitious capital’, ‘voodoo economics’, or economics ‘with mirrors’.

“The financial system”, states Harvey, “has achieved a degree of autonomy from real production unprecedented in capitalism’s history” (1990:194), a state of affairs which parallels the postmodernists’ obsession with surfaces and simulacra (pace Baudrillard), an obsession which, as I have already suggested, is echoed in Glissant’s increasing suspicion of the search for depth and for ‘roots’ (as in Alex Haley’s novel of the same name(1977)), but which at the same time seems to be of a slightly different order, the Caribbean world-view retaining a concern - albeit decentred and relational - with locality and identity.

In a very concrete sense, the changes in contemporary life wrought by postmodern economics are all-too obvious: technological innovations - particularly in the communication and IT sectors - have had a radical impact on both interpersonal and economic relations (as part of Harvey’s ‘time-space compression’), while politically speaking, the rise of multinational business, not to mention the increased mobility of goods, people and capital, has significantly weakened the autonomy of the nation state. Glissant’s claims that the Caribbean has something to contribute to global politics are supported by some of these developments: thus his promotion of a “pensée archipélique” (1996b: 43) can be considered relevant in a time when, as he puts it, “L’Europe s’archipélique” (44). Indeed Glissant, in true
Lyotardian fashion, sees contemporary political developments as evidence of the failure of older structures inherited from the Enlightenment; for him it is therefore syncretic Caribbean models - of créolisation, for example - which provide the most appropriate way of viewing the emergent new world (dis)order:

Je pense que le terme de créolisation s'applique à la situation actuelle du monde, c'est-à-dire à la situation où une « totalité terre » enfin réalisée permet qu'à l'intérieur de cette totalité (où il n'est plus aucune autorité « organique » et où tout est archipel) les éléments culturels les plus éloignés et les plus hétérogènes s'il se trouve puissent être mis en relation. (22)

The consequences of flexible accumulation are often double-edged swords, however. Bauman has tellingly demonstrated how globalisation tends to polarise: while “the top of the hierarchy is extraterritorial, its lower ranges are marked by varying degrees of space constraints” (1998: 105). Harvey, meanwhile, has shown how the new regime of capital accumulation depends, or has drawn on vast reserves of cheap immigrant labour, and, in the mid 1970s/80s, the revival of sweatshops in American inner-city areas (1990: 152-3). It is therefore important not to gloss over the distinction between an epistemological postmodernism and the often pernicious reality of postmodern economics, even when the two appear to be complementary. Although Glissant appeals to postmodern mobility as evidence of the legitimacy of his theories, therefore, he is simultaneously wary of certain aspects of this same postmodernity: “les multinationales capitalistes expliquent aux gens des pays où elles s'implantent de ne pas se renfermer sur eux-mêmes, de s'ouvrir au monde, mais cela n'entraîne pas une véritable relation. On connaît la suite” (1998a). Likewise Malémort contains a damning portrayal of the effects of bétonisation in post-war Martinique, a process of ‘modernisation’ which has been reinforced by postmodern tourism, the French Antilles’ primary - and nearly its only remaining - ‘industry’.

I have already identified postmodern economics as marked by the primacy of tertiary industry - the circulation of signs, financial services and cultural artefacts - over ‘real’ production. Tourism is a perfect example of the increased mobility, in terms of the consumption of leisure space, of people in the late twentieth century: “le néo-capitalisme et le néo-impérialisme partagent l'espace dominé en régions exploitées pour et par la consommation de l'espace” (Lefebvre, 1974: 408). The politics of assimilation in Martinique, for example, inexorably pursued since the

77 Accompanied by spiralling Third-world debt (Harvey, 1990: 163).
conversion of the French Antilles into a DOM in 1946, has made of the island what Glissant calls a “colonie de consommation” (1981: 62) with “une économie de consommation sans production réelle” (65). As a result the island’s geography has been transformed into an illusory space, a network of roads and hotels, all geared towards the circulation - a negative circulation, this time, and far removed from Glissant’s nomadisme circulaire⁷⁸ - of tourists, and of goods and services supporting the tourist trade. Not least among the many paradoxes of Martinican economy (although “au sens propre, il n’y a pas une économie martiniquaise” (60)) is that it may well be easier to find Coca-Cola or imported whiskey than fresh fish (65). Glissant’s critique is based on the assumption that the economics of French assimilation have led to a disembodied commodification of an exoticised Martinique which has effectively crippled the island, both economically and politically. This critique of one aspect of postmodern culture (the transformation of local culture into commodity, an eternal paradise of lambi and ti-punch) does not necessarily invalidate certain aspects of postmodern thinking, but it does highlight a number of contradictions which, although inherent in postmodern culture to begin with, nevertheless suggest that we need to treat the term with caution. Much can be said of the world wide web, a potentially rhizomorphic system, of which Chamoiseau says that “les traditions orales peuvent trouver un étonnant support dans le cyberespace” (1997a: 281), but which ultimately proves deceptive. Despite the promise of what Glissant calls “une multi-relation qui ouvre à l’infini la diversité […] les progrès opérés en la matière mènent aussi à une sorte de non-réalité”, a weak kind of “espéranto universel” (1996b: 92).

There seems to be a fine line, then, between the positive, liberating, possibilities suggested by world-wide expansion and the flattening-out with which Coca-Cola culture threatens to engulf the globe. Or as Glissant puts it, “la mondialisation, conçue comme non-lieu [...] mènerait à une dilution standardisée” (1997e: 192). Jameson, as one of the more subtle exponents of postmodernism, is well aware of this danger, as is clear when he speaks of the “as yet untheorized original space of some new ‘world system’ of multinational or late capitalism, a space whose negative or baleful aspects are only too obvious” (1991: 50). In a brilliant passage, he goes on to identify spatial confusion as the crisis, or perhaps challenge, of postmodern culture, arguing that “this latest mutation in space - postmodern hyperspace - has

⁷⁸ Cf Glissant (1990: 23-25): whereas ‘le nomadisme en flèche’, which characterises colonisation and invasion ‘est un désir dévastateur de sédentarité’, ‘le nomadisme circulaire est une forme non
finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself [...] to map the great global multinational and decentred communication network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects” (44). Interestingly he comes to the same conclusion as Glissant, namely that within the gigantic rhizome which is the postmodern “world space of multinational capital” (akin perhaps to Glissant’s tout-monde) it may be necessary “to grasp our positioning as individual and collective subjects” through a kind of “cognitive mapping” (54, my italics). Harvey likewise argues that “capitalist hegemony over space puts the aesthetics of place very much back on the agenda” (1990: 303). In this new world space, Lefebvre has written, “aucun lieu ne disparaît” (1974: 474); once again, it seems, “le lieu est incontournable” (Glissant, 1993a: 153). The emergence of a dialogue between space and place is a key issue in this thesis and informs my reading of Glissant in particular (ch. 7).

The appeal to an aesthetics of place does not, in itself, efface a number of problems with postmodern theory which Terry Eagleton has highlighted in his study *The Illusions of Postmodernism.* Referring to it as a “thoroughly orthodox heterodoxy” (1996: 26), Eagleton in fact sees postmodernism as complicit with, and reproducing, the capitalist enterprise. Hybridity in his view amounts to a rather normative reaction to a time of relative peace, whereas nationalism occurs most strongly in periods of turbulence. And if postmodernism, as we have suggested, ends up actually representing contemporary culture rather than providing a critique of it, the equation (as Terry Eagleton would say) cancels all the way through; postmodernism emerges not as a radical gesture, but as a reactionary one after all, hence Habermas’ scornful allusion to Lyotard and others as “neoconservative” (Docherty, 1993: 101). Postmodernism in other words may be little more than an apology for the status quo; worse yet, its deconstructive weaponry may well end up cutting the ground away from the minorities it purports to defend: “in diagnosing the decline of the metanarratives of authority in the West, [postmodern theory] also high-mindedly evaporates the legitimacy of national emancipatory struggles, which may depend crucially on these very shopsoiled ideals of universal freedom and justice” (Connor, 1989: 234). There is certainly a lot to be said for this critique of postmodernism, which also has serious implications for postcolonial theories of hybridity (and I shall be returning to this topic in my next chapter when I discuss metaphors of identity).

intolérante de la sédentarité impossible’ (24).
For now we can say, first, that more subtle exponents of postmodernism such as Jameson and Harvey are not unaware of these pitfalls; likewise, postcolonial thinkers such as Spivak have been able to take on board the tools offered by (deconstructive brands of) postmodern theory without at the same relinquishing their grip on the political and the strategic. Such thinking must perhaps be deployed primarily as a deterrent, then, as what Spivak calls a "radical acceptance of vulnerability" (1990: 18), which does not necessarily proclude the appeal to universals which "will give you the power to fight the other side" (12). What we might call an 'applied' postmodernism, and this is my second point, therefore offers a radical way of engaging in strategic situations; if we turn our attention briefly to some of the issues relating to postmodern cities - in particular to those cities in the Third World and in the Caribbean (featured in Chamoiseau's *Texaco*) - we can see examples of such practices of resistance at work.

**Postmodern Cities**

"For the first time in history", as Massey, Allen & Pile reflect, "more than one half of humanity will be living not just in cities but in megacities" (1999: 1). And as I stated earlier, it is the city - and descriptions of cities - which best reflect the changing concerns of the modern and postmodern eras. Having examined Barthes's discussion of Tokyo as an exploded epistemological/textual structure, I should now like to return briefly to *L'empire des signes* as a means of elaborating a picture of postmodern urban space as a reaction to the space of modernity. Barthes' text is valuable in this context because it identifies a complicity, within Western modernity, between space and power-structures. For Barthes, the Western town-centre thus expresses the centralised nature of its institutions:

Conformément au mouvement même de la métaphysique occidentale, pour laquelle tout centre est le lieu de la vérité, le centre de nos villes est toujours *plein*: lieu marqué, c'est en lui que se rassemblent et se condensent les valeurs de la civilisation: la spiritualité (avec les églises), le pouvoir (avec les bureaux), l'argent (avec les banques), la marchandise (avec les grands magasins), la parole (avec les agoras: cafés et promenades): aller dans le centre, c'est
rencontrer la «vérité» sociale, c'est participer à la plénitude superbe de la «réalité». (1970a: 44).

In addition to the centralisation of economic and political power, then, Barthes sees another kind of centripetal impulse at work: the Western town evokes the metaphysical truth of all that is central, and by implication the inferiority of the marginal or peripheral. The case presented by Tokyo on the other hand - and for me, Barthes’ Tokyo is prototypically postmodern - is radically different: the centre of this city is empty, the site here which should speak the centrality of power and radiate symbolic authority, is instead an opaque absence: “toute la ville tourne autour d’un lieu à la fois interdit et indifférent [...] obligeant la circulation à un perpétuel dévoiement. De cette manière [...] l’imaginaire se déploie circulairement, par détours et retours de long d’un sujet-vide” (44-45). This centrifugal structure, as I have already mentioned, is typical of a movement within postmodernity (its cities, but also global communication and business networks) towards decentralisation, a movement which bears a close affinity to postcolonial narratives of peripheral, marginal and liminal forms of existence.

The modern metropolis, to put the postmodern city in perspective, was typically brought into being by a kind of Faustian “creative destruction”, Faustian because, as Harvey remarks, “Faust forces himself and everyone else (even Mephistopheles) to extremes of organization, pain and exhaustion in order to master nature and create a new landscape, a sublime spiritual achievement that contains the potentiality for human liberation from want and need” (Harvey, 1990: 16). Robert Moses, in post-war New York, and Baron Haussmann, the so-called ‘artiste démolisseur’ who engineered the transformation of Paris from medieval city to what Benjamin famously called “la capitale du dix-neuvième siècle” (1989), are good examples of the way in which “the modernist has to destroy in order to create” (Harvey, 1990: 16). The rationalised approach to planning these ‘modern’ cities, however, dates back to the eighteenth century when, as Bauman informs us, thinkers such as Morelly codified the construction of cities. Consider the following highly prescriptive instructions for instance:

Around a large square of regular proportions public warehouses will be erected storing all the necessary supplies and entailing the hall for public gatherings - everything of the uniform and pleasant appearance.

On the outside of that circle city districts will be regularly arranged - each of the same size, similar form, and divided by equal streets.
All buildings will be identical...
All districts will be so planned, that if needs be they may be expanded without disturbing their regularity. (in Bauman, 1998: 36)

More recently the gospel of the modern city has been kept alive by Le Corbusier, who sees its space as characterised by the mono-functional unambiguity of urban zones as well as the geometric regularity so dear to Enlightenment planners (Bauman, 1998: 42). In his text *La ville radieuse* (1933), which was to inspire the construction of Brasília, Le Corbusier set out his view of the perfect city and criticised existing cities, charging them - as Bauman (1998: 41) remarks - “with non-functionality [...], with insalubrity, and with offence to the aesthetic sense (brought about by the chaotic maze of streets and architectural styles)”, all qualities which, in Chamoiseau’s *Texaco* are ascribed to the eponymous Fort-de-France suburb. The postmodern view of what a city should be therefore grows out of a critique of the Fordist state-managed metropolis. Here, complete with arrogant (or, as Lefebvre would say, phallocratic) verticals, there is a tendency to reduce the heterotopian to a series of segregated areas which embody the confident linearity of teleological History. Opposed to this model is a perspective in which “the city cannot be thought of as having one geography and one history [...] cities are characterized by their openness: to new possibilities, and to new interactions between people” (Massey, Allen & Pile, 1999: vii).

How then can we characterise urban postmodernism? For Soja, it is Los Angeles which best represents the postmodern condition, a place where like Borges’ *Alep*, “it all comes together” (1989: 190-221). LA, he maintains, is the “paradigmatic window through which to see the last half of the 20th century” (221), paradigmatic because it is connected to every other part of the world, an idea familiar from internet ideologies, but also from Glissantian thinking, in particular his evocation of a *tout-monde* and his claims that “j’écris en présence de toutes les langues du monde” (1996b: 39). Thus “there is a Boston in Los Angeles, a Lower Manhattan and a South Bronx, a São Paulo and a Singapore [...] Los Angeles seems to be conjugating the recent history of capitalist urbanization in virtually all its inflectional forms” (193).

If modernism was, as I have suggested, utopian, postmodernism is heterotopian, to borrow a term from Foucault (1994 IV: 752-762). Indeed eclecticism (the juxtaposition of incongruous elements) is, for Lyotard, “the degree zero of contemporary general culture: one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald’s food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in
Tokyo and ‘retro’ clothes in Hong Kong” (Docherty, 1993: 42). Similarly as Soja remarks, Los Angeles - this “entrepot to the world” (1989: 223) - is home to “the most culturally heterogeneous population ever agglomerated in any city in history” (Gibson & Watson, 1995: 130), a comment which recalls similar descriptions of cultural and ethnic diversity in Caribbean novels. Thus Patrick Chamoiseau, in his autobiographical Antan d’enfance (1996a: 125), recalls that “Jeanne-Yvette nous venait des mémoires caraïbes, du grouillement de l’Afrique, des diversités d’Europe, du foisonnement de l’Inde, des tremblements d’Asie..., du vaste toucher des peuples dans le prisme des île ouvertes” a diversity which characterises the “lieux-dits de la Créolité” (1996a: 125).

One version of the postmodern city, then, would be that of heterotopian world-city, LA as ubiquitous Aleph, where hundreds of conflicting messages, sounds and images bombard the spectator simultaneously:

Perhaps more than any other place, Los Angeles is everywhere. It is global in the fullest sense of the word. Nowhere is this more evident than in its cultural projection and ideological reach, its almost ubiquitous screening of itself as a rectangular dream machine for the world [...] as a result the seers of Los Angeles have become countless, even more so as the progressive globalization of its urban political economy flows along similar channel, making Los Angeles perhaps the epitomizing world-city, une ville devenue monde (Soja, 1989: 223)

This openness to world-space, then, which resonates with Glissantian concerns, connects postmodern discourse about cities and the postcolonial cities we shall be examining shortly. Diane Austin-Broos, for example, in her essay ‘Gay nights and Kingston Town: representation of Kingston, Jamaica’, states that “movement, travel, other places, itineracy, are part of the daily cut and thrust of life [...] knowing about ‘foreign’ is an integral part of Jamaica” (Gibson & Watson, 1995: 151). The postmodern city, however, is also a decentered or “polycentric archipelago” (Soja, 1989: 241), economically because much production takes place in peripheral regions, but also because the city becomes a difficult-to-read “splintered labyrinth” of meanings (243). Indeed, “the sixty-mile circle” of Los Angeles and its outskirts, “encloses a shattered metro-sea of fragmented yet homogenised communities, cultures and economies confusingly arranged into a continually ordered spatial division of labour and power” (244). Postmodern LA, therefore, epitomises the kind of fragmentary “mosaïque constitutive” evoked by the proponents of créolité

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Cf Coates (1997: 31-33).
(Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 27), a polysemic structure which - like Glissant's *tout-monde* - resists overarching attempts at constructing holistic meaning.

One obvious feature of postmodern thinking, we have seen, has been the discrediting of centripetal structures, whether by this we mean the Derridean explosion of an epistemological origin or, in narrative terms, any single source of authority (omniscient narrator, for example). Against the reductive search for centres, postmodernism suggests modes of knowledge which organise themselves centrifugally in space to give decentred, polycentric and peripheral forms. However classic accounts of postmodernism, in terms of architecture and urban space, have tended to look to the West for their inspiration: Jameson’s description of the Westin Bonaventure hotel in Los Angeles (1991: 39-44) and Soja’s analyses of the same city reinforce the image of the high-tech metropolis as postmodern archetype. In addition we need to bear in mind the reality of most cities in the West where, against a projected egalitarian postmodernism, there is all too often an exclusive kind of ‘carceral city’, a city-wide network of barriers, partitions and surveillance systems.

Here, then, I should like to propose a shift of emphasis. It is to the so-called Third World, I believe, to the shanty-towns of Bombay and other postcolonial cities, that we should turn for the most cogent examples of postmodern urban morphology. Jim Masselos’ comments on Bombay resonate strongly with the Caribbean examples we shall be considering in due course and go to make up a postcolonial urban postmodernism:

In many ways the archetypal postmodern architectural experience may not at all be the plunge into the Escher-like structures of the Westin Bonaventure in Los Angeles, but an excursion into the shanty slum. Shanty structures derive from village prototypes in rural India but are modified by the requirements of space and the availability of materials - plastic, tin, bits of cloth, wood and bricks, which draw on past and present materials. There are the tight packing together of structures, the unplanned pathways that wend their way through the massed huts, the pathways out into spaces that lead nowhere (though sometimes to spaces that serve as latrines), the dead ends, the hidden and clear exits, the makeshift entries through holes in fences and walls, and the juxtapositions of satellite saucers, make-do machines, trailing electric wires, bits and pieces of past and present crafts and technologies. All of these are, if anything, more constantly decentralised and diffuse in their experiential quality, more drawing on the pasts as needed, than anything the Westin can produce with its ordered pathways and hidden exits. All are the subject of an overall if confused planning process designed to appeal to a limited and selective stratum of society. The shanty settlement represents the other side of the enclave and a similar gathering of pasts and presents, but it creates something that is qualitatively different from any of the pasts and presents from which it draws. (Gibson & Watson, 1995: 212)

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80 Cf Davis (1990).
Soja, to his credit, does in fact recognise this slightly different kind of application of postmodernism; “it can be said that today every city in the world is to some degree a postmodern city [...] it is not only in Los Angeles that one can see the effects of postmodern urbanization, but also in Huddersfield, Wollongong, Kingston, and Kualar Lumpur” (Gibson & Watson, 1995: 126). If I have chosen to dwell on the postmodern city it is partly because, to quote Homi Bhabha, it is “the space [where], in our time, the perplexity of living is most acutely experienced” (1994: 170), partly also because it illustrates the contradictions of postmodern culture, the polarised phenomena inherent in contemporary life. The favellas which so appealed to Lefebvre, the quartiers populaires of Martinique and Guadeloupe, not to mention Bombay’s topadpatti (which feature in Salman Rushdie’s latest novel The Ground Beneath her Feet (1999a)) provide to my mind one of the best instances of the postmodern, because they articulate all the contradictions of postmodernity (glaring inequalities and heterogeneous juxtaposition), together with strategies of resistance to such contradictions.

Oppositional strategies of the kind found in contemporary Caribbean writing often operate spatially confronting what Glissant has identified as “les lieux stratégiques de l’aliénation” (1981: 47) - town-halls and schools for instance - with Chamoiseau's lieux-dits de la créolité. They also suggest a different way of looking at the question of the urban and a new approach to history, what Chamoiseau’s urbaniste refers to as a “mutation de l’esprit” (1992a: 300). Jim Masselos, echoing Chamoiseau, goes on to say the following:

A global city like Bombay is in fact predominantly a village, a series of villages represented in the shanty structures that permeate the city. They are omnipresent, and should and cannot be ignored. They are in a symbiotic relationship with the city in which they are located. The economy of the city needs them - and employs the slum dwellers. (Gibson & Watson, 1995: 212)

This is strangely reminiscent of a passage in Texaco to which we shall return in a later chapter and which likens the shanty-town suburb of Fort-de-France to an ‘urban mangrove’:

La mangrove semble de prime abord hostile aux existences. Il est difficile d’admettre que, dans ses angoisses de racines, d’ombres moussues, d’eaux voilées, la mangrove puisse être un tel berceau de vie pour les crabes, les poissons, les langoustes, l’écosystème marin [...] Pourtant, la ville se renforce en puisant dans la mangrove urbaine de Texaco, comme dans celle des autres quartiers, exactement comme la mer se repeuple par cette langue vitale qui la relie aux chimies des mangroves. (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 336-337)
As well as embodying a quasi ecological stance, the shanty suburb in Caribbean fiction is generally contrasted with a modernising central district: as Diane Austin-Broos argues, “downtown confronts modernity and its notion of haven and encultured order. These notions find their roots, in turn, in the Jamaican elite and the metropolitan world” (Gibson & Watson, 1995: 159). Similarly, whereas Chamoiseau identifies the centre of Fort-de-France as co-terminous with “le moderne du monde” (1992a: 218), Texaco is to *pen-ville* what decentred Japanese cuisine was to the centred Western meal, a kind of chaotic (postmodern) fringe or what Chamoiseau calls its “couronne bouillonnante, indéchiffurable, impossible” (235). Crucially, as we shall in a later chapter, this relationship is underwritten by differences in the approach to the past, where the marginal, interstitial space of Texaco is characterised as a Creole zone where the structures and practice of collective memory modify written History (ch. 6).

Postmodern theory and the Caribbean

I should like to conclude this chapter with a few remarks on the relationship of Caribbean literature to critical theory, and what difficulties this ambivalent relationship throws up. Postmodernism, for example, despite a number of problems inherent in the concept itself, seems in so many ways to be an appropriate tool for describing the situation of late twentieth-century societies, including such postcolonial ones as those of the Caribbean. But is this really so? Predictably, but not unreasonably, many ‘postcolonial’ writers have tended to resist the application of labels such as ‘postmodern’ as an act of neo-colonial imposition; for, as Helen

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*The relationship of *Texaco* to metropolitan ‘French’ literature, of course, also exhibits comparable tendencies.  
*Cf.* for example, Gyssels’ comment (1998: 86): ‘André Schwartz m’arbore un large sourire quand je lui dis que d’autres avant moi taxaient son écriture de postmoderne’. In a similar vein, Chamoiseau & Confiant (1991: 12-13) condemn the tendency of (Western) academics to categorise Creole literature: ‘Oh les docteurs ont sévi, ils l’ont nommée littérature négro-africaine, littérature des îles, littérature noire d’expression française, littérature afro-antillaise [...] Aujourd’hui encore, ils persistent et mutilent les pompes de ce chaos.’
Tiffin points out, “the crisis in European authority has ironically resulted in the hegemonic appropriation of ‘the other’ into a European system” (1988: 171), and this despite the apparently radical nature of the critiques these labels bring with them. Meanwhile Derek Walcott, as Bart Moore-Gübert reminds us, “damns French theory in an apoplectic tone which is not untypical of many more traditional kinds of postcolonial critic. Complaining of the ‘stink’ and ‘rot’ of ‘the dead fish of French criticism’, Walcott concludes: ‘It convinces one that Onan was a Frenchman’.” (1997: 1) Glissant, on the other hand, pursues a more subtle line of argument, which although it poses significant problems for the application of postmodern ideas to Caribbean culture, does not completely close the door on such an approach:

Quand j' assiste d'un peu loin au très intéressant travail qui s' élabore de manière théorique en Occident, il me semble qu'il y a là deux dimensions: j' éprouve à la fois un sentiment du dérisoire et un sentiment de l' extrême importance de ces réflexions. (1981: 257)

The ambiguous nature of this relationship is revealed further in Glissant’s remarks concerning the Western attack on authorship and I should like to introduce them here as a means of crystallising the difficulties inherent in reading the Caribbean in terms of postmodern theory.

We have already identified the postmodern ‘era’ as, broadly-speaking, a product of the late 1960s and early 1970s: the break with modernism in architecture, we have seen, was symbolised by the 1972 demolition of the Corbusier-inspired Pruitt-Igoe development in St Louis, while in economic terms it was the 1973 world-wide crash and the ensuing oil crisis which triggered the shift to ‘flexible accumulation’ (Harvey, 1990: 141-172). Similarly in French theory the shift from (modernist) structuralism to (postmodern) poststructuralism is marked by a movement from work to text figured in Derrida’s 1967 essay ‘La structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines’ (1967a: 409-428) and Barthes’ seminal 1968 critique of the author.83 For Glissant, however, this change in the fate of the author cannot simply be seen as a reaction or part of a paradigm shift when translated to the Caribbean:

Le texte est mis en question (dans la modernité mature occidentale) dans la mesure où il est démythifié, où on essaie d’en définir le système génératif. L’auteur est démythifié dans la mesure où on en fait, disons, le lieu de rencontre de ces systèmes génératifs, et non pas le génie souverainement créateur qu’il croyait être. Si je dis que cela m’apparaît dérisoire, c’est parce que en fait (dans notre modernité vécue) ces questions-là ne « portent » pas. Nous devons développer une poétique du « sujet », pour cela même qu’on nous a trop

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Glissant's ambivalent response to Western theory, then, reflects the Janus-like nature of the Caribbean (and by extension (Latin) American) situation itself. I would argue that the status of the author in this region cannot be viewed in the same terms as that of the author in the West, even if superficially the same process of subversion appears to be at work. The reasons for this are twofold: in the first place, the 'death of the author' (and by analogy any absolute source of textual authority) in the West amounts to a reaction against a long tradition which culminates in the extreme solipsism of nineteenth-century Romanticism; by contrast, the experience in the Caribbean is more sudden, it constitutes what Glissant calls an "irruption dans la modernité" (1981: 192). Creole literature, in fact, has no tradition of authorship, the writer becomes what Chamoiseau has called a marqueur de paroles. In the second place, the shift away from the authorial narrative towards a subverted polyphony is at the same time a kind of recuperation, an attempt to reintegrate the communal and the oral tradition - in which the author is already subverted - into an inherited European scriptural tradition to give what Glissant calls a 'roman du Nous':

L'auteur doit être démythifié, oui, parce qu'il doit être intégré à une décision commune. Le Nous devient le lieu du système génératif, et le vrai sujet. Notre critique de l'acte et du donné littéraires ne procède donc pas d'une «réaction» à des théories qu'on nous propose, mais d'une nécessité fulgurante d'intervention. (1981: 258)

Similarly, the subversion of narrative authority in Chamoiseau's works - the fact that his alter ego or 'marqueur de paroles' is mocked by characters in his own works for example - relates less to the kind of ironic playfulness typical of a postmodern novel such as John Fowles' The French Lieutenant's Woman (1969) than it does to a storytelling tradition where the conteur makes fun of himself. For the conteur, as Chamoiseau & Confiant inform us, "devra aussi pratiquer une auto-dérision" (1991: 60). This does not necessarily mean that we cannot consider this literature as a form of postmodernism - indeed I would argue that several of the works that I shall be examining are in many respects postmodern (Texaco and Tout-monde in particular fall into this category). It is simply that the label 'postmodern' is, in different ways, simultaneously too reductive and too all-embracing. We need to view contemporary
Caribbean writing as a tangential manifestation or special category of postmodernism: this involves a Glissantian strategy which highlights the relation to the global, while at the same time affirming the particularity of the local. In other words we need to bear in mind the historical, cultural and political specificities which characterise the Caribbean, as well as its affiliations with wider issues and modes of thinking. This 'double imperative' (a Deriddean conceptual tool which I shall examine in the next chapter) emerges in particular as a strategy of negotiation which, as we shall now see, can be related to the question of identity as formulated by poststructural and postcolonial thinking.
CHAPTER THREE  
Poststructuralism and Postcolonialism:  
Space and Identity  

‘If there’s one thing I totally distrust, in fact, more than distrust, despise  
and have utter contempt for, it is people looking for roots. Because  
anyone who can conceive of looking for roots, should already, you  
know, be growing rutabagas.’

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1990: 93)

This chapter extends the discussion of spatial anti-essentialism outlined in  
previous chapters (a resistance to the conception of space as either an entity or as a  
category susceptible of compartmentalisation) to the question of identity. I want  
thereby to demonstrate a number of convergences between poststructural and  
postcolonial thought, showing how they share a common anti-establishment  
perspective, before going on to consider theories of hybridity, especially in their  
Caribbean formulations: métissage, créolisation, créolité. I shall be arguing for a view of  
these concepts as inherently spatial in the sense that they exhibit an affinity with what  
I will call a philosophy of the ‘in-between’. In particular I will make a case for  
Caribbean (linguistic-based) versions of the in-between as modifications to, and  
developments of, Western hybridity. Underlying this argumentative structure is a  
desire both to embrace contamination, in opposition to prevalent notions of purity,  
and to disentangle negotiational strategies of hybridity from a synthetical mixing  
complicit with liberal multiculturalism.

Hybridity is in many respects a resistance to dominant appeals to purity. Derrida,  
for example, speaking in *Khôra* of “un discours philosophique impur, menacé, bâtard,  
hybride”, urges us to recognise that “ces traits ne sont pas négatifs” (1993a: 94). All  
too often, however, what was once both threat and fantasy has been appropriated as  
a pretext for unproblematical pluralism. Caught between denigration on the one  
hand and exoticism on the other (what Robert Young (1995) has called ‘colonial  
desire’), the notion of hybridity has had a chequered history, one which, however,  
has undergone a mutation in the last twenty or thirty years to the point where, in a  
climate of multiculturalism (however suspect the claims made in this name actually  
turn out to be), it has become almost fashionable, in certain areas, to speak of culture  
and cultural forms as hybrid. The fact that the term is increasingly current in the
discourse and onomastics of the British dance music scene is a case in point. We need, in other words, to be cautious about using the term uncritically, and a major function of this chapter will be to differentiate hybridity as productive negotiation from more normative assertions of mixing.

This chapter is not simply about hybridity, however; rather, it is concerned with the way in which related - ‘impure’ - discourses resist a ‘philosophical’ tradition predicated on a binary logic which can in turn be seen to have supported various forms of colonialism (mental as well as actual). In addition, this chapter attempts to recast these questions in terms of the identity-space relationship already hinted at in previous chapters. What I want to suggest here is that conceptions of identity are, more often than not, articulated (at a theoretical level) in terms of spatial metaphors, and that such metaphors arise not merely out of convenience, but rather because, as I have attempted to show elsewhere, there is an indivisible connection between space/place on the one hand and the conceptualisation of identity on the other. What I hope to explore is a particular set of images relating to the notion of the hybrid or ‘in-between’, to borrow Bhabha’s terminology. This will serve as a backdrop to the debates within Caribbean studies (which I shall be presenting in later chapters) concerning the supposedly syncretic, anti-essentialist nature of West Indian cultures; Glissant’s notion of composite (creolised) as opposed to atavistic (standardised) cultures, for example, is an obvious reference point here. At the same time, I intend to use the terms of these timely debates as a way, not of reconciling, but rather of negotiating the minefield which, as I have just suggested, the very notion of hybridity has become. The in-between or hybrid position, I shall be arguing, retains its force of critical intervention - in the almost-literal sense of a coming in-between polarised terms - despite the numerous, and often valid, objections which have been levelled against it.

The notion of hybridity and the in-between derives from two traditions of post-war thought, namely poststructuralism and postcolonialism, which, contrary perhaps to initial appearances, share a common anti-establishment perspective. Taking a historical-theoretical position, it is possible to see how the emergence of postcolonial

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**86** The UK dance act Hybrid, for example.

**87** Cf in particular Bhabha (1994), (1996).

**88** Cf Glissant (1996b: 22-23), (1997e: 34-37). Glissant’s categories, though they sometimes appear in binary form are not, I would argue, to be taken as purely abstract (ontological) categories, but rather as tendencies or states-in-process. Creolised cultures, for example, can become standardised and vice-versa (1996b: 22). The debate over créolisation vs créolité likewise makes Glissant’s stance on static terms
theory and of poststructuralism went hand in hand with various resistance struggles: Fanonian nationalism, the politics of decolonisation and resistance to French attempts to maintain military control over imperial possessions (Indochina, Madagascar, North Africa). "If so-called 'so-called poststructuralism' is the product of a single historical moment", argues Robert Young, "then that moment is probably not May 1968 but rather the Algerian War of Independence - no doubt itself both a symptom and a product". In this sense, he adds, it is significant that Sartre, Althusser, Derrida and Lyotard, among others, were all either born in Algeria or personally involved with the events of the war" (1990: 1). One might also point to the predominance of non-hexagonal thinkers (Derrida and Kristeva, for instance) - an inherent 'otherness' - at the very heart of so-called 'French' literary, and particularly feminist, theory.

Poststructural textuality can similarly be seen to begin as a postcolonial critique, as resistance to what Barthes, for example, sees as petit bourgeois myths, associated crucially with 'Other' colonial sites: Algeria, for example, or the Tangiers of Le plaisir du texte (1973). In Mythologies (1957) Barthes sets out a critique of that 'doxa' which he would later describe as "l'Opinion publique, l'Esprit majoritaire, le Consensus petit-bourgeois, la Voix du Naturel, la Violence du préjugé" (1975: 51), and against which he constructs his notion of a utopian, emancipatory, aesthetics: the text as a space "uncontaminated by doxa" (Moriarty, 1991: 115). Significantly, several of the most celebrated of Barthes' mythological sketches relate directly to the colonial issue: I am thinking in particular of his discussion of the black soldier (1957: 201) and of French wine-production in Algeria ('Le vin et le lait', 77). It is thus possible to demonstrate a thread of resistance, with in many instances a specifically (post)colonial twist, running right through Barthes' work. This anti-establishment perspective underwrites the strategic juxtaposition of a Derridean/Barthesian aesthetic of 'textuality' and the postcolonial identity politics of hybridity which informs this chapter.

fairly explicit. For a playful organisation of related and opposed binary categories/terms cf Glissant (1990: 236).
87 Cf also 'Bichon chez les nègres' (1957: 64-67), 'le bifteck et les frites' (77-79), and Andrew Leak's comment that 'from the end of the war, France was embroiled in a series of savage colonial wars [...] Many of these struggles were coming to a head at the period in which Mythologies was written, and they form an insistent backdrop to a number of the essays' (1994: 27).
As Patrick ffrench has shown, the historical moment of postcolonialism coincides with the development of a certain critical position in French thinking. This new space of Leftism emerged in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 which prompted many key intellectuals to leave the Parti communiste français, and enabled the existence of a forum outside the Manichean Sartre-PCF divide of the "existentialism or Marxism" question (ffrench, 1995: 11). This historical development is also in a sense a moment of hybridity, a sense of unease with unilateral identity, which has influenced thinkers such as Bhabha and as such informs the questions with which this chapter concerns itself. A further claim of this chapter is that hybridity should be seen as a spatial concept, and this is because, as we shall see, in-between or hybrid thinking emerges as a resistance to binarisms. The hybrid perspective is not only a feature of postcolonial thinking, however, but characterises the spatial approach outlined in this thesis more generally. The kind of Lefebvrian perspective, for example, which I was promoting in Chapter 1, suggests that, within the space-identity relationship, it is impossible to separate praxis and theory, representation and 'reality'. Nevertheless it is especially relevant when considered through the postcolonial prism, in line with Said's insistence that "we must [...] set the art in a global, earthly context. Territory and possessions are at stake, geography and power. Everything about human history is rooted in the earth" (1993: 5). One of the aims of this thesis being, therefore, to engage in a 'worlding' of otherwise 'abstract' ontological categories, I shall proceed from an assumption, namely that poststructuralism is largely defined by its resistance to the binary-fever characteristic of structural linguistics and structuralism more generally, to a consideration of how this same resistance translates into postcolonial theory - though with a more overtly political spin - often through the influence (explicit in Bhabha and Spivak) of thinkers such as Barthes and Derrida. In so doing I hope to demonstrate how these discussions of space, both representational and physical, are used to deconstruct essentialist categories of identity.
Derrida’s seminal response to structuralism, which can be seen as giving birth to the deconstruction movement in the States, is outlined in ‘La structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines’ (1967a: 409-428), which he gave as a paper at the John Hopkins University in 1966. Derrida’s critique of ‘classical’ structuralism in this article attacks the confidently centred system upon which Lévi-Strauss, for example, with his opposition between nature and culture, is able to base many of his claims, thereby negating the ability of these systems to exceed the terms in which they are fixed and, in textual terms, excluding the element of ‘play’:

Perhaps the most prominent feature under attack in this passage is the way in which structuralism proceeded through the drawing-up of mutually-dependent, but nonetheless polarised, binary terms (culture/nature, male/female, black/white). Now the structuralist quest for binaries, as is well known, derives directly from Saussurian linguistics, with its signifiant/signifié duality. Consequently, as Spivak argues in the introduction to her translation of Derrida’s De la grammatologie (1967), “the binary opposition within the Saussurian sign is in a sense paradigmatic of the structure of structuralist methodology” (1976: lvi). The construction of Western meaning, in this sense, is created out of static, oppositional difference (rather than by the process of differentiation), by a process of exclusion which can also be seen to characterise classical identity-formation of the type: \( x = x / x \neq y \).

In addition to its oppositional methodology, however, Derrida “finds the concept of the binary sign itself, in its role as the guide of this objective enterprise [ie structuralism], committed to a science of presence” (1976: lvi). Logocentric structures, that is, partake of a certain metaphysical drive for plenitude, a plenitude which characterises the self-presence of the Cartesian cogito, for example, and which Derrida

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90 Barthes makes adopts a similar position in S/Z, arguing in the introduction that ‘interpréter un texte, ce n’est pas lui donner un sens [...] c’est au contraire apprécier de quel pluriel il est fait’ (1970b: 11) before going on to say, in the section ‘Et/ou’, that ‘décider d’une hiérarchie des codes [...] c’est
sees as containing, not rich, as had previously been supposed. The most insidious feature of what he has dubbed this “métaphysique de la présence” (1967a: 412) lies in the fact that the seductive power of the binary masks the inequality of its terms, one of which is almost inevitably privileged over the other. This hierarchical dichotomy helps explain the traditional Western association of light and transparence with reason, darkness (or opacity) with ignorance and barbarity - the ‘dark ages’, the ‘dark continent’ and so on - the very same association which is contested by the Caribbean emphasis on a parole de nuit. Furthermore, in the Western tradition, the weak term within a binary pair often becomes almost dispensable, an unnecessary adjunct. Thus, for Rousseau, “writing is merely a supplement to speech, it adds something inessential” (Selden & Widdowson, 1993: 146). Feminist, but also poststructuralist and postcolonialist, critics have obtained considerable mileage from demonstrating these lop-sided signifying processes at work and it is therefore no coincidence that these fields have been precisely the ones to generate a discourse of the impure or hybrid: mestizo identity characterised by the cyborg or in-between.

**Khôra and the in-between**

‘Nous devons revenir vers une pré-origine qui nous prive de cette assurance et requiert du même coup un discours philosophique impur, menacé, bâtard, hybride. Ces traits ne sont pas négatifs.’

Jacques Derrida (1993a: 94)

One of the characteristic techniques of Derrida’s so-called deconstructive style - which is not, as he himself states, anything approaching a system or philosophy⁹² -

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écramer la tresse de l’écriture sous une voix unique, ici psychanalytique, là poétique (au sens aristotélicien) [...] manquer le pluriel des codes c’est censurer le travail du discours’ (84).


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has always been to tease out the radical undecidability of certain key terms, such as Plato's *pharmakon* (poison/cure), without seeking to provide any (transcendental) form of 'correct' or absolute meaning which would constitute what the Guyanan writer Wilson Harris has called 'predatory closure'.\(^{93}\) Deconstructing the *logocentrism* of meaning, that "authorizing presence, that spawns hierarchized oppositions" (Spivak, 1976: lxix), thus becomes a resistance to epistemological closure. More recently, Derrida has pursued this reading strategy in texts which engage with questions of a more overtly 'political' nature: Marx, and Fukuyama's 'end of history' pronouncements (*SPECTRES DE MARX*, 1993b), a variety of topical themes from drugs to AIDS in *Points de suspension* (1992), or discussions of both European and Maghrebian identity (*L'AUtre cap* (1991) and *Le monolinguisme de l'autre* (1996) respectively).

Derrida's critique of closure enables an articulation with postcolonial and specifically Caribbean thought. *Le monolinguisme de l'autre* is of particular interest in this context because it makes explicit what has always seemed to me to be, if not an equivalence, then certainly an affinity, between Derridean and Glissantian thinking. *Le monolinguisme de l'autre*, as Derrida himself indicates, developed from a paper given at a conference at the University of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, which was organised by Glissant;\(^{94}\) and there are a number of quotes and references drawn from both *Le discours antillais* (1981)\(^{95}\) and *Poétique de la Relation* (1990).\(^{96}\) I shall be returning to this text of Derrida's in due course, together with *L'AUtre cap*, as a means of fleshing out the connection between forms of poststructural indeterminacy and hybrid (postcolonial) identity politics. For now, however, I should like to turn my attention to *Khôra* (1993a), a reading of Plato's *Timaeus* in which Derrida focuses precisely on the ambiguous, interstitial nature of what Plato calls 'space' ('khôra') as a third category or 'triton genos' (Derrida, 1993a: 16). Although in doing so I may be guilty of simplifying Derrida's reading of Plato, not to mention Plato's text itself, it is nevertheless primarily on this practice of what Soja has termed 'thirding' (1996: 5) - understood spatially - that I should like to concentrate.

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\(^{93}\) A phrase used by Harris at the Faber & Faber Caribbean Series book launch, held at the South Bank Centre's Voice Box, Festival Hall, Autumn 1998.

\(^{94}\) Cf Derrida (1996: 10).

\(^{95}\) Derrida (1996: 11, 44).

\(^{96}\) Derrida (1996: 39)
In chapter 1, I referred to a certain tradition or representation of space (which, although present in Plato, is most strongly expressed in the Cartesian-Newtonian world-view) as a neutral or empty receptacle/container, a blank slate waiting to receive the imprint of the material universe. I argued, with reference to the work of Soja, Lefebvre and other proponents of the new ‘spatiality’, that this view tended to negate the importance of space as a relational term or as a constituent part of being, and was thus crucially at odds with the understanding of spatiality and of the physical world in recent Caribbean writing (Glissant’s *poétique du paysage*, or Wilson Harris’ ‘music of living landscapes’). I also suggested that the division of space typical of Renaissance painting and map-making, which partakes of this same tradition of representation, could be seen historically both to inform the implementation of the colonial enterprise (often on a very practical level) and to support the elaboration of a (falsely) universal notion of space based, in fact, on European values which have often proved exclusive of difference. It is precisely this kind of philosophical tradition, I think, to which Bhabha is referring when he speaks about “those ‘dividing practices’ which construct the colonial space” (1994: 108). It is also a tradition which Derrida explicitly resists in *Khôra* when he speaks of the difficulty of treating this eponymous and indeterminate *triton genos* as “espace vide ou géométrique, voire, c’est ce qu’en dira Heidegger, comme ce qui «prépare» l’espace cartésien, l’*extensio* de la *res extensa*” (1993a: 58).

So how, precisely, does Derrida see in Plato the elaboration of an impure, anti-essentialist discourse? Plato’s *Timaeus* is an early attempt at providing a comprehensive explanation of creation and of the natural world. In light of his own brand of dualism, with its split between the realm of ideal forms and that of copies, between the sensible and the intelligible, we might well expect Plato’s description of space in this text to conform to a similarly divisive patterning. Indeed, the totalising claims of *Timaeus* - culminating in the assertion that “our account of the universe is complete” (1965: 124) - seem initially to confirm our impression of an uncompromising, essentialising certainty. Derrida himself points to the totalising nature of the cosmogonical ‘theory of everything’ embodied in *Timaeus* (1993a: 44).


98 I am aware that this kind of Platonic dualism is not necessarily the same, philosophically speaking, as the dualism embodied in the binary terms I referred to earlier. I would nevertheless argue that they perform a very similar categorical *strategy* of division.
In the notion of *khôra* itself, however, Derrida finds precisely the opposite, a category which disrupts the oppositional hierarchy which *Timaeus*, and the Platonic system as a whole, seem to set up. In the process, Derrida argues that to read Plato as an entirely coherent system of thought is to overlook the textual and the rhetorical; traditional interpretations, in other words, tend to neutralise these texts by privileging logocentric, ‘safe’ meanings, and relegating *aporia* to the sidelines.

Space/*khôra* in *Timaeus*, then, occupies an intermediate position between the twin realms of being and becoming (Plato, 1965: 72), or in Derrida’s account of the text, a position outside the opposition of these two categories altogether. The notion of *khôra* particularly attracts Derrida because, to quote John Caputo, it is “too low for philosophy’s conceptual radar to pick up”, it “[eludes] the order of categories that Plato has installed” (1997: 85), generating instead “a spurious or corrupted *logos*” (84), or what Derrida in *Khôra* will call “un raisonnement hybride, bâtard [...] voire corrompu” (1993a: 3). Significantly, the hybrid nature of *khôra* in Derrida’s account, does not amount to a static in-between position, but rather a ‘thirding’, an ‘otherness’ which goes beyond binarisms. “La pensée de la *khôra* excède la polarité”, states Derrida, adding that “la pensée de la *khôra* inquiéterait l’ordre même de la polarité en général, qu’elle soit ou non dialectique” (22). Focusing on the transgressive qualities of this kind of indeterminacy (what Barthes, in his evocation of Tangiers, would call a space ‘outside the sentence’ and which *french* (1997a) has identified as ‘perverse space’) underlines the importance of reading the ‘post’ in poststructuralism, postmodernism or postcolonialism *spatially*: not simply a *coming-after*, but a *going-beyond*, neither transcendent nor dialectical, but beyond polarity as such. The view of hybridity I want to expound here likewise treats in-betweenness as a concept which, as I have already suggested, refuses absolute categories in the first place, rather than just fusing existing ones into a comfortable synthesis.

“Plato’s treatment of *Khôra*”, argues Caputo, “serves Derrida as a ‘sur-name’ for *différance*, that is a kind of allegory of *différance*” (1997: 75). For my purposes it is of course significant that Derrida should identify a spatial term as the generator of this kind of categorical uncertainty, of an in-between reasoning opposed to *logocentric* meaning:

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99 Cf *Bhabha* (1994: 181), ‘What is caught anecdotally ‘outside the sentence’, in Barthes’ concept, is that problematic space - performative rather than experiential, non-sententious but no less theoretical - of which poststructuralist theory speaks in its many varied voices’. 

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What Derrida is also undermining, however, is a sense of the 'identity' of those traditional categories in which an object is seen as self-contained, or bounded, defined by its identity to itself. It is thus no coincidence that Derrida quotes Vernant's definition of myth as "le modèle structural d'une logique qui ne serait pas celle de la binarité, du oui ou non, une logique autre que la logique du "logo" (1993a: 13), going on to spell out that "ce que Platon désigne sous le nom de khôra semble défier [...] cette «logique de non-contradiction des philosophes» dont parle Vernant" (15). Barthes himself, in *Le plaisir du texte*, had already spoken in similar terms of the (utopian) idea of an individual "qui abolirait en lui les barrières, les classes, les exclusions, non par syncrétisme, mais par simple débarras de ce vieux spectre: la contradiction logique" (1994: 1495). Categorical identity, defined by the law of non-contradiction, comes undone here in the profusion of anti-essentialist spatial terms, or metaphors: 'third' space, the space 'outside the sentence', the 'in-between' or interstice, khôra.

At this point I would like to suggest that these indeterminate spatial terms - with their resistance to philosophical categorising - can be related to more tangible spaces. In the troubling field of so-called national identity, for example, these two areas come together through the overlaying of a certain sense of physical belonging or geo-political boundedness on the one hand and a multiple complex of other ontological claims - relating to culture, race/ethnicity and language - on the other. The hybrid or interstitial space in this sense is created by a plurality of claims on identity. Once again, Derrida has written tellingly on the subject and, although the field is a huge one, I propose to consider some of his more recent texts briefly by way of a bridge from the poststructural to the postcolonial. For if a deconstructive approach can help to erode self-contained binary terms philosophically speaking, the same is true in the sphere of postcolonial identity-politics.

The congruence of poststructural and postcolonial perspectives on identity becomes explicit in Derrida's recent work through a certain autobiographical turn. In *L'autre cap*, for instance, his meditation on the meaning of 'Europe', Derrida describes himself as a kind of cultural hybrid, "une sorte de métis européen sur-acculturé, sur-colonisé" (1991: 13); "vieil Européen" (13), that is, but also born and
raised in Algeria, “l'autre bord” (14). Derrida’s bi-culturality highlights the problems associated with definitions of European identity which are self-enclosed, defined by a telos, or cap (the spatial bias of Derrida’s terminology is, once again, striking). Linking the physical with the more metaphysical (“cap géographique” and “cap spirituel” (28)), then, Derrida refuses to subscribe fully to any self-sufficient notion of European identity:

Je suis européen, je suis sans doute un intellectuel européen, j’aime le rappeler, et pourquoi m’en défendrais-je? Au nom de quoi? Mais je ne suis pas, ni me sens de part en part européen. Par quoi je veux dire, j’y tiens ou je dois dire: je ne veux pas être européen de part en part. L’appartenance «à part entière» et le «de part en part» devraient être incompatibles. Mon identité culturelle, celle au nom de laquelle je parle, n’est pas seulement européenne, elle n’est pas identique à elle-même, et je ne suis pas «culturel» de part en part. (80)

Equating identity with identicity, that is to say identity as necessarily, tautologically identique à elle-même, becomes an exclusive or assimilative strategy which generates inflexible boundaries. These are, of course, the very boundaries which, because they are conceived as end-point (telos or cap) (and not, for example, as “that at which something begins its presencing”, to quote Heidegger)¹⁰⁰ are contested by the impure or hybrid philosophical discourse. Consequently Derrida can see himself as European, but only “entre autres choses” (80); his notion of identity remains open, a movement or ‘promise’ which is always à-venir, an idea echoed in his insistence that “une démocratie […] doit avoir la structure de la promesse” (76). Similarly, the idea of Europe, for Derrida, has to be able to accommodate a degree of Otherness, an as yet undefined foreign element which is still ‘to come’ (à-venir/venir). “J’en garde une autre [main] pour écrire ou chercher autre chose, peut-être hors d’Europe”, says Derrida, “ […] non pas seulement pour chercher […] mais pour ne pas fermer d’avance une frontière de l’à-venir de l’événement, à ce qui vient, à ce qui vient peut-être et peut-être vient d’une tout autre rive” (68).

It should be obvious, then, that what Derrida is questioning is not so much the notion of what is generally called ‘identity’ itself, but rather a certain (philosophical) tradition of identity as ontologically fixed or pre-determined. “Une identité”, he argues “n’est jamais donnée, reçue ou atteinte” (1996: 53); similarly “le propre d’une culture, c’est de n’être pas identique à elle-même” (1991: 16). Bhabha has likewise stated, from a very Derridean position, that:

Meaning is constructed across the bar of difference and separation between the signifier and the signified. So it follows that no culture is full unto itself, no culture is plainly plenitudinous, not only because there are other cultures which contradict its authority, but also because its own symbol-forming activity, its own interpellation in the process of representation, language, signification and meaning-making always underscores the claim to an originary, holistic, organic identity. (1991: 210)

In light of the accusations of nihilist relativism which are so often levelled at Derrida, however, it is worth restating here that the in-between position he proposes does not refute allegiances altogether, but only those which are unswervingly categorical. It simply does not follow that resisting the idea of ‘organic’ identity is tantamount to rejecting identity per se. Like Glissant’s conception of alterity defined as Relation, in which “nous n’abdiquons pas nos identités quand nous nous ouvrons à l’Autre” (1997e: 248), or Bhabha’s insistence on negotiation, Derrida’s position maintains a degree of tension between the participating terms. Thus, although Derrida rejects an interviewer’s suggestion that he is not interested in having an identity himself, insisting that, on the contrary, he is - “comme tout le monde” (1992: 350) - he goes on to add:

En tournant autour d’une chose impossible et à laquelle sans doute je résiste aussi, le «je» constitue la forme même de la résistance. Chaque fois que cette identité s’annonce, chaque fois qu’une appartenance me circonscrit, si je puis dire, quelqu’un ou quelquechose crie: attention, le piège, tu es pris. Dégage, dégage-toi. Ton engagement est ailleurs. (1992: 350)

Opposed to the reductive exclusiveness of tautological identity-formation, this warning-cry, this instinctive refusal to allow oneself to be ‘circumscribed’ by any one set of ontological demands, leads to what Bhabha seems to understand by hybridity, hybridity in the sense of the opening-up - through that ‘time-lag’ which defines the translation of colonial demands to colonial space - of what he calls a ‘Third Space’ of enunciation.

Seen in this way, hybridity is less an established result of cross-breeding than a possibility, or promise, of events to come, engendered through relation. The tangible

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101 Which, as he himself points out, are based on a false premise, namely that to question the possibility of Truth, as a notion, is to abdicate one’s right to appeal to truths of any kind: ‘Ah Vous vous posez des questions au sujet de la vérité, eh bien, dans cette mesure même vous ne croyez pas encore à la vérité, vous contestez la possibilité de la vérité. Comment voulez-vous, dès lors, qu’on prenne au sérieux vos énoncés quand ils prétendent à quelque vérité, à commencer par vos prétendues questions? Ce que vous dites n’est pas vrai puisque vous questionnez la vérité, allons, vous êtes un sceptique, un relativiste, un nihiliste, vous n’êtes pas un philosophe sérieux!’ (1996: 17-18).
consequences of such an indeterminate ‘space’ often take the form of political dilemmas. Derrida, for example, poses the following challenge for Europe:

Comment, d’une part, réaffirmer la singularité de l’idiome (national ou non), les droits des minorités, la différence linguistique et culturelle, etc.? Comment résister à l’uniformisation, à l’homogénéisation, au nivellement culturel ou linguistique, à son ordre de représentation et de rentabilité spectaculaire? Mais, d’autre part, comment lutter pour cela sans sacrifier la communication la plus univoque possible, la traduction, l’information, la discussion démocratique et la loi de la majorité? (1992: 371)

The implications of this exemplary “double impératif contradictoire” (1991: 77) - d’une part ... d’autre part - constitute what Derrida, in an echo of Glissant, elsewhere calls an “espace de la relation” (1996: 39). Building on this “double devoir” (1991: 78), Derrida then asks whether there is a valid program beyond the twin confines of eurocentrism on the one hand and anti-eurocentrism on the other. “Il faut se faire les gardiens d’une idée de l’Europe”, he argues, “mais d’une Europe qui consiste précisément à ne pas se fermer sur sa propre identité” (33).

This paradox, as Glissant has shown, also informs the cultural politics of the Caribbean. Attempts at creating internal markets, for example, such as the abortive CARICOM, have proved economically unviable, necessitating a greater degree of economic openness to continental America. It is of course dangerous to conflate EU politics with that of the Caribbean (though Martinique, as an ‘ultra-peripheral region’ of the EU does present a special case), not least because both are highly diverse regions in themselves. Derrida seems primarily concerned with questions of European identity rather than with the practicalities of concrete economic problems. Nevertheless, as a strategy of political in-betweenness, there is demonstrably a common perspective: Glissant makes a case for the Caribbean as a model for the kind of open rootedness Derrida advocates, while Derrida himself, in Le monolinguisme de l’autre, has acknowledged the significance of the Caribbean perspective:

Les phénomènes qui m’intéressent sont justement ceux qui viennent brouiller ces frontières, à les passer et donc à faire apparaître leur artifice historique, leur violence aussi, c’est-à-dire les rapports de force qui s’y concentrent et en vérité s’y capitalisent à perte de vue. C’est qui sont sensibles à tous les enjeux de la ‘créolisation’, par exemple, le mesurent mieux que d’autres. (1996: 24, emphasis added)

As I have argued elsewhere (Coates, 1997), models such as the creolisation of Glissant and Brathwaite, which are linguistically-based, may well be preferable, as a representation of the in-between, to the by now well-worn notion of hybridity. At
the very least, I would suggest, they deserve wider currency in discussions outside the field of Caribbean studies. Crucially, it seems to me, linguistic issues highlight problems, such as translation, which are also spatially determined, and I think it not insignificant that Derrida chooses the sea, "un espace symboliquement infini" (1996: 75), to figure the tension between written and oral culture, a tension which, precisely, forms a central nexus within the emergence of what Ludwig (1994) has dubbed la nouvelle littérature antillaise.

**Postcolonial identity**

Earlier in this chapter I referred to the prevalence of hybridity within popular culture. Although it is often unexplored in 'high' theory, the field of popular music in particular can be seen to crystallise many of the debates surrounding so-called cultural identity, as well as forming a major subject of contemporary Caribbean writing. The importance of such questions has been best demonstrated by Paul Gilroy, whose pioneering analyses of the cross-cultural dynamics of the 'Black Atlantic', that interactional space of musical and cultural exchange, with its "rhizomorphic, fractal structure" (Gilroy, 1993b: 4) argue for a theory of flows circulating in-between models of identity which are spatially or ontologically fixed. Seeing culture in this way reveals the complex processes of interaction - generated by, as well as generators of, "unfinished identities" (1) - which connect reggae, jungle, rap, hip-hop and a whole host of other contemporary forms across key sites in the continental matrix: London, New York, Kingston. At the same time, however, Gilroy is reluctant to dismiss out of hand the reality of a "coherent (if not always stable) experiential sense of self" (102). Gilroy's position, then - informed by the 'fractal' Chaos-theory which, as we shall see in chapter 7, forms a characteristic feature of contemporary Caribbean

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102 Literary examples which use music as a statement about identity include Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1986) and Ernest Pépin's *Tambour-Babel* (1996), though the presence of music, and drumming, as part of the *contre* tradition, in particular, is felt implicitly in many others. Chamoiseau's *Soñbo magnifique* (1988b) is a good illustration of the latter point, especially as it relates to the status of oral (that is popular) culture. For a discussion of jazz as a vector of the hybridity of Caribbean cultural forms, cf Brathwaite (1967a; 1967b; 1968).
writing connects Bhabha's notion of negotiation and Spivak's emphasis on the strategic with the Glissantian dialectic of space and place, a tension which refuses both dogmatic essentialism and vapid relativism. "Music and its rituals", Gilroy argues, "can be used to create a model whereby identity can be understood neither as a fixed essence nor as a vague and utterly contingent construction to be reinvented by the will and whim of aesthetes, symbolists and language-gamers" (102). Similarly despite his call for Relation, with its resistance to essentialising discourse, Glissant insists that "la dignité passe aussi, quoiqu'on en dise, par la «recherche d'identités»" (1981: 168). Tension and negotiation, it seems, are characteristic of contemporary identity-politics.

Statements by practitioners of the many emergent musical hybrids resonate with Gilroy's own theoretical assertions of cross-cultural anti-essentialism. The 1990s British dance-music scene, with its distinctive Afro-Caribbean and Asian influences, is a case in point. Talvin Singh, for example, the tabla-playing composer-DJ who came to prominence as the recipient of the 1999 Mercury Music Award best-album prize, has highlighted, in a recent interview, the difficulties associated with so-called 'Anglo-Asian' identity:

When I was studying music in India, I wasn't allowed to enter competitions because I was British. Yet in Britain, I'm treated as an Indian. It's given me an identity-crisis and I've never felt that before. Suddenly I feel that I don't fit anywhere [...] the only positive thing is that not fitting in allows me to take liberties musically - and to get away with them.

This unsettling and unsettled position, this 'crisis' of identity or 'double imperative', which is perhaps paradigmatic of the situation of immigrant cultures and identities more generally, underlines the inadequacy of (institutional or personal) demands which proceed on the basis of unproblematical, either-or, models of received cultural identity, and which fail to admit, except as a form of freakish non-belonging, the in-between possibilities of what Homi Bhabha has called "hybrid hyphenations" (1994: 219).

Derrida, in his discussion of what is generally termed ‘franco-maghrebīn’ identity, has focused on this question of hyphenation, referring damningly to “le silence de ce trait d’union” (1996: 27), an unwillingness to navigate a space between hyphenated terms, and an intolerance towards anyone reluctant to choose between them. Indeed even where there is a recognition of cultural plurality or ‘hyphenated ethnicity’ it is more often than not subsumed into the idea of an overarching national or cultural unity. Appealing to a notion of unifying syncretism, such as the US motto *e pluribus unum*, or the hackneyed image of a ‘melting-pot’, merely serves to dissimulate the often unreasonable nature of identitarian demands beneath a veneer of false tolerance. As Homi Bhabha has commented, “although there is always an entertainment and encouragement of cultural diversity, there is always a corresponding containment of it. A transparent norm is constituted, a norm given by the host society or dominant culture, which says that ‘these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our own grid’” (1991: 208). The version of hybridity proposed by Bhabha, on the other hand, must be seen as a productive, negotiational concept, opposed to transparent, liberal, multiculturalism which refuses to entertain a genuinely multiple identity.

In addition to refusing uncertain terms of cultural belonging, the construction, or reinforcement, of a (projected) national identity often involves the construction of what Glissant would call an *atavistic* idea of the nation. Such an idea, grounded in the originary myth of an Edenic projected past (what Glissant calls “la vision prophétique du passé” (1996b: 86)), can be expressed through a variety of cultural forms. Salman Rushdie, for example, has highlighted the fact that a spate of nostalgic Raj heritage films (ITV’s *The Jewel in the Crown* and David Lean’s *Passage to India* among others) coincided with the Falklands War (1992: 87, 91-92). More often than not, this projected image (in the cultural practice of neo-imperialism) disavows a degree of cultural hybridity often acknowledged in earlier periods. This, Said argues, was in fact a defining feature of nineteenth-century historical writing:

> Whereas Greek civilisation was known originally to have roots in Egyptian, Semitic, and various other southern and eastern cultures, it was redesigned as ‘Aryan’ during the course of the nineteenth century, its Semitic and African roots either actively purged or hidden from view. Since Greek writers themselves openly acknowledged their culture’s hybrid

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106 Cf Gomez-Peña’s notion of *menguado chowder*, with its ‘stubborn chunks’, as an alternative to the melting-pot cliché (Bhabha, 1994: 218-219), and Coates (1999b) for an application of this notion to Caribbean models of identity. Cf also chapter 7 of this thesis where I explore these ideas in relation to Glissant’s late fiction.
past, European philologists acquired the ideological habit of passing over these embarrassing passages without comment, in the interests of Attic purity. (One also recalls that only in the nineteenth century did European historians of Crusades begin not to allude to the practice of cannibalism among the Frankish knights, even though eating human flesh is mentioned unashamedly in contemporary Crusader chronicles. (1993: 16)

And this despite the fact that “cultures actually assume more ‘foreign’ elements, alterities, differences, than they consciously exclude” (Said, 1993: 15).

The in-betweenness of cultures is also negated through the discourse of racination, the search for, and often artificial construction, of ‘roots’. The theorectisation of créolisation and créolité both emerge as critiques of just such an attempt, in the discourse of the Négritude movement, to posit an often undifferentiated notion of Africa as some kind of lost origin. And just as Spivak dismisses those who proclaim their ‘roots’ as growers of ‘rutabagas’, so Glissant, particularly from Poétique de la Relation (1990) onwards, moves from a partial desire for re-racination in the Martinican soil, figured in his novels by Mahogony and Ebony trees, towards a more rhizomorphic set of images: nodular root-systems rather than single roots. “La racine unique”, to quote Glissant, “est celle qui tue autour d’elle alors que le rhizome est la racine qui s’étend à la rencontre d’autres racines” (1996b: 59). Despite the often magnificent achievements of ‘rooted’ cultures, Glissant is increasingly suspicious about the way the notion of ‘original’ roots accompanies the establishment of patterns of filiation and mythes fondateurs whose aim is to legitimise claims to territory (1996b: 23). Rootedness is thus a concept which is, if not destroyed, then at least put under erasure in the Caribbean novels I shall be examining.

The grounds for criticising (cultural) demands such as the search for roots or for an uncontaminated sense of historical community might, perhaps, remain more open to debate but for the insistent claim by postcolonial critics that there is no stable barrier between the realm of discourse and that of concrete (neo/colonial) practice. As I have argued repeatedly, there is in many cases a demonstrable complicity between the two purportedly distinct modes (abstract-textual/concrete-geographical). Bhabha, for example, has pointed out the importance of recognising the various complicities between Enlightenment modernity and colonialism:

We need to draw attention to the fact that the advent of Western modernity, located as it generally is in the 18th and 19th centuries, was the moment when certain master narratives of the state, the citizen, cultural value, art, science, the novel, when these major cultural discourses and identities came to define the ‘Enlightenment’ of Western society and the
critical rationality of Western personhood. The time at which these things were happening was the same time at which the West was producing another history of itself through its colonial possessions and relations. That ideological tension, visible in the history of the West as a despotic power, at the very moment of the birth of democracy and modernity, has not been adequately written in a contradictory and contrapuntal discourse of tradition. (1991: 218)

The fact that the connection between these two realms is not always acknowledged only serves to reinforce the point. Thus, Said also warns of "a quite serious split in our critical consciousness today, which allows us to spend a great deal of time elaborating Carlyle's and Ruskin's aesthetic theories, for example, without giving attention to the authority that their ideas simultaneously bestowed on the subjugation of inferior peoples and colonial territories" (1993: 12).

Glissant's critique (in *Le discours antillai*) of hexagonal representations of Martinique, which lead to what he calls "un génocide culturel" (1981: 173), likewise stresses the way in which the writing (and reading) of history and nation have been used to reinforce or justify the tangible effects of (neo)colonialism: economic dispossession, encroaching tourism, bétonage, and isolation from neighbouring islands. His fictional writing portrays both these effects and instances of resistance to them (through, for example, marronage, Mycée's madness and Mathieu's development of an alternative mode of history) which, as I have been suggesting, are often couched in spatial terms. The kinds of space (representational and represented) I am interested in, which feature so highly in the writings of Glissant, but also in the exponents of the créolité movement, can be seen to correlate to a notion of Third Space as a site of resistance. As Lefebvre has stated repeatedly, the progress of tourism amounts to a kind of neo-colonialism which entails the consumption of space (whether Mediterranean or Caribbean). However, as we saw in chapter 1, he also insists that space can be used in terms of a 'politics of difference', as in Chamoiseau's *Texaco*, where the assertion of a kind of Third Space, in-between countryside and town proper (En-villé), a "mangrove urbaine" (1992a: 336), is deployed as an alternative to the Cartesian, logic of what Aimé Césaire has called Fort-de-France's "fardeau géométrique de croix éternellement recommençante" (1995: 72).

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102 Cf also Chamoiseau (1992a: 336): 'la mangrove [...] ne semble appartenir ni à la terre, ni à la mer un peu comme Texaco n'est ni de la ville ni de la campagne'.
Hybridity is currently the most popular name given by Western theory to the intermediate phenomena I have outlined thus far. Originally used to designate the offspring of distinct species or races, the term is marked, fatally some might say, by its biological overtones. As Robert Young reminds us the notion of the hybrid, in the nineteenth-century at least, is tied up with the fear that inter-racial reproduction would give birth to "progenies and prodigies; dark extensive moon-calves, unnameable abortions, wide-coiled monstrosities, such as the world has not seen hitherto" (1995: 6). If hybridity can be seen to participate in the postcolonial strategy of reappropriation, however, its force lies precisely in the fact that the term, in its more traditional, scientific, usage connotes sterility: as the cross-breed of two distinct species, hybrids are generally unable to reproduce. Re-asserting hybridity thus becomes a way of denying the well-documented assumption that impurity (racial or otherwise) is a weakness, as if some kind of pre-lapsarian purity existed in the first place. Because of its biological connotations, hybridity has seemed well placed to discuss phenomena whose most obvious sign is perhaps inter-racial, and has its origins in the nineteenth-century when gradations of hybridity were categorised in quasi-scientific terms.

The sense in which I am using hybridity, however, is not a narrowly biological one; it is not restricted to questions of ethnicity, that is, but describes both collective and inter-subjective processes of interaction (which is precisely why alternative linguistically-based terms may prove useful markers). Bhabha is certainly the most prominent proponent of this kind of hybridity, what he has called "Culture's In-Between" (1996). His attacks on various kinds of binarism (Self/Other, Orient/Occident, 1st/3rd World), with which Derrida and other poststructuralist thinkers have also grappled, underscore a commitment to analysis which, as he puts it, locates culture "on the shifting margins of cultural displacement [...] with the cultural and historical hybridity of the postcolonial world [...] as the paradigmatic place of departure" (1994: 21). Culture, and by extension identity, is caught in a state of historical flux in which there are no pre-ordained terms and in which, therefore, identification replaces static identity. Referring to Benjamin, Bhabha argues powerfully that "the state of emergency in which we live is not the exception, but the
rule” and that “we must attain to a concept of history that is in keeping with this insight” (1994: 41).

One of the strengths of Bhabha’s writing, it seems to me, is that it attempts to get away from simplistic representations of colonisation as either unequivocally oppositional or internally unified.\textsuperscript{108} Just as Glissant, in his novels, illustrates both ambivalence \textit{within} and difference \textit{between} different colonial masters (the crucial pairing of Senglis and La Roche most notably),\textsuperscript{109} Bhabha is keen to present a more subtle picture of the colonial as well as postcolonial situation. In Bhabha’s view there exists within colonial discourse a form of paradoxical ambivalence, for instance, which opens it to the possibilities of mutation or translation, understood in the Benjaminian sense. As he demonstrates in ‘The Other Question’, slaves tend to be described (not necessarily within the same text, of course, but within the larger ‘text’ of nineteenth-century cultural representation) as both savage (the ubiquitous image of the cannibal) and obedient (docile food carriers), rampantly sexual and childishly innocent, simple-minded yet deceitful (1994: 82). Such ambivalences, then, give rise to a form of what I have been calling hybridity within the very structure of ‘colonial’ discourse. Although at first glance such discourse seems to contain ambiguity and resistance, “the colonial presence”, as Bhabha sees it, “is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference” (108).

What Bhabha refers to as this “enunciative split” (1994: 36), therefore, is the product of the ambivalences which inhabit colonial power. Crucially, of course, it is the spatial non-immediacy of colonial sites which necessitates the ‘time-lag’ which Bhabha identifies as a major producer of this hybridity (1994: 250-251). A principle which is formulated in London can never escape the process of translation across space, the mutations to which it is subjected through its reception and implementation in another place, the very possibility of its translation also entails its mutability, its hybridity. This view of translation, it should be obvious, flies in the face of universalising notions of transparence upon which the possibility of a noise-free, dyadic relationship between original and translation are predicated; as Derrida

\textsuperscript{108} Indeed, Young opens his discussion of Bhabha in \textit{White Mythologies} (1990: 141) by pointing out that the latter’s critique of Said’s \textit{Orientalism} (1978) focuses on an number of ambivalences within the concept of Orientalism itself, while ‘[recasting] it a more positive, enabling form’.

\textsuperscript{109} Both \textit{Le quatreème siècle} (1964) and \textit{Tout-monde} (1993a) provide good examples of the differences between the two plantation owners. The name Senglis is, of course, a thinly-veiled (phonetic) reversal of Glissant’s own.
puts it, “rien n’est intraduisible en un sens, mais en un autre sens tout est intraduisible, la traduction est un autre nom de l’impossible” (1996: 103).

How this works in ‘real’, historical, terms is, of course, an elusive, though nonetheless fundamental, question. Bhabha, for his part, gives a number of (mainly textual) illustrations relating, for example, to the translation of religious texts from metropole to colony. The seminal essay in this context is certainly Bhabha’s ‘Signs taken for wonders: questions of ambivalence and authority under a tree outside Delhi, May 1817’ (1994: 102-122), in which he discusses the “the fortuitous discovery of the English book” (102), in various parts of the Empire, as a repeated scenario within nineteenth-century colonial writing. What Bhabha attempts to demonstrate is a certain “crisis of authority” (1994: 101), a resistance to the imposition of Biblical authority (a synonym for Englishness at this point) in a pure or uncontaminated form, which constitutes a state of hybridity. Crucially, then, hybridity becomes a kind of resistance to imposed ideologies: “when the natives demand an Indianized Gospel”, Bhabha suggests, “they are using the powers of hybridity to resist baptism and to put the project of conversion in an impossible position” (1994: 118).

A not dissimilar process of religious translation, it is worth noting, occurred in the Caribbean, particularly in Haïti, through the elaboration of various kinds of hybrid voodoo icons: black Virgin Marys, dual sets of saints and the like.\(^\text{10}\) Indeed Haitian voodoo (or vodun), for Harris, becomes paradigmatic of the hybrid ‘limbo’ which characterises the Caribbean as a whole. Speaking of “the partial erasure [...] of the habitual boundaries of prejudice” (1999: 164), Harris argues that Haitian vodun, as distinct from its African counterpart, amounts to “a metamorphosis or new spatial character born of the Middle Passage” (162). In a statement which resonates with his analysis of West Indian culture and identity more generally, he sees vodun not as “an imitation of the past”, but rather as “a new and daring creative conception in itself” (162). Bhabha’s hybridity, which he at one point describes as the “revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity” (1994: 112), similarly both unsettles the (narcissistic) mimetic demands of colonial power and forces a rethinking of identities. This is because the identity in question has to be restated at various points and in various ways, a

\(^{10}\) Cf Hurbon (1995: 72-82, 114-115). Cf also Jean Price-Mars’ assertion that ‘Voodoo is a religion because, amid the confusion of legends and the corruption of fables we can discern [...] a system of representation thanks to which our African ancestors have, primitively, accounted for natural phenomena and which lies dormantly at the base of the anarchical beliefs upon which the hybrid Catholicism of our popular masses rests’, from So Spoke the Uncle, cited in Hurbon (1995: 144).
restatement which as much as a reiteration is also marked by *différance*. Because this enunciation of identity is necessarily split between its statement and its reception, it can no longer remain statically 'identical to itself', but prompts instead an opening-up of that Third Space I mentioned earlier.

As much imaginary as concretely grounded, the conceptualisation of Third Space necessitates what Bhabha describes as "a willingness to descend into that alien territory [...] the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation [which] may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* 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", he adds, "we should remember that it is the 'inter' - the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space - that carries the burden of the meaning of culture" (1994: 38). Third Space, for Bhabha, is created when the colonial demand cannot be fully translated from its original place of articulation to another place, but instead splits to give something else. As an image of hybrid in-betweenness it is deployed by Bhabha as a means to undermine essentialist representations of identity:

The notion of hybridity [...] denies the essentialism of a prior given original or originary culture [...] all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity. But for me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom. (1991: 211)

This definition of hybridity, as more than simply 'two original moments from which a third emerges', echoes what I have already referred to as the spatial nature of the prefix 'post': it goes *beyond* binarism, that is, rather than synthesising it in the manner of the Hegelian dialectic. Bhabha similarly sees negotiation as "a dialectic without the emergence of a teleological or transcendent History" (1994: 25), precisely the terms in which Glissant defines the process of *créolisation*, when he describes it as a producer of unpredictability and not a predictable third term.111

Thirdspace, in Soja's account, is also opposed to predictable third terms, arising as what he calls a form of 'thirding-as-othering': the third or 'other' term - by virtue of

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111 Cf, for example, Glissant (1996b: 89): 'la créolisation c'est l'imprédictible'. Cf also Gloria Anzaldúa's description of *Coatücue*, the Earth-goddess, as simultaneously 'duality in life, a synthesis of duality, and a third perspective - something more than mere duality or a synthesis of duality' (1999: 68).
its resistance - always contradicting the possibility of resolution. For Lefebvre, we should remember, this ‘othering’ scuppers the possibility of dialectical synthesis, its hybridity is always a resistance to closure. It thus resonates with bell hooks’ advocation of marginality, in which margins are seen as having been “both sites of repression and sites of resistance” (1990: 151), and which she describes as “an intervention”:

A message from that space in the margins [...] is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves, where we move in solidarity to erase the category colonizer/colonized. Marginality is that space of resistance. Enter that space. Let us meet there. We greet you as liberators. (1990: 152)\(^{112}\)

“For hooks”, argues Soja, “the political project is to occupy the (real-and-imagined) spaces on the margins, to reclaim those lived spaces as localisations of radical openness and possibility, and to make within them the sites where one’s radical subjectivity can be activated and practiced in conjunction with the radical subjectivities of others” (1996: 99). Recent Francophone Caribbean writing is rich in this kind of hybrid Thirdspace: from Texaco’s eponymous suburb, through the ubiquitous image of the mangrove (in late Césaire, Confiant, Condé, Chamoiseau and Glissant) to the chaotic openness of Glissantian identities, the thematics of spatial hybridity as political resistance is a persistent one.

As a notion, then, Bhabha’s Third Space recalls the Lefebvrean concept of an \textit{espace de représentation}, from which Soja derives his ‘real-and-imagined’ Thirdspace featured in his book of the same title (1996), not to mention Derrida’s investigation of \textit{khôra} in terms of a \textit{triton genos} in-between being and becoming. It forms the ground for a dialogue between the postmodern, the poststructural and the postcolonial, three areas of theoretical debate whose boundaries are rarely clearly demarcated, precisely because, as I have attempted to demonstrate, they emerge as breaks with, or critiques of, a perceived historical-theoretical lineage - often parallel with the notion of modernity - stretching from the late seventeenth to the early twentieth century.

\(^{112}\) Cited by Soja (1996: 98).
Hybridity and its discontents: 
a space for creolisation?

As an increasing number of commentators have been quick to point out, there are 
a number of troubling paradoxes at the very heart of the excitement which surrounds 
the valorisation of hybridity in contemporary discourse. As Prina Werbner remarks, 
in her introduction to the collection of essays Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural 
Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism, “the current fascination with cultural hybridity 
masks an elusive paradox. Hybridity is celebrated as powerfully interruptive and yet 
theorized as commonplace and pervasive” (Werbner & Modood, 1997: 1). If 
everything is hybrid, in other words, what is the force of proclaiming hybridity as a 
radical alternative in the first place? And if on the other hand there are degrees of 
hybridity, where do their boundaries lie?

Like postmodern theory, it seems, postcolonial affirmations of in-betweenness 
can all too often slip into an insipid liberalism, potentially complicit with the very 
system they claim to discredit. This is of course the criticism which Eagleton, as we 
saw in chapter 2, levels at such theories. There is ultimately only a very fine line, then, 
between a supposedly radical or ‘interruptive’ (postcolonial or postmodern) hybridity 
and the predictably bland New Labour-style evocation of a ‘multicultural Britain’, 
that Eurovision-like pluralistic ‘celebration’ of cultural diversity. In this sense, what 
Bauman refers to as our age of ‘heterophilia’ becomes highly normative. Normative 
because ultimately reactionary, and for historical reasons; as Moore-Gilbert argues, 
“the most hybridized portion of the subject culture, the national bourgeoisie, was the 
one to which control was relinquished at the beginning of the (neo-)colonial period, 
and serves as another warning that ‘hybridity’ can be as oppressive as the supposedly 
monocultural systems it opposes” (1997: 195). Even more worrying, perhaps, in a 
politically real sense, is the ease with which the strategies of opposition which some 
versions of hybridity propose - their self-proclaimed position of alterity and liminality 
- can become stratified: as Said puts it, “there is an inherent danger to oppositional 
effort of becoming institutionalized, marginality turning into separatism, and 
resistance hardening into dogma” (1993: 63).

In the hands of critics such as Bhabha, however, who is self-consciously aware of the dangers of theory,\textsuperscript{114} the term can take on a subtle variety of meanings and applications. Similarly both Bhabha and Spivak have always been at pains to denounce the politics of multiculturalism - an otherwise seemingly related notion - as exoticising. As far as the usefulness of proclaiming the ubiquity of hybrid cultures is concerned, it is worth bearing in mind Bakhtin's distinction between an organic (or unintentional) hybridity on the one hand and a conscious (or intentional) hybridity on the other (1981: 358).\textsuperscript{115} Thus while it is true that the process of hybridisation is a "universal" one - with variations of course - the degree to which hybridity is acknowledged is variable. Unconscious hybridity becomes non-disruptive, conscious hybridity strategic; that is, it bears the force of an intervention. The criticisms levelled as hybridity must be taken on board, then, but do not, I feel, constitute sufficient cause for rejecting the notion outright. Moreover related discourses feature prominently in the contemporary Caribbean and as such demand attention as literary, historical or theoretical phenomena, quite apart from their intrinsic value.

A more relevant problem, in terms of the Caribbean at least, relates to the biological bias of the term hybrid itself. While I do not see this as a real handicap, as should have been obvious from my adoption of the term here, I do feel that there is room for a more widespread taking-on-board of the linguistic-based terms, such as créolisation, which characterise recent Caribbean discourse. One of the strongest arguments in favour of such models is that the process of linguistic change and exchange reflects very closely the dynamics of social and cultural interaction in the Caribbean, while also highlighting the inequalities of a system which has tended to ascribe moral values to language (hence the denigration of Creole languages as little more than dialect, patois or petit-nègre). This is a view which Young has endorsed, arguing that Creole-language models benefit from the fact that “they preserve the real historical forms of cultural contact” (1995: 61).

Gilroy, for his part, has described both hybridity and créolisation, along with related terms m	extsuperscript{est}	extsuperscript{icaj}e and métissage as “rather unsatisfactory ways of naming the processes of cultural mutation” (1993: 2), preferring instead to focus on the spatial dynamics of what he “heuristically [calls] the Black Atlantic world” (3). What I have attempted to promote here is an approach which conjoins both spatial and linguistic

\textsuperscript{114} Cf Bhabha (1994: 20), for example, where he asks whether poststructuralism and semiotics are not "collusive with the hegemonic role of the West as power bloc?"
categories, one which 'grounds' the textual-linguistic in a context of historical and social reality while at the same time refusing to reduce one to the other. Considering Glissant's *Tout-monde* (1993a), for example, with its discussion of immigrant populations in Paris HLMs, as well as Martinique, thus avoids the danger of terms such as creolisation becoming universalised meaninglessly: what the term means in different places may well differ historically and socially, while still involving similar processes. These spatially-oriented representations and the way they relate to the debates broached in the first chapters of this thesis will be the focus of the next four chapters, where after a more general consideration of Caribbean spatiality and literary space, I shall use literary case studies as a means to focus such themes as the notion of community, history and narration, and the place of the Caribbean in a global context.

**Third space, rhizome, text**

*le rhizome [...] n'a pas de commencement
ni de fin, mais toujours un milieu*

Deleuze & Guattari (1980: 31)

Before we go on to look at specific texts, however, I should like to repeat the point that literary and theoretical questions, in the Caribbean, are intimately connected. This thesis is concerned with literary texts, but not exclusively so. Indeed, the approach I have adopted sees these texts as always exceeding the purely literary, intersecting in often complex ways with political and philosophical debates. This process sometimes takes place within the texts themselves, sometimes within a writer's wider *œuvre* and sometimes implicitly, in a cultural dialogue with other related discourses. As should become clear in later chapters, where I shall be discussing particular texts in terms of both narratological and identity-based questions, there is an indelible link between spaces (real-and-imagined/representational) and texts (literary, official, and cultural). Bhabha, in a similar vein, claims that the image of a

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115 Cf also Werbner & Modood (1997: 4-5).
nation is like the plot of a realist novel, in the sense that it is marked by metonymy, linearity and contiguity (1994: 158): nation, in a famous phrase,\textsuperscript{116} is narration. It is also possible to argue, as Bhabha has done, for the existence of a complicity between imperial ideology and the confident omniscience of realist narrative, of the kind denounced by not only by Barthes, but also by the nouveaux romanciers in texts such as Nathalie Sarraute's \textit{L'ère du soupçon} (1956) and Alain Robbe-Grillet's \textit{Pour un nouveau roman} (1963). The same notion of textuality which resists mimetic literature also pertains, therefore, to notions of identity and nation-building in Caribbean (or, more generally, postcolonial) writing. Or put another way, attempts to rethink the Caribbean such as \textit{antillanité} and \textit{créolité} place the idea of a hybrid identity side by side with a vision of literature which problematises the position of the author and resists simple, dyadic, conceptions of mimesis.

One of the most significant concepts in this context is the image, introduced by Deleuze & Guattari, of the rhizome. The rhizome, as an image of the in-between, embodies a critique of mimesis which, as Deleuze & Guattari argue, "est un très mauvais concept, dépendant d'une logique binaire, pour des phénomènes d'une tout autre nature. Le crocodile ne reproduit pas un tronc d'arbre, pas plus que le caméléon ne reproduit les couleurs de l'entourage" (1980: 18). The binarisms upon which such mimesis (as a literary form or as ideology) is based - object/copy or reality/representation, for example - become doubly suspect when the complicity of (narrative) discourse and (colonial) imposition - mentioned by both Bhabha and Said, but also Glissant with his objection to demands to assimilate to \textit{le Même} - is understood and, as such, demand resistance if not rejection. Similarly the rhizome, as an alternative (though not necessarily an opposite) to 'arborescent' thought-systems, "ne commence et n'aboutit pas, il est toujours au milieu, entre les choses, inter-être, \textit{intermezzò}" (36). It bears the characteristic structure of what they call \textit{conjonction - \textit{et...et...et...}} rather than an exclusive \textit{être} - a structure which also typifies descriptions of hybrid third space. Giving the in-between or \textit{milieu} a typical spin, they argue that:

\textit{Le milieu n'est pas du tout une moyenne, c'est au contraire l'endroit où les choses prennent de la vitesse. \textit{Entre} les choses ne désigne pas une relation localisable qui va de l'une à l'autre et réciproquement, mais une direction perpendiculaire, un mouvement transver\textsuperscript{a}l qui les emporte l'une \textit{et} l'autre, ruisseau sans début ni fin, qui ronge ses deux rives et prend de la vitesse au milieu. (37)}

\textsuperscript{116} Cf Bhabha (1990).

\textsuperscript{117} Cf also Glissant's notion of \textit{transversalité} (1981: 134, for example).
As we have seen with other instances of in-between imagery, this description of rhizome aims to transcend, or rather cut across, static binaries of the kind which underwrite both Western metaphysics and a geometrically Cartesian (representation of) space supporting both Enlightenment identity and the colonial project.

Glissant, as is well known, has applied the notion of rhizome to the question of identity,\footnote{Cf Glissant (1996b: 59) for an explicit reference to Deleuze & Guattari and his use of their term. Glissant's Tout-monde (1993a), it is worth remembering, numbers Félix Guattari as one of its dedicatees.} generating a multiple dialogue between identity and genealogy, space (as in-between or entre) and text. His later works in particular abound with rhizomatic images (mangroves and forests) which, like those of the créoliste, stand for Caribbean identity. His description of 'mad' grass in Mahagonny (1997b: 132-145), for example, evokes an interstitial (rhizomatic) resistance which subverts the apparently rooted dominance of the mahogany tree. Appropriately, Deleuze & Guattari have the following to say about grass in 'Rhizome', the introduction to Mille plateaux, on which Glissant draws heavily:

L'herbe n'existe qu'entre les grands espaces non cultivés. Elle comble les vides. Elle pousse entre, et parmi les autres choses. La fleur est belle, le chou est utile, le pavot rend fou. Mais l'herbe est dément, c'est une leçon de morale. (1980: 29)

As metaphor, then, the rhizome is a suggestively literary figure, as these examples from Glissant's works illustrate. Its vegetal character lends itself well to a body of literature which, as we shall see, makes extensive use of Caribbean landscapes and spaces. But like these literary landscapes, its theoretical force is underlined by its affinity with a number of terms or concepts, described in this chapter, which resist the false dichotomies of much of Western thought, in a condition of non-synthetic hybridity.

Describing notions of identity in terms of spatial categories and textual spaces in disruptive fashion often engages with the kinds of textual 'utopia' which fascinated Barthes. Texts provide that space "uncontaminated by doxa" (Moriarty, 1991: 115) where alternative representations of identity can be explored and where particular aspects, of what in the case of Martinique is a largely submerged culture, can be brought to the fore: thus Chamoiseau's Solibo magnifique (1988b) attempts to create a rejuvenated literary language (which is neither fantastical nor realistic) through the
juxtaposition, intermingling and synthesis of two traditions: scriptural and oral. The power of literary texts to perform this utopian function (though the textual is never very far from the historical and social in the texts I shall be discussing) underlines the importance of their inclusion in this thesis. Using metaphors of identity which engage a certain thematics of spatiality (rooting vs displacement, for example) is, as should be clear by now, a repeated feature of the discourse of both postcolonialism and poststructuralism. Metaphor is of course itself spatially constructed, by displacement, that is by the use of one term to describe another. Focusing on this metaphoricality in philosophical texts, as Derrida does, leads inevitably to a destabilising of the assumption of an unmediated discourse outside the confines of language. And seeing identity as a product of discourse, among other things, also underwrites - through the opposition of different philosophical traditions - the throwing into question of colonial representational practices and a resistance to these in postcolonial theory and literature. The point which I should like to stress here is that while (geographical) space is the object of colonial desire, metaphorical spatial discourse articulates colonial representations (islands as false Edens, for instance), but also a postcolonial resistance to these “dividing practices” (Bhabha, 1994: 108), in the hybridised form of “unfinished identities” (Gilroy, 1993b: 1). Seen in this way, space becomes both stake and weapon.
CHAPTER FOUR
Caribbean spatiality

‘Si vous n’êtes pas français [...] alors qu’êtes-vous?’

Valéry Giscard d’Estaing19

‘Le Martiniquais est un Américain réel, mais contrarié [...] un Européen impossible mais satisfait [...] un Antillais aveugle sur sa réelle antillanité.’

Edouard Glissant (1981: 289)

Up to this point I have focused on questions of a primarily theoretical nature - the critical status of ‘space’ in contemporary discourse, its place in a philosophical tradition, and the implications of this for notions of identity. In this following chapters, I intend to turn my attention firmly to the literary production of the contemporary Francophone Caribbean. The three chapters which follow this one will take the form of literary case studies, each articulating key themes relating to the wider theme of space, but with particular emphasis on a single text. The three texts which I have decided to focus on in this way are Condé’s Traversée de la mangrove (1989a), Chamoiseau’s Texaco (1992a) and Glissant’s Tout-monde (1993a). This choice is as much motivated by the intrinsic literary qualities of these texts as by the proximity of their publication in a period which saw an explosion of interest in the Caribbean: the appearance in 1989 of the manifesto Eloge de la créolité (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993) and, in 1992, the twin successes of Chamoiseau’s Prix Goncourt, for Texaco, and Walcott’s Nobel Prize. Initially, however, I shall attempt to set out some general features of what I see as the current French Antillean concern with spatiality, and in so doing to establish a historical literary context, together with a reading of Caribbean texts in spatial terms within which to place these works.

The current chapter will thus form a bridge between the theoretical and the literary, a necessary one given that for Glissant in particular - whose writings provide the theoretical backbone of this section - literary production and theoretical reflection go hand in hand; indeed they are often indistinguishable from each other,

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except in name. For Glissant’s poetics, I would argue, are always grounded in a critique based on concrete observation, while his interventions on subjects of a sociological and political nature derive in turn from a poeticised view of the ‘real’ and of ‘history’. While Glissant, whom Michael Dash describes as “the single-most important theoretician to have emerged so far from the Caribbean” (1998: ix), remains for me the pivotal figure, however, I am staking a claim for the existence of a distinctively Caribbean spatiality in contemporary writing from the region in the context of what I have already outlined as a reawakening to the possibilities of the spatial at work in contemporary discourse and in postcolonial literatures more specifically. To this end I shall be referring periodically to a number of non-francophone writers and thinkers - Walcott, Harris, Brathwaite and Benitez-Rojo most prominently - whose works display the spatial concerns I see as common to the contemporary literature of what Glissant calls “l’Autre Amérique” (1981: 13). More specifically, I would like to focus on a kind of ‘double imperative’ (to borrow Derrida’s felicitous phrase) which I see at work here: the resistance of these writers to naïve notions of rooting and ‘authentic’ belonging, but at the same time a movement of re-inscription in a cultural space of Caribbean-American dimensions, rather than one bound by reference to a purported European or African ‘origin’. Michael Dash’s recent study *The Other America - Caribbean Literature in New World Context* (1998) will prove a useful touchstone in this context.

Spatiality is not, I should repeat here, the exclusive property of contemporary Caribbean writing, let alone postcolonial writing or Caribbean writing tout court. Indeed, as I have already stated, both space and time are ‘givens’ of all literary texts; to quote Hillis Miller again, “every narrative, without exception, even the most apparently abstract and inward (the stories of Maurice Blanchot or of Franz Kafka, for example), traces out in its course an arrangement of places, dwellings and rooms joined by paths or roads” (1995: 10). What I am concerned to explore here, then, is in what way my chosen group of texts might constitute a distinctive version of this universal narrative feature. In the context of the Caribbean, this will mean setting out a provisional literary history of the French Antilles, outlining a number of differences

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120 So much of *Le discours antillais*, after all, takes the form of commentaries on contemporary political, sociological or linguistic issues, many of them first elaborated in the context of seminars at l’Institut martiniquais d’études. Cf Glissant (1981: 503-504) - the section entitled ‘Dates et lieux’ - for details.

121 The reference is to Derrida (1991: 77), where he speaks of a ‘double impératif contradictoire’. Cf also chapter 3 of this thesis.
between the generation of Césaire (as well as earlier forms of Caribbean writing, such as so-called doudouist literature), on the one hand, and the treatment of space as it features in Condé, Glissant, and the créolité group, on the other. I am aware that, in so doing, I may be running the risk of conflating a number of works whose theoretical underpinnings are sometimes at odds with one another. It is true, for instance, that Condé has been one of the most vociferous critics of créolité as ideology, a stance to which I shall be devoting some space in my next chapter. It would be unadvisable, therefore, to deny the existence of these conflicts: I find myself unable to agree with Pépin, for example, when he says that the (Glissantian) distinction between créolisation and créolité "relève de la chinoiserie" (Le Pelletier, 1998: 95). At the same time, however, I detect a great deal of common ground between these writers, more similarities than differences in fact, and this despite their periodical attempts to dissociate themselves from one another. Above all, there is a self-avowed solidarity as regards their concrete writing practices, which largely overrides theoretical differences: thus, both Glissant and Condé have openly praised the richness of the literary renaissance for which Chamoiseau and Confiant (not to mention Pineau and Pépin) have been responsible in recent years. Consequently I shall attempt here to sketch out the common-ground which these writers inhabit, leaving a discussion of points of deviation for later (in the context of specific texts).

It is always tempting to generalise about literary, sociological or cultural trends, so I am keen to keep my assertions here in some kind of perspective. It should be stated right at the outset, therefore, that the spatial character of my chosen texts, though a


123 Cf Glissant (1993c: 123): 'Mes amis Raphaël Confiant et Patrick Chamoiseau se sont un peu trop hâtés dans leur « Eloge de la Créolité »: la créolité, ça ne marche pas ailleurs qu'aux Antilles. La créolisation, elle, n'est pas une essence, mais un processus universel [...] Le monde entier est métissé, mais il n'en a pas conscience [...] c'est pourquoi je suis hostile à la créolité qui est [...] comme la latinité, la francité ou la négritude. Le chaos-monde va à une vitesse telle que nous pouvons à peine le suivre'. For Chamoiseau's assimilative response to this criticism, cf (1997a: 201): 'Il faut appeler créolisations des résultantes particulières dans l'alchimie des créolisations [...] On passe de la Créolisation à la Créolité, quand [...] on plonge dans la chair ouverte d'une des ses résultantes en un endroit précis [...] la Créolité martiniquaise n'est pas la Créolité haïtienne, ni même la Créolité guadeloupéenne...'. Note that Chamoiseau, in typical deference to Glissant, does not actually refuse the theoretical distinction between créolisation and créolité, but justifies himself by seeing one as a necessary product - or concrétisation - of the other.

124 It is also striking that, when she spoke at the Faber & Faber Caribbean series book launch (Voice Box, Festival Hall, Autumn 1998), Condé aligned herself implicitly with Chamoiseau et al, referring to the notion of diversalité with which Eloge de la créolité closes.
repeated feature of contemporary Caribbean writing, is in no way representative of Caribbean writing as a whole. Indeed the majority of Caribbean writing, as Wilson Harris is quick to point out, “belongs to the conventional mould” (1999: 141), specifically the nineteenth-century realist tradition of the ‘character’-based novel. It is striking, nevertheless, that many of what are generally held to be the most significant contributions to the field exhibit precisely this characteristic spatiality, in contrast to such Western literary models. The feature of this break with the European novel which is of greatest relevance here concerns the relationship between being and space: a number of key texts, I would argue, large and prominent enough to constitute some kind of literary momentum, throw into question precisely the European idea of character as “self-sufficient individual” in favour of what Harris has called a “dialogue” or “dialectic”, a “profound and unpredictable sense of person” (1999: 140). Moreover these texts foreground the thematics of spatial being in a highly self-conscious way: obvious examples include the title of Harris’ The Womb of Space (1983), Glissant’s dedication of Le sang rivé to “toute géographie torturée” (1994a: 9), as well as Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant’s Elage de la créolité, which they address “à tout concepteur de notre espace” (1993: 13). What I would like to demonstrate, then, is that there exists a fairly explicit dialogue between space and being in this group of texts, a dialogue which is marked by history, culture, politics and language.

This spatial dimension differs quite specifically from the corpus of nineteenth-century (European) writing in the sense that it refuses to regard space as a passive or neutral element (either as a blank slate upon which feelings can be projected or as some kind of “décor consentant” (Glissant, 1996a: 217)) subservient to the primacy of individual agency. Instead, spatial elements (the eponymous river in Glissant’s La Lézarde (1958) or the bush in Faulkner’s Go Down, Moses (1960)) become active players; space becomes a ‘character’ in its own right. “L’alentour”, says Glissant “est mon principal personnage” (1993d: 112). This view of space, as I have demonstrated, is opposed both to the mind-body dualism of the Cartesian tradition and to the

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privileging of reason over nature (through the Enlightenment subject), a fact which helps to explain the ecological turn of much of this literature. And of foremost importance in this activation, or dynamisation, of space is the elaboration of a new rôle for the Caribbean landscape, which constitutes an obvious (and often self-conscious) break with two strands of the European literary tradition: nineteenth-century Realism, on the one hand, and Romanticism, on the other.

The space of Romanticism, broadly speaking, is a one-sided projection outwards from the individual onto the natural world (in line with Fichte’s Ich-Lehre), a kind of ‘pathetic fallacy’. Goethe, for example, deploys nature as an exteriorised expression of internal feelings, as the opening of his ‘Mailied’ - with its emphatic sense of poetic self - illustrates:

Wie herrlich leuchtet
Mir die Natur!
Wie glänzt die Sonne!
Wie lacht die Flur!
(Goethe, 1953: 13)

The Realist novel, for its part, tends to locate characters and action in concrete historical time and space, the description of physical surroundings creating an illusion of objective or ‘realistic’ space, the essentially flat or neutral backdrop which was damningly labelled by Sarraute as having “la fadeur des nourritures remâchées [...] la plate apparence du trompe-l’œil” (1956: 65), and within which individuals act out their parts. Where a link is drawn between a character and their surroundings, the relationship is usually one of simple reflection; thus Madame Vauquer’s delapidated pension mirrors her social status: “toute sa personne explique la pension, comme la pension implique sa personne” writes Balzac (1966: 26-27). The absolute nature of the space of this realist universe, it goes without saying, is underwritten by the presence of the omniscient narrator, whereas, in the Faulknerian model which is of such importance for Glissant, “l’auteur n’est pas d’abord cet «observateur attentif»

126 Cf Russell (1947: 744-745): ‘[Fichte] holds that the ego is the only ultimate reality and it exists because it posits itself.
127 ‘How splendid is the brightness of Nature around me! How the sun shines, how the fields laugh’, Goethe (1964: 7).
128 The first page of Balzac’s Le père Goriot, for example, sets the scene in 1819 in the pension Vauquer which is ‘établissement rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, entre le quartier latin et le faubourg Saint-Marceau’ (1966: 21).
qu'évoquait si souvent Balzac" (1996a: 87). Barthes, in Le degré zéro de l'écriture, has identified this novelistic universe as "la construction d'un univers autarcique, fabriquant lui-même ses dimensions et ses limites, et y disposant son Temps, son Espace, sa population, sa collection d'objets et ses mythes" (1969: 25).

Space in this kind of nineteenth-century European writing has neither a great deal of autonomy, nor can it be said to constitute a genuinely interactive entity along the lines I have been suggesting throughout this thesis. The Caribbean literature I am interested in, on the other hand, includes space into the equation of existence. As Geneviève Belugue has indicated, for example, the key Glissantian notion of Lien functions as a "générateur de l'existence", determined by, as well as determining, both the individual and history. More specifically, argues Glissant, "toute une littérature contemporaine s'est développée dans laquelle les paysages cessent d'être un décor consentant, cessent d'être un environment tout simplement, pour devenir une part constitutive de l'être". The landscape in this literary model "en devient véritablement un, sujet et personne, plus que décor consentant" (1996a: 217); thus, "pour Longoué, le pays devient personnage". Faulkner is often evoked as an inspiration for this dynamic view of space, which amounts to something considerably more complex than a simple kind of personification. Here, for example, is what Glissant has to say about Faulkner's depiction of the Mississippi as 'Old Man River':

Le Fleuve n'y est pas décrit en objet, comme un réceptacle ou un beau spectacle, c'est un personnage, un corps vivant, il est là débordant, tourbillonnant, rompant les digues, il entre dans le tourment des autres personnes de cette histoire, comme s'il faisait partie d'eux qui se battent contre lui." (1996a: 210)

Opposed to the realist tradition of representation in which space provides the illusion of a three-dimensional setting, an ultimately flimsy piece of scenery whose trompe-l'œil artificiality is soon exposed, the description of landscapes and places "n'est jamais suffisante à elle-même [...] Faulkner ne décrit pas, il diffuse le paysage partout" (215). Landscape is not "un pur portait [...] qui se détache sur l'ensemble comme un ornement"; instead, its influence is all-pervasive, impossible to isolate as

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129 In her paper, 'Du lieu incontournable à la Relation', 'Les poétiques d'Edouard Glissant', held at the Sorbonne (Paris IV), 11th-13th March 1998.

130 See above and Chevrier (1999: 214). It is worth remembering that Glissant's poetics, as it relates to space and landscape, is not restricted to Caribbean or American writing, but extends to include a number of world writers, Iceland's Thor Wihjamsson among others.

131 See above.
setting, “le paysage est là diffus, dispersé dans le texte, rivé aux personnes qui parlent, il ne s'expose pas comme un motif de peintre [...] C'est le livre tout entier qui est un brousse” (216). The text, in other words, becomes a kind of expressive landscape.

As we shall see in due course, however, landscape can also become a kind of text in its own right, an idea which Wilson Harris suggests in this passage from his essay ‘The Music of Living Landscapes’:

It seems to me that, for a long time, landscapes and riverscapes have been perceived as passive, as furniture, as areas to be manipulated; whereas, I sensed, over the years, as a surveyor, that the landscape possessed resonance. The landscape possessed a life, because, the landscape, for me, is like an open book, and the alphabet with which one worked was all around me. But it takes some time to really grasp what this alphabet is, and what the book of the living landscape is. (1999: 40)

This notion is perhaps underlined by the fact that, as Condé has stated, landscape is an inescapable fact of life in the Caribbean, or as Walcott puts it, “visual surprise is natural in the Caribbean; it comes with the landscape, and faced with its beauty, the sigh of History dissolves” (1993: 7). As we shall see below, however, and this is of course not what Walcott means when he speaks of the 'beauty' of the landscape, an exoticised, Eurocentric, image of the Caribbean-as-paradise has for too long submerged the very Caribbean-ness of the region: “nous n'avions jamais réfléchi à la présence réelle de nos paysages, du point de vue de notre imaginaire, de notre sensibilité”, opines Glissant (1996b: 117).

If the landscape is elevated to the status of a participant or “personnage parlant” (Glissant, 1990: 85), therefore, it is not simply out of some desire to break with European tradition, but largely because, as Glissant says, “décrire le paysage ne suffit pas. L'individu, la communauté, le pays sont indissociables dans l'épisode constitutif de leur histoire. Le paysage est un personnage de cette histoire. Il faut le comprendre dans ses profondeurs” (1981: 199). The importance of history, though not in a strictly conventional sense, is stressed by Glissant when he says “je suis dans l'histoire jusqu'à la moindre moëlle” (1994a: 27), and will form the theme of chapter 6 of this thesis. The refusal of the convention of an individualistic “roman des personnages” (Robbe-Grillet, 1963: 28), it is worth noting, also works in parallel with

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132 Faber & Faber Caribbean series book launch (Voice Box, Festival Hall, Autumn 1998).
133 On this point see chapter 6 of this thesis, which deals more specifically with the theme of history, as well as Coates (1999a).
a placing ‘under erasure’ of the notion of the agent or author in Glissant’s works together with a return to the communitarian - the so-called “roman du Nous” (Glissant, 1981: 153) - in the French Antillean novel more generally.

Resisting a European - imposed or colonising - tradition can also lead to isolation, however. One self-imposed task of the contemporary Caribbean writer often seems to be a re-inscription of the potentially fragmentary island-perspective into what Glissant, in an early collection of verse, called ‘un champ d’îles’, that Caribbean ‘chain’ of islands, or what Benitez-Rojo calls “an island bridge connecting, in “another way”, North and South America” (1996: 2). Seen in this way, the Caribbean becomes neither a purely autonomous zone, nor one whose only logic is determined by an elsewhere (of European or African origin). Instead, Glissant proposes a vision of the Antilles as “les gouttes multipliés de cet immense fleuve [...] l’autre source”, going on to call “les Antilles l’avancée de l’Amérique. Ce qui échappe à la masse du continent et pourtant participe de son poids” (1981: 230). He repeats this assertion in a lecture entitled ‘Créolisations dans la Caraïbe et les Amériques’: “la Caraïbe”, he says, “n’a toujours [...] paru être une sorte de préface au continent” (1996b: 12). A kind of microcosm, then, Martinique also becomes “une anthologie des paysages qu’on appelle tropicaux” (1981: 276).

Within the broad tendency of a re-awakening to spatiality (outlined in chapter 1), the Caribbean emerges as part of a characteristically ‘American’ kind of space, marked by ouverture and what Glissant sees as a version of the baroque: “l’espace du roman américain”, he says, “me semble ouvert, éclaté, irréué” (1981: 255). In this version of American space, landscape in particular suggests something typical to the region, while also remaining open to the possibilities of the other: “les paysages des Amériques conviennent à ces extensions”, writes Glissant, “même cultivés ils ne perdent rien de leur démesure, qui n’a pourtant rien à voir avec leur étendue [...] tout s’ouvre, convoque l’ailleurs,lève le vent et les cyclones” (1996a: 215). Space therefore becomes a correlative of Creole culture and language more generally, which is perhaps what Walcott means when he says that “for us the ragged, untutored landscape seems as uncultured as our syntax” (1998: 27). Tracing this ‘other American’ perspective, however, also means situating Glissant’s poétique du paysage

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134 Cf, in particular, Glissant (1981: 257-258).
135 And as such can be distinguished from the modernist solipsism of Joycean or Kafka.
(1981: 262) within the crucial and mobile space of the sea. For, as Chamoiseau suggests (1997a: 232-247), we need to take on board the possibility of an alternative view of the island as neither prison nor exoticised paradise, but rather as an opening or invitation, and in which the sea becomes not the limit or boundary of the island, but rather a web of connections, which Derrida, in an echo of Glissant, has called an “espace de la relation” (1996: 39).

Reaching out beyond the narrow physical confines of the island to embrace the wider Caribbean archipelago, and by extension the world, thus becomes a call, which the Caribbean, as Glissant argues, is particularly well-placed to answer:


In my series of literary case studies, I shall attempt to show how this ‘opening-up’ is encoded textually through a whole host of vegetal and marine images: forests, mangroves, bruyssaille, tides and shifting volcanic sands. I propose to give some shape to this set of images by organising my chosen texts in terms of a slightly arbitrary, but nonetheless suggestive spatial trajectory, a succession which should not be understood as a temporal succession, however, but rather as a thematic organising principle. Starting from the repeated trope of the contamination of origins and closed communities (La Lézarde, Traversée de la mangrove), then, I shall proceed, in successive chapters, to examine both the world-historical space of the city (Texaco) and the Glissantian ideal of a Tout-monde, that chaotic system in which “tous les lieux du monde se rencontrent” (1993a: 31; 1997e: 59). For, like Borges’ Aleph, the space of the world, with its infinitely criss-crossing relations, can be contained or implied in the smallest particle of it: “notre terre est démesurée. Je le sais, moi, qui en quelques pas saurais en faire le tour, mais qui jamais ne peux l’épuiser” writes Glissant (1981: 277).
Caribbean literature and the relation to space

The literary production with which I am concerned can be described as an exploration both of space and in terms of space. As we shall see below, it is a common strategy of both Glissant and the créolistes to read the past in terms of what we might call a text of space. It is also possible, however, to chart the evolution of literary production in the French Antilles spatially, and more specifically, in terms of the triangle formed by Europe, Africa and the Caribbean. This is essentially the basis upon which Eloge de la créolité (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993) presents its analysis of Creole identity, discussing each stage - doudouisme, Négritude, antillanité, créolité - by reference to a set of spatial projections. Thus 'mimetic' literature, as we shall see in due course, holds up an alienating European model, exoticised in the case of doudouist writing, while Négritude's own form of alienation, according to the proponents of créolité, consists of looking outwards towards Africa - that "espace ancestral" (Glissant, 1981: 88) - for its inspiration, to the point where Aimé Césaire, for example, was able to declare "je suis un poète africain".137 Both forms of writing, they argue, are guilty of positing false ideals (and consequently of bringing about the kind of neurosis138 analysed by both Fanon and Glissant); "la Négritude fit, à celle d'Europe, succéder l'illusion africaine", as Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant would have it (1993: 20).

The difference between these externalising models and the Caribbean-centred model proposed by Glissant is that while the former are predicated on universalised notions (of truth and beauty, in the case of mimetic writing, or race, in the case of Négritude poetry), the latter partake of the postcolonial drive towards location and the irreducible. "Le lieu", as Glissant's mantra would have it, "est incontournable" (1997c: 59; 1993: 31/513). What the generation of post-Césaire writers in the French Antilles are attempting to do, therefore, is to ground the problematics of identity. Thus although it is possible to view Négritude in spatial terms, focusing on the notions of Africa - the motherland - and 'pays natal', for instance, the racial bias of the term tends to transcend the spatial in favour of a quasi-Marxist universal concept.

of 'blackness'. The texts I shall examine here are all concerned with a certain (though never absolute) degree of rooting in the local as an antidote to sublimation into the universal. "Contre l'universel généralisant", says Glissant, "le premier recours est la volonté rêche de rester au lieu [...] notre lieu c'est les Antilles" (1981: 249). The parallel notions of rooting and displacement, whose oscillation describes a central dialectic in Glissantian thinking, are but one pair of terms within a larger arsenal of related spatial images. I do not propose to schematise this proliferating body of terminology here, preferring to let it re-emerge organically in the context of specific texts and themes. Suffice it to say that spatiality, in its various forms, is an omnipresent theme as well as an analytical tool in this writing and that one characteristic of this spatiality is a tension or interdependence of writing and reading, of space and through space.

Re / readings: the text of space

'Nos barques sont ouvertes, pour tous nous les naviguons.'

Edouard Glissant (1990: 21)

We have already seen, in chapter 1, how the notion of space as legible derives from the insight that space is 'produced', to use Lefebvre's favourite term. If space is socially, historically, economically 'produced', I have argued, a set of relations and not a neutral or inert 'substance', then its encoding, the way in which it bears the traces of the past, demands scrutiny. This is particularly relevant when these traces are hidden from view, obscured by a process of overwriting which presents a produced space as natural or pre-existing. Revisiting the spaces of the colonised past becomes a strategy of reversal, an overturning of the abstract or neutral, an opening-up of space to speculation, negotiation and relation (both in the sense of interconnection and as a form of narrative or relaying).

139 Cf Chamoiseau (1997a: 72-73): 'C'est comme si nous nous étions décrochés de notre souffle vital. Théâtre militant et poèmes-combats étaient devenus des mécaniques internationalistes, globalisantes, perdues dans un «Monde noir» et dans un «Nègre» extensible à l'infini. Elles n'exploraient pas nos espaces ni n'arpentaient le terreau de nos douleurs.'
This strategy, of 'reading' (or re-'reading') the past through space and spaces, is a primary activity within what, for want of a better word, we must call the 'theoretical' counterparts of my chosen texts. Chamoiseau, in his idiosyncratic travel-guide Martinique, has pointed to a crucial passage in Glissant's *Le discours antillais*, as axiomatic for this approach to the text of space, saying: "rien ne m'a mieux aidé que ces deux-trois phrases là, à extraire de l'évidence paradisiaque, les lignes secrètes de mon Pays natal" (1995: 6). Glissant's 'classic' description of Martinique in this passage outlines a schematic view of the island which he divides into three zones:

Au nord du pays, l'enlacement de verts sombres que les routes n'entament pas encore. Les marrons y touffèrent leurs refuges. Ce que tu opposes à l'évidence de l'Histoire. La nuit en plein soleil et le tamis des ombres. La souche, sa fleur violette. Le lacis des fougères. La boue des premiers temps, l'impénétrable originelle [...]  
Au Centre, l'ondulé littéral des cannes. Le mont s'apprivoise en mornes. Les carcasses des usines s'y tapissent, pourtant témoignage de l'ancien ordre des Plantations [...] Ce que nous appelons la Plaine, où dégorgeait la Lézarde et d'où les crabes ont disparu [...] A la main tombante, l'échelonnement des bananes, rideau d'écumé entre verte épaisse entre la terre et nous [...]  
Le Sud enfin, où les cabris s'égaillent. L'émoi des sables, oublié de tant qui chevauchèrent les troncs de coco, essayant jadis de rejoindre Toussaint Louverture dans le pays d'Haïti [...] Ces plages sont à l'encan. Les touristes les réclament. Frontière ultime, où sont visibles nos errances d'hier et nos perditions d'aujourd'hui.  
Il y a ainsi des temps qui s'échelonnent sous nos apparences, des Hauts à la mer, du Nord au Sud, de la forêt aux sables. Le marronage et le refus, l'ancrage et l'endurance, l'Ailleurs et le rêve. (1981: 20-21)

The importance of this schematisation lies mainly in the way it proposes a Creole version of history, an alternative scripting of the past not contained in the colonial chronicles and record-books, but waiting to be read in what Harris calls 'the book of the living landscape' (1999: 40): thus, continues Glissant, "notre paysage est son propre monument, c'est tout histoire" (1981: 21). In addition however, the raw materials of nature - vegetation, winds, sands and fluids - provide metaphors for a different kind of history, or even the impossibility of historiography altogether (ideas which I shall explore more fully in chapter 6).

In Glissant's novels, of course, it is the *quimboiseur* Papa Longoué who holds the secret to performing what their author has termed the "lecture d'un paysage" (1981: 260), and who, in *Le quatrième siècle* (1964), teaches Mathieu Béluse the pitfalls of

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140 Cf Burton's critique of Glissant's 'opposition 'classique' entre mornes et plaine' (1997: 182). If only because of its ubiquity in Chamoiseau's writings, Glissant's analysis of Martinican space, it is true, can be seen as a dominant or 'classical' model of sorts. Burton also takes issue with Glissant for constructing what he sees as false oppositions; his criticisms are essentially made with reference to historical data which fall outside the purview of this thesis, however.
History (with a capital ‘H’). Similarly in Texaco, the ‘notes’ written by the urbaniste to the author figure, or marqueur de paroles, constitute a series of readings of the twin urban spaces of Texaco and what, in an echo of Creole, is called l'en-ville. These readings perform a double function, which I shall explore in the next two sections of this chapter: on the one hand, a sociological critique of colonial alienation, rooted in an analysis of space and spatial representation and, on the other, a number of resistances to this alienation, suggested by both ‘real’ and textual forms of spatial subversion.

Before moving on to consider these forms of subversion, however, it is worth outlining how the reading of space informs a critical reappraisal of the colonial legacy in the Caribbean, a legacy which, in the case of French-owned Martinique, is all too present. Glissant’s critique of Martinican society and history, which is also echoed in some parts of Fanon’s more obviously psychoanalytical work, focuses on the way in which the ability of the island to achieve any degree of autonomy or sense of self has been negated by the practice of assimilation. Le discours antillais, for example, as I demonstrated in chapter 2, contains a trenchant critique of the Martinican tourist industry which has effectively neutralised the capacity for self-determination through ‘real’ production, creating a stultifying atmosphere of what Glissant memorably calls “morbidité générale” (1981: 101). The effects of this ossification are most evident in the ubiquitous bétonnage of the island-space, the encroachment on the natural environment of a system of roads and hotels which make of the island a “colonie de consommation” (1981: 62) supported by “une économie de consommation sans production réelle” (65). The ‘death’ of Martinique’s economy is evoked in the title of Glissant’s Malemort and by the drying-up of the Léîarde river (1975: 126), earlier a figure of immense fecundity in Glissant’s novel of the same name (1958).

What Glissant will call Martinique’s “non-histoire” (1981: 131) has thus been maintained through the replacement of an obvious, or ‘brutal’, form of colonisation by a more ‘furtive’ one (Chamoiseau, 1997a: 23). In spatial terms this amounts to the substitution of one set of “lieux stratégiques de l’aliénation” (1981: 47) for another. Thus the prevailing sites of power in 1848, “la mairie, le presbytère, l’hospice public, l’hôpital d’habitation, la maison du maître, les ateliers, la case du commandeur” (47) become, in more recent times, “la mairie, la sécurité sociale, les bureaux scolaires,
l'école, l'assistance publique, les garages, les grandes surfaces, les associations, les assemblés politiques et administrative, les stades, les organismes du crédit” (51).
Against these institutional forms of imposition, Glissant identifies several forms of resistance to the dominant order. As well as the obviously rebellious nègre marron whom Glissant describes as “le seul vrai héros populaire des Antilles” (1981: 104)\(^{141}\) are the related figures of the quimboiseur (epitomised by Papa Longoué in Glissant’s novels) and the conteur. In addition to these more individual forms of resistance, however, the thinking of Glissant and, later, Chamoiseau & Confiant has built up a reading of space which traces a number of key “matrices” of creolisation which they see as forming the Creole cultural imaginaire. Significantly these paradigmatic sites embody a subversion (Glissant’s détour (1981: 32)) of the very structures of domination which at first sight they appear to implement, and as such constitute the Caribbean’s revenge on the practice of colonisation. Glissant’s *Poétique de la Relation* (1990) and Chamoiseau & Confiant’s *Lettres créoles* (1991) articulate this double movement of imposition and subversion in terms of a trio of spaces: the hull of the slave-ship (*bateau négrier*), the sugar-cane plantation and, lastly, the Creole town.

In the space of the slave-ship Glissant symbolises the irrevocable break with the *pays d'avant*. For him this fundamental displacement, located not in a specific historical moment, but rather in a movement of the imaginary, constitutes the only true ‘origin’ of Caribbean cultures: “l'océan de traite fut notre nouveau pays” (1981: 58) as he puts it. The ship's *cale* becomes not so much temporary prison as “gouffre-matrice” (Glissant, 1990: 18), engendering a conception of the sea as a space of relation, rather than enclosing wall, and making of the ship what he calls “[une] barque ouverte” (17). The moment of rupture, of displacement, felt as a lack or loss in the poetics of Négritude, is seen here as fostering Relation; it suggests that impossibility of returning to a cultural source, which, as we shall see, is a defining feature of texts such as Carpentier’s *Los pasos perdidos* (1966) and Glissant’s own *La Lézarde* (1958). In a movement of positive reassessment, then, Glissant posits the Caribbean experience of uprooting, of displacement, as harbinger of a new, creolised, world-order, and as a symbol of resistance to the enclosing practice of the colonial enterprise.

\[^{141}\] Cf also Chamoiseau & Confiant (1991: 115), 'le marronage est resté le seul lieu où le colonisé créole parvient à exprimer sa défiance ou son refus d'un destin dont il n'a pièce maîtrise'.
This paradigmatic openness, or lack of fixity, reappears in the next defining space, that of the plantation, in the form of linguistic and cultural creolisation, but also in the figure of the conteur, torchbearer of a Creole aesthetics. In his seminal essay, 'Lieu clos, parole ouverte' (1990: 77-89), Glissant shows how the subversive strategies of the oral tradition developed an open poetics, in spite of and in opposition to repeated attempts to contain the slave within the hierarchical structure of the plantation-system. "La prétention à l'extranéité réciproque n'a pas empêché les contaminations", writes Glissant (1990: 81), going on to argue that it was precisely the throwing-together of so many diverse cultural elements in this "Locus Solus" (82) which triggered the process of "métissage culturel", making of the plantation "un des ventres du monde" (89). Like Glissant, Chamoiseau & Confiant point to the plantation as the birthplace of the conteur créole and thus of a properly Creole poetics which articulates "la contestation de l'ordre colonial" (1991: 35). Necessary product of the colonial space, the oral tradition performs a subversion of this same space; reading the past in this way thus constitutes an alternative history based on creolisation and points the way forward to a reinstatement of a creolised poetics at the heart of the literary enterprise.

In the wake of the abolition of slavery and the reorganisation of the plantation-system, which forced newly-freed slaves from the countryside to the urban environment of the colonial town, a new 'matrix' of creolisation and resistance was born. The new urban space engendered by this demographic shift becomes the site of necessary "production de survie" (Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1991: 66), a universe inhabited by the djobeurs of Glissant's Malemort (1975) and Chamoiseau's polyphonic Chronique des sept misères (1988a). The struggle for survival in the margins and interstices of the ville créole will, of course, form the theme of Chamoiseau's Texaco, a novel which marries the desire to describe this paradigmatically hybridised space with the new story-telling techniques of a postmodernised créolité. We shall see, in my next two sections, how the problem of cultural dispossession outlined by Glissant (1981) is countered first through this practice of writing a more 'authentic' Caribbean space and, secondly, by the development of a dissident Creole textuality.
Space-into-text:
‘writing the real country’

‘le destin des Antilles de langue française fût de se trouver en porte-à-faux sur leur réalité’

Edouard Glissant (1981: 15)

‘Comment écrire alors que ton imaginaire s’abreuve, du matin jusqu’aux rêves, à des images, des pensées, des valeurs qui ne sont pas les tiennes? Comment écrire quand ce que tu es végète en dehors des élans qui déterminent ta vie? Comment écrire, dominé?’

Patrick Chamoiseau (1997a: 17)

“Nous sommes fondamentalement frappés d’extériorité” state Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant (1993: 14), echoing Fanon’s comment, in Peaux noire masques blancs, “je suis sur-déterminé de l’extérieur” (1995: 93). The way in which colonised peoples have been subject to an alienating set of (European) values, what the authors of Eloge de la créolité call the “mécanismes cachés de notre aliénation” (1993: 22), is a recurrent theme in the field of postcolonial writing. Glissant, for instance, points anecdotally to the incongruity of radio broadcasts declaring that “l’hiver guadeloupéen est très doux” (1981: 123), whereas the notion of winter is irrelevant in the context of a Caribbean climate which knows only two seasons. The project of Francophone Caribbean writing - from Négritude through antillanité to créolité - is explicitly concerned with reversing this kind of alienation.

The desire to reject not only the European denigration of Caribbean culture and language, but also the fear of all that is hybrid, and impure, is already contained in Césaire’s affirmation, in Cahier d’un retour au pays natal, “J’accepte...entièrement sans réserve... / ma race qu’aucune ablation d’hysope et de lys mêlés / ne pourrait purifier” (1995: 120). However, it finds its most positive expression, its most complete acceptance, in the créoliste’s declaration, “il n’existe rien dans notre monde qui soit petit, pauvre, inutile, vulgaire, inapte à enrichir une projet littéraire. Nous faisons corps avec notre monde” (1993: 39). What is at stake here is a greater degree of realism, though in terms of content-matter rather than as a form of literary mimesis (and distinct from the vein of Caribbean Realism typified by Zobel’s La rue case-nègres (1974), therefore). Glissant’s ambition, for
example, is certainly not to any unquestioning ‘authenticity’, which his brand of thinking would be the first to undermine anyway. Nevertheless it is undeniable that this literature embodies a drive towards portraying the ‘real’, towards writing what Glissant refers to as le pays réel in reaction to former escapist modes of narration. Glissant’s brand of spatiality explores the ways in which space, as we have seen, has been the vehicle of a ‘strategic alienation’, and proposes the reinvestment of a more genuinely Creole kind of space in the representation of Martinique.

A central feature of this re-inscription is the attempted synthesis of a kind of literary écriture on the one hand, and the structures of an oral, conteur tradition (repetition, antiphony, circularity), which are symbolised in the notion of a parole de la nuit, on the other. This synthesis, or what we might call the collision of two modes of apprehending reality, necessitates above all a new form of interaction with the Creole language - whose inherent hybridity was, to an extent, occluded by Césaire - and which Glissant for his part describes as “la première géographie du Détour” (1981: 32). In terms of text selection, it is important to note that Traversée de la mangrove, which marks Condé’s return to Guadeloupe after an extended period in Africa, is the first novel in which she tackles the question of what Chamoiseau & Confiant have called “son identité créole” (1991: 151) and in which “pour la première fois, elle s’efforce d’analyser son rapport à la langue française” (152) in terms of what she herself has called “[une] prise directe sur le créole” (1989b: 113).

Language is of course a primary vector of the alienation against which Fanon, Glissant, Chamoiseau, Confiant (and Condé, ultimately) construct their views of Caribbean identity. Instances of literary attempts to imitate the language and values of the European ‘parent’ culture, which can seem ludicrously inappropriate, not to say alienating, when placed in a New World context, are not difficult to come by. Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin cite the Canadian poet Joseph Howe as a prime example of such incongruity:

...the gay moose in jocund gambol springs,
Cropping the foliage Nature round him flings.
(1989: 10)

145 Cf Confiant (1993a).
In similar vein, Chamoiseau and Confiant, in their history of 'Creole Letters', cite the following lines, composed in 1835 by Pierre Faubert:

Je suis fier de le dire, ô négresse, je t’ aime;  
Et ta noire couleur me plaît; sais-tu pourquoi?  
C’est que nobles vertus, chaste cœur, beauté même  
Tout ce qui charme enfin, le ciel l’a mis en toi.  
(1991: 83)

For them, such attempts to mime the ‘alien’ structures, language and imagery of the French literary tradition as means to describing a Creole ‘reality’ amount to a process of *devenir-français* (1991: 70). “La fétichisation de la culture française”, they argue, can only proceed by “le rejet de la réalité créole” (105), turning the victims of *francisation* into “zombies” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 15) and prompting Walcott, in his poem ‘Names’, to ask: “When they named these bays / bays / was it nostalgia or irony?” (1992: 306).

One way of counteracting the deep-felt sense of alienation from the ‘real’, which this use of an imposed or borrowed language suggests, is, in the case of the Caribbean, to embrace the multilingual richness of a Creole lexicon, as Walcott implies in the following section of ‘Sainte Lucie’:

Come back to me,  
my language.  
Come back,  
cacao,  
grigni,  
solitaire,  
ciseau  
the scissor-bird  
no nightingales  
(1992: 310)

Significantly, for my purposes, alienation from a Creole reality through the fetishisation of a European language is simultaneously a kind of alienation from Creole (local) space, since, to quote Chamoiseau & Confiant again, Creole constitutes “la langue première du réel de ces lieux” (70). Consequently, in addition to the revalorisation of the Creole language, the re-exploration of Creole *topoi* as locations of Creole culture plays a vital rôle (all the more so given the practical difficulties of writing or publishing in Creole). Thus, in the literature of *créolité*, it is often spaces and locations, rather than characters, which are the real heroes. As Alain Bullo informs us
(1994: 1), the first draft of Chamoiseau's *Chronique des sept misères* included 'Chronique du marché aux légumes' and 'Chronique des douleurs du marché aux légumes' as possible titles. Indeed Chamoiseau himself has said of this novel that "ce serait le marché aux légumes qui serait en quelque sorte le héros et on verrait apparaître des personnages sans qu'aucun n'ait une voix qui dépasserait l'autre, une espèce de polyphonie permanente".146 It would, in fact, be easy to show how each of Chamoiseau's novels presents a distinctively Creole space as its protagonist: the market in *Chronique des sept misères* (1988a), the Savane and the conteur's circle of auditors in *Solibo magnifique* (1988b), the eponymous suburb in *Texaco*, the spaces of home and school in *Antan d'enfance* (1996a) and *Chemin d'école* (1996b) respectively, not to mention the Glissantian forest of *L'esclave vieil homme et le molosse* (1997b) and the rum distillery in his most recent text, *Elmire des sept bonheurs* (1998a).

In order fully to grasp the project of post-Négritude writing, it is necessary to understand the literary context from which it springs, particularly in terms of the kinds of alienation (both spatial and linguistic) which I have been illustrating. Pépin, speaking at a recent conference,147 outlined a brief history of space in French Antillean literature which follows closely the analyses of Glissant (1981, 1990) and Chamoiseau & Confiant (1991). The trajectory it contains describes the same movement we have been considering from alienation to what Glissant would call "le soleil de la conscience" (1997c), from an exteriorised space, that is, to a more engaged, self-conscious one. I propose, therefore, to examine this history briefly, both in order to establish a context for, and to highlight the stakes of, the new spatiality which this literature embodies.

It is possible, as the authors of *Eloge de la créolité* have done, to identify a continuum of alienation in the literary representation of Caribbean space against which the Glissantian impulse to write the 'real country' can be opposed. One nineteenth-century form of writing, for example, known as *doudouisme*, portrays the space of the French Antilles in terms of what Chamoiseau neatly terms a *géographie-paradis* (1997a: 49). This description proceeds through a persistent eulogising of "les éclats du pays, l'infinitie douceur de ses rives, son goût de bonheur vanille. Sonnets de papillons et de ciel bleu. Rimes d'alizés, de soleil et de fleurs odorantes" (47). In this

147 "Caribbean Writing in French: Place and Displacement", held at University College Dublin, 2nd-4th September 1999.
particular version of literary alienation, the island becomes an exoticised space—what Pépin has called the “décordu fantasme érotique”\(^{148}\). These texts extol the beauty of balmy Caribbean nights, and beaches whose white sands are as soft as the flesh of the exotic creatures, or *doudous*, which provide their inspiration:

Dans cette tracée littéraire [doudouisme], on utilise la réalité créole, donc on revient un peu en soi et dans son monde, mais on y revient comme un touriste, c'est-à-dire avec une vision européenne, une vision exotique donc superficielle. Et ce regard superficiel sur soi-même ne retient que l'évidence paradisiaque, les bleus du ciel, le blanc du sable, les fleurs et les petits oiseaux, et surtout celle que le voyageur apprécie par-dessus tout: la doudou, une créature envoûtante qui cherche moyen d'améliorer sa dévée en charmant ceux qui passent. (Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1991: 89)

What is effaced here, in addition to the quotidian realities of the Creole universe, is the kind of historical engagement without which novels such as *Le quatrième siècle* and *Texaco* would be unthinkable. There is, in other words, an absence in *doudouist* poetry of beings-in-history,\(^{149}\) which is replaced instead with a vision of the island as exotic (not to mention erotic) paradise. As Chamoiseau points out, this image is purely decorative; there is no room here for the interactive vision of landscape upon which he and Glissant place so much emphasis, “toute relation intime à ces magnifiques paysages se voit ignorée”, he says, “seule se considérait une exaltation de surface conforme à la vision extérieure des conquérants de ce monde” (1997a: 48). “Le pays mien dans ces livres était mis à distance” concludes Chamoiseau (47).

Although *doudouist* poetry describes the landscape, then, it does so in a form which is complicit with the alienating practices of colonisation more generally. Consequently, the description of non-Creole space becomes, for Chamoiseau, an adjunct of more concrete forms of divorce between Creole subject and his entour. “L'admiration des poètes-doudous pour leur entour n'était pas autonome. Elle obtempérait aux hiérarchies de valeurs du dominant qui valorisait là une part superficielle (inoffensive et le plus souvent reconstruite) de l'espace colonisé” (1997a: 100). There are parallels here with Glissant's analysis of the folk tale, to which I shall be returning shortly, in the sense that the alienating vision of *doudouist* poetry reconfirms the Martinican's crippling “non-maîtrise du quotidien” (1981: 152) through his or her highly tenuous hold on the ‘real’. Indeed Glissant has described this kind of writing as precisely “le court-circuitage du pays réel [qui] transporte l'être


\(^{149}\) 'Têtre est absent' says Pépin in this 'poétique dont le rêve est ailleurs', Dublin conference 1999.
«en suspension» [...] dans un rêve projeté qui le dénature, dans une géographie fantasme” (1981: 287), a distortion which needs to be countered, in order to “crier le pays dans son histoire vraie” (15).

Glissant, as we shall see in due course, views the history of the Caribbean as a series of missed opportunities, culminating in the départementalisation of 1946, and identifies the European desire to reduce other to self, le Divers to le Même as prime culprit. “Il n’était jamais donné à ces pays de rejoindre leur nature vraie, paralysés qu’ils étaient par leur éparpillement géographique et aussi par une des formes les plus pernicieuses de colonisation: celle par quoi on assimile une communauté” (1981: 15), Glissant suggests. The myth of “Isless paradiisiques” (15) typical of doudouisme generates an especially alienating and disabling form of assimilation at the level of the imaginary and the representational. Another instance of such alienating representation, whose constricting geometry and linear order will be countered by the spatial historiography of Glissant and Chamoiseau in particular, is the writing of bèkè chronicles and formalised descriptions of various kinds (1981: 180) whose unquestioned ‘objectivity’ obscures any number of alternative realities.

The vision of the island in what Dash terms “Caribbean modernism” (1998), on the other hand, attempts to reverse the European bias of these pre-modern forms of Caribbean writing. It is predicated on the notion of what Dash (with reference to Brathwaite) has called “the fallen condition of Caribbean man” (1998: 72) and posits an oppositional ‘prelapsarian’ truth, embodying a “therapeutic wholeness” (72). Dash identifies an early text of Caribbean modernism, Jacques Roumain’s Gouverneurs de la rosée (1988), as typical of this stance:

The main protagonist of Roumain’s novel is on a quest for a lost paradise, a lost time and vision that will provide an alternative source of knowledge and confer a new set of meanings to the lives of the villagers of Fonds-Rouge. (Dash, 1998: 76)

The novel’s “theogenic” hegemony (78), he goes on to argue, “epitomizes the organicist longings of this phase [and] reaches forward to a utopian, prediscursive logos that confers a new intelligibility on the broken, fallen, fragmented, world” (79). This confident vision is reinforced by the novel’s linear narrative structure and by the univocality of its master narrator, Manuel, who provides the “structuring vision, the

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150 Cf chapter 6.
ordaining voice to the community" (79). A very different proposition from the questioning, polyphonic, writing of Condé, Glissant and Chamoiseau.

Similarly with the advent of *Négritude* poetry a vision is created for the Caribbean "which is not future-oriented but built around an unearthing of a mythical past or an Adamic self" and which is "theorized outside of history" (61). What is being appealed to in this literary revolution is an essentially ahistorical view of radical difference which constitutes a break from Western models and substitutes for the perceived alienation of colonisation a kind of authentic, organic, indigenism. Its sign is not diversity, but rather a purity which "negates time and the complexities of the past" (75). The representation of space is, of course, central to this picture. A cursory examination of Roumain, Césaire and the poetry of Haitian indigenism reveals what Dash calls "one of the major tropes of Caribbean modernism - the island as primeval ground" (73). The space of *Négritude* in particular is thus a mythical Africa, an 'ancestral' space functioning as repository of the values of 'black' resistance, a space of "impossible nostalgie" (Pépin), in which references to the baobab and the tam-tam, so redolent of the African cultural heartland, abound. This space is marked by origins, confirming an essentialised view of race and blood-ties:

Et mon originale géographie aussi; la carte du monde faite à mon usage, non pas teinte aux arbitraires couleurs des savants, mais à la géométrie de mon sang répandu.

(Césaire, 1995: 124)

The reinscription of an atavistic vision on the untouched, virgin, space of the brave new world of the Americas articulates the possibility of renaissance unfettered by European influence, but, by the same token, obscures the hybridity of Creole culture so crucial to post-*Négritude* poetics. Paradoxically, then, the process of rejecting an imposed European vision of the exotic and hermetically sealed island-space, which is characteristic of *Négritude*, nevertheless amounts to another version of "extériorité" (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 14):

Même galvanisant nos énergies au coin de ferveurs inédites, la Négritude ne rémédia nullement à notre trouble esthétique. Il se peut même qu'elle ait, quelque temps, aggravé notre instabilité identitaire, nous désignant du doigt le syndrome le plus pertinent de nos morbidités: le départ intérieur, le mimétisme, la naturel du tout-proche vaincu par la fascination du lointain, etc., toutes figures de l'ahénation. (1993: 20)

The next major break in Caribbean writing will come with Carpentier and Glissant who introduce an ironic, self-conscious mode of writing and a subversion of these
same *mythes fondateurs* into the confident attempt to reinstate some kind of lost community. The same perversion of origins characterises *La Lézarde* and Glissant's analysis of Creole folk-tales, particularly his discussion of their relationship to the Caribbean 'entour', which provides a good starting point for any discussion of his 'poetics of Relation' and, in terms of his literary trajectory, of the way in which “la langue créole s'engouffre dans la baie de la claire eau française”\(^{151}\). Valued by Glissant because they perform a subversion of atavistic founding-narratives (*mythes fondateurs*)\(^{152}\) - in contrast to other species of folk-tale (Amerindian, for example) - he nevertheless detects in them the absence of any tangible or habitated landscape - an erasure of the 'real' or of the local - which for him is symptomatic of the Martinican’s alienating inability to take root *(s’ensoucher)* in his surroundings, together with a paralysing “non-maitrise du quotidien” (1981: 113). Thus, “le conte antillais”, he writes, “délime un paysage non-possédé” (152), betraying the lack of a genuine “arrière-pays culturel” (166).

We have already seen how the erasure of the ‘real country’ is resisted by the elevation of typically Creole topoi *(lieux)* to the status of characters in Caribbean texts.\(^{153}\) What a reading of the ‘double imperative’ in Glissant’s theory of narrative also reveals, however, is the extent to which the temptation of this re-writing to become an exclusive practice has to be held in check by the evolution of a counter-poetics which makes a virtue of the inability to ‘occupy’ space. In this sense, the Caribbean tradition of non-racination becomes an advantage: “n’ayant jamais disposé de ma terre”, says Glissant, “je n’ai point cet atavisme d’épargne du sol, d’organisation. Mon paysage est encore emportement; la symétrie du planté me gêne” (1997c: 25).

\(^{151}\) Glissant’s inscription in my edition of *Malemort* (1975).

\(^{152}\) On this point, cf Glissant (1996a: 265-266). Of course, the fact that Glissant moves from a view of the Creole folk-tale as alienated (1981: 240-244) to a rather more positive assessment (1996) reflects the writer’s changing concerns, specifically a development from this desire to write the ‘real country’ *(pays réel)* to a more mobile poetics of *errance* aimed at undermining originary narratives, which he sees - with increasing distaste - as supporting the politics of Nationalism and other sectarian or exclusionary modes of cultural appartenance.

\(^{153}\) It has been suggested that the vision of Glissant and Chamoiseau is ultimately a somewhat nostalgic one which shies away from the realities of contemporary Martinican life. Cf Burton (1997: 263): ‘sauf chez Delsham, le réel martiniquais est plus ou moins systématiquement occulté par toute la littérature qui s’écrit actuellement à la Martinique’. Cf Confiant’s response to this criticism, ‘De la modernité en littérature’, reprinted on pp259-262 of the same volume. It should also be noted that Raphaël Confiant, whom Burton describes as giving ‘l’expression la plus vivante de la du génie de la Créolité’, makes a feature of such ‘réalités’ as the fax-machine, cable-TV and the problems of traffic in Martinique, albeit in highly ironic mode, in his *Trilogie tropicale* (1995a, 1995b, 1997).
The stakes of Glissant's own poetics are often most clearly visible through his analyses of other writers and artists. The double imperative of parallel *enracinement* and *errance*, the specific tension which this creates, emerges most forcefully from his essays on Wilfredo Lam and from the Faulkner project (1996a) in particular. Glissant describes Lam's works, for instance, as being simultaneously "peinture de l'enracinement et peinture de l'envol" (1981: 230). For Glissant they are quintessentially 'other-American' because they signify a double imperative, neither completely rooted nor floating, which expresses "l'éblouissement de l'ici-ailleurs" (230). Similarly, in *Faulkner, Mississippi*, Glissant summarises the American's project as "cette folle vertu du différemment et du dévoilement -, autour d'un lieu qu'il lui faut signifier" (1996a: 20). Consequently, while Glissant defines the project of *antillanité* as "la convergence des réenracinements dans notre lieu vrai" (1981: 182), he accords equal importance to the questioning of any kind of absolute or exclusive rooting, an idea which he will explore more specifically in relation to the Deleuze & Guattarian notion of *rhizome* (1990, 1996b). Any form of rooting, in his writing, is always relativised, thrown into relation with other forms of spatial identification. The double imperative, as an operative concept of the Glissantian text, always implies a negotiation, or *Relation*, between positions.

The difference between Glissant and the *Négritude* generation can be summarised in the fact that while the latter see the Caribbean as a being displaced from a lost (but recuperable) origin, Glissant sees displacement itself as the only valid kind of origin: "l'océan de traite fut notre nouveau pays" (1981: 58), as he puts it. This questioning of origins, specifically the way in which they function as guarantors of filiation and legitimate claims to atavistic belonging, is a feature of Glissant's analysis of the Creole folk-tale. For the *conte*, he argues, becomes the very site of a Creole counter-poetics, or what he calls a *poétique forcée*.

Le conte créole est le détour emblématique par quoi, dans l'univers des Plantations, la masse des Martiniquais développait une poétique forcée (que nous appellerons aussi contre-poétique), où se manifestait en même temps une impuissance à se libérer globalement et un acharnement à tenter de le faire. (Glissant, 1981: 241)

Whereas some other forms of folk-tale partake of the search for uncontaminated origins, then, the *conte créole* subverts these originary foundation narratives. While the universe of the Amerindian folk-tale, therefore, is described as being "plein de cette réclamation toujours avortée: l'exigence d'une Genèse, et son tragique déni" (1996a:
266), its Creole counterpart is characterised by the "parole du composite, de ce qui conteste, même sans le dire, toute idée de Genèse, de création du monde, de généalogie légitime garantie par une filiation" (265). Thus "l'idée du conte est de contester ainsi l'absolu et le sacré de toute genèse. Ou au moins de ne pas lier une pensée de l'absolu ou du sacré à ce commencement mythique" (267). Glissant calls this contaminated view of origins "une 'Digenèse'" (267).

Glissant's deployment of the conte créole as a destabilising counterpart to originary narratives is developed in relation to an ongoing fascination with Faulkner. Now the importance of Faulkner for my chosen texts, particularly in the wake of Glissant's idiosyncratic study of the writer (1996a), cannot be overestimated. Condé has, after all, admitted that Faulkner's As I lay dying (1964) is the structural intertext for Traversée de la mangrove (Pfaff, 1996: 74). For Glissant the importance of the Faulknerian universe is that, despite the accusations of racism which have sometimes been levelled against the writer, particularly in terms of black-white polarisations, what these texts actually suggest, albeit sometimes unconsciously, is the instability, if not absence, of such categorisations in the first place.

Faulkner's writing, for Glissant, brings to the fore two related themes, the fear of intermixing (i.e. a persistent longing for purity) and the need to establish filiation. Despite Faulkner's apparent failure to valorise mixity - "on voit bien qu'il ne dit pas: métissage [...] le noir et le Blanc sont des absolus, le métis une malédiction" (1996a: 119) - in fact "beaucoup de ces Noirs faulknériens, de manière surprenante, sont des produits mélangés" (117). Consequently, argues Glissant, it would be a mistake to read Faulkner as an unquestioning upholder of the validity of a colonised deep South. What his fictional works enact is precisely "la mise en question ou en vertige de cela-même qu'il s'est obstiné à soutenir et à confirmer dans sa vie «civile»: la légitimité absolue d'une fondation du Sud" (31). His obsessional description of filiation, also a feature of Glissant's own writing, Le quatrième siècle in particular, articulates the impossibility of this same filiation; talking about filiation should not be confused with an absolute belief in it, therefore. On the contrary, what is implied is precisely the way in which its quasi-Biblical overtones run aground or are subverted by métissage, by the lurking suspicion of impurity and of racial admixture:

Dans la métaphysique délirante du Sud, il est une logique non déniable: que c'est impossible de fonder lignée à partir du mélange. La mixité n'autoriserait que la famille étendue, laquelle ne «comprend» ni la filiation patrilinéaire ni par conséquent la fondation d'une dynastie. Dans l'inextricable du monde, dont témoignent les personnes convoquées
par Faulkner dans son œuvre, le malheur et la damnation demeurent les seules résultantes possibles, quand on a repoussé avec révulsion le métissage ou la créolisation. (123)

This process of subversion or contamination of filiation, of uninterrupted lineage guaranteeing legitimacy of possession, is highlighted paradigmatically by a Faulknerian text such as Absalom, Absalom! (1995). In spatial terms, this instability is figured by the insistent image of “le pré carré, si absurdement géométrique et comme irréel dans la brousse proliférante d’alentour” (62), in which “la rectitude géométrique et artificielle de la propriété se défait dans l’emmêlement sauvage de la dégénérescence” (63). Far from supporting the legacy of the plantation-system, then, Faulkner’s writing illustrates an uncertainty, “le processus sans cesse avorté de la «fondation», de l’établissement sur la terre nouvelle” (63). Tension replaces immobile certainty.

The description of trees and vegetation in Faulkner’s work forms an important subset of the representation of space, as well one of the most telling barometers of the periods of Caribbean writing I have been outlining. Of particular importance is the way these arborescent and vegetal image-systems relate to the question of rooting and communitarian belonging. In Glissant’s terms, what both Césaire’s Cahier d’un retour au pays natal and Roumain’s Gouverneurs de la rosée do is to articulate a new founding narrative characterised by a poetics of the source and rooting. In the “logocentric poetics” of Négritude, as I have suggested, it is thus the virile qualities and strong roots of the baobab tree which are brought to the fore: the tree, rooted in ancestral space, is “dressé, debout” (Pépin). By contrast, trees, for Glissant, while they also stand for a kind of ré-enracinement, also “sécrètent mystère et magie” (1997b: 13). The racination they symbolise is non-atavistic. Moreover, as we shall see, Glissant’s works contain a paradigmatic tension between this (already) provisional rooting (embodied in what Jean-Pol Madou has called “le cri vertical du mahogany” (1996: 80)) and a kind of ‘insane’ errance or proliferating uncertainty suggested by the low-lying grasses of Martinique, a tension which is paralleled in the mutually-dependent twinning of Mathieu and Mycéa who can be seen to characterise the

154 Cf also Glissant (1981: 255): ‘je ne pratique pas l’économie du pré, je ne partage pas la tranquillité de la source’.

155 A recurrent word in Césaire (1995).

Western and non-Western tropes of *le discours* and *l’indicible* respectively. The primary symbol of *créolité*, for its part, which its architects describe as “une spécificité ouverte” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 27), is that of the mangrove, a kind of interstitial ‘third space’ which stands as a figure of diversity and dialogic interdependence. I shall examine in my next chapter how the revision of the image of the mangrove, from the sterile swamp of Césaire’s ‘condition-mangrove’ (1982: 30) to fecund zone of Creole multiplicity, constitutes a major feature of the developing spatiality of contemporary Antillean writing. Similarly in chapter 7 (which focuses on the novel *Tout-monde*), I will show how Glissant’s notion of *chaos-monde*, with its distinctively fractal structure, can be seen as the theoretical template for articulating both *enracinement* and *errance, lieu* and *espace*.

**Text-into-space:**

*figuring the Caribbean*

‘De Glissant: Fais personnage des arbres, pierres, rivières et paysage et de ton écriture même’

Patrick Chamoiseau (1997a: 123)

The representation of space, as an expression of the relation to the Caribbean *entour*, forms a central part of my engagement with literary texts. Equally important, however, though often overlapping with this former category of spatiality, is the use of textual space itself as a representation of Caribbean culture, history, language and ideas. The use of text as what Lefebvre might call *une espace de représentation* (rather than a *représentation de l’espace*), I shall argue, becomes both a metaphorical space and a form of resistance to dominating strategies, especially where, as in what Chamoiseau calls his *pays dominé* (1997a), the reappropriation of concrete spaces is often impossible. In particular I will attempt to set out some features of Caribbean textuality which best characterise the new forms of a hybrid negotiation between the

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written and the oral. This distinctively Caribbean textuality exhibits features which can be aligned with, but never entirely subsumed into, two strands of contemporary writing, postcolonialism and postmodernism. Although I shall refer to these literary categories from time to time, mainly in relation to specific texts, I have already suggested some of the ways in which both postcolonial and postmodern writing and theory apply (or do not apply) to my chosen texts, and am wary of overemphasising any such allegiances at this juncture. For these reasons what follows will concentrate on issues of form and language most pertinent to the writing of the contemporary Caribbean.

The counter-values of Creole culture, from which both antillanité and créolité take their cue, are fairly obviously rooted in a certain view of the Creole language itself. The syncretic nature of this fundamentally hybrid language thus becomes the paradigmatic symbol and well-spring of recent Caribbean writing with its insistence on the composite and what Glissant terms créolisation:

La créolisation nous apparaît comme le métissage sans limites [...] la créolisation diffracte [...] elle est ici vouée à l'éclatement des terres, qui ne sont plus des îles. Son symbole le plus évident est dans la langue créole, dont le génie est de toujours s'ouvrir. (1990: 46)

The Creole language, in this account, embodies an engagement with space which is fundamentally open, outward-looking, inclusive of the Other, and multiple in itself (through its roots in a variety of French, Breton and African languages). This is admittedly not the only way of viewing Creole linguistics; in fact, what Glissant and his followers react against is precisely the idea, embodied in the colonial mind-set and perpetuated in the Caribbean education system,159 that Creole is little more than a degenerate patois or "sous-langue" (Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1991: 70). What I am primarily interested in here is the way in which these alternative values of openness,160 which are reflected in a particularly Caribbean way of describing and conceptualising the surroundings, and in particular the Caribbean archipelago, permeate, but equally derive from, the structures of an oral conteur tradition, and how these in turn determine the spatial character of an oppositional Creole textuality.

159 Cf Glissant (1981: 341-347) and for a more personal account, Chamoiseau (1996b).
160 Cf Glissant (1990: 89), "La Plantation est un des ventres du monde [...] le lieu était clos, mais la parole qui en est dérivée reste ouverte".

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The first feature of this mode of writing which I should like to highlight has to do with the inscription of an oral culture within an existing scriptural tradition. Chamoiseau's *Solibo magnifique*, for instance, is a symbolic account of the eclipse of an oral culture in Martinique, symbolised in the mysterious death of its eponymous hero, and its painful rebirth in the writing of créolité, though he has pointed, on at least two occasions,\textsuperscript{161} to a pair of earlier novels, Glissant's *Malemort* and Frankétienne's *Défïafi* (1975) as trailblazers for a properly Creole textuality. (It is presumably for this reason that *Lettres créoles* (Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1991) stops at 1975, the year in which these two texts appeared and therefore also the beginning of what its authors see as a new phase in Creole writing). The territory which Chamoiseau, for example, is staking out for himself can be summarised in Glissant's allusion - quoted as an epigraph to *Solibo magnifique* (1988b: 11) - to a synthesis of "la syntaxe écrite et [...] la rythmique parlée, de l'«acquis» d'écriture et du «réflexe» oral, de la solitude d'écriture et de la participation au chanter commun - synthèse qu'il [lui] semble intéressant à tenter" (1981: 256).

In addition to this hybrid, creolised, production of a literary language "à la limite de l'écrire et du parler" (Glissant, 1981: 256), however, *Solibo magnifique* attempts to articulate a whole range of linguistic positions within both French and Creole, a discursive practice suggested by Solibo himself:

Solibo Magnifique utilisait les quatre facettes de notre diglossie: le basilecte et l'acrolecte créole, le basilecte et l'acrolecte français, vibrionnant enracinement dans un espace interlectal que je pensais être notre plus exacte réalité socio-linguistique. (1998b: 45, italics added)

The linguistic space which the writing of créolité navigates is thus a hybrid or interlectal one (though perhaps, as Richard Burton suggests,\textsuperscript{162} most forcefully creolised in the constantly neologising linguistic imagination of Confiant). Through the collision of a number of different linguistic universes (each symbolic of a set of cultural values) the monolingual primacy of a dominant language, French, is thrown into question.

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\textsuperscript{162} Cf Burton (1997: 257), 'Raphaël Confiant est possédé par, plutôt qu'il ne le possède, ce génie de la parole pléthorique en quoi l'on peut voir ce que la Créolité a de plus viscéralement créole. Il parle, et même il déparle, surtout pour faire rire, et sans doute a-t-il, comme Solibo Magnifique, 'tout un lot de paroles à parler encore' [...] à la plus grande joie de ses lecteurs et lectrices qui se plairont à reconnaître en lui, bien plus qu'en le trop schématique Patrick Chamoiseau, l'expression la plus vivante du génie de la Créolité'.
This does not simply entail the substitution of one model for another, Creole for French, however; hence "la créolité n'est pas monolingue. Elle n'est pas non plus d'un multilinguisme à compartiments étanches", rather, "le jeu entre plusieurs langues (leurs lieux de frottements et d'intéractions) est un vertige polysémique" (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confi ant, 1993: 48). The performance of a destabilisation of the French language within a textual-linguistic space of multiple coordinates therefore parallels what Chamoiseau seems to be implying, both here and in more theoretical texts, about Creole culture, namely its diversity or what, in *Eloge de la créolité*, he will call its "maelström de signifi és" (27). In a letter quoted in the preface to the English translation of his *Antan d'enfance*, Chamoiseau explains how his literary language, which is, of course, not so much 'natural' as evocative of the syncretic vitality of the Creole "imaginaire mosaique" (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 492), draws on the full range of available vocabulary:

I use the entire French language. For me there are no obsolete, out of date, unused, or vulgar words...I go from old French to contemporary slang. I travel the totality of the language, from its origins to today, everything is usable and everything is placed in the service of literary effect: old words, new words, scholarly words, technical words, slang words, hypercorrection and imprecise popular expressions...It's a language fest! (1999: vii)

His texts articulate this linguistic diversity both at the level of personal discourse and through the juxtaposition of a range of styles or idiolects. In the case of *Texaco*, for example, the text's heteroglossic appetite sets up a contrasting set of discourses (from the hypercorrect French of the bookish Ti-Cirique to the abundance of Creole phrases and sayings), while Marie-Sophie Laborieux, who, as founder of the Creole suburb, most obviously stands for its hybridity, forges her own idiosyncratic language out of a bewildering multiplicity of sources, mixing "le créole et le français, le mot vulgaire, le mot précieux, le mot oublié, le mot nouveau" (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 494). Chamoiseau's production of an 'espace interlectal' within his textual universe can thus be seen to set up what I would like to call a space of dialogue (in-)between different discursive positions which provides a counterpoint to other forms of spatial relation and contributes to his elaboration of a Creole cultural aesthetics.

This linguistic 'polysémie' is reinforced by a number of narrative strategies which also aim at an undermining of absolute meaning, and create a space of negotiation. In particular, the absence of a sovereign narratorial voice, even though it is generally identifiable as being that of the *marqueur de paroles*, opens up the space of narration - and of reading - to the unknown and the unknowable. *Solibo magnifique*, for example,
is a subverted detective story, full of false paths and epistemological dead ends, which resists the hermeneutic drive of the reading process. For the detective activity, so masterfully parodied in this novel through the pairing of Évariste Plon and his laughable sidekick Philémon Bouaffesse, is seen as typical of the Western (French) rationalist tradition. The ‘real’ cause of Solibo’s death is never truly discovered and the only explanation put forward by the novel’s narrator, auto-strangulation or what Chamoiseau calls “une égorgette de la parole” (1998b: 25), is itself shrouded in uncertainty. Furthermore, Chamoiseau consistently parodies his own position as marqueur de paroles, emphasising the fact that his written text always fails to emulate the oral qualities of Solibo’s “discours sans virgule” (26): “alors, Ti-Cham, écrire ça sert à quoi?” ask the vendeuses in the market where Chamoiseau is a kind of “parasite” (44). This is essentially a disingenuous appraisal, however: the writerly text of Solibo magnifique no more aims to ‘capture’ an oral performance than it seeks to perpetuate a scriptural tradition. Chamoiseau’s writing is fundamentally creolising, ludic, hybrid, rather than some kind of naïve attempt to ressucitate a lost tradition rooted in an Edenic past.

As I have already argued in chapter 2, the self-parodying of the narrator figure, although it sometimes recalls the destabilised narrators of the nouveau roman, more obviously stems from the story-telling tradition: “le conteur devra aussi pratiquer une auto-dérision” as Chamoiseau & Confiant point out (1991: 60). Other oral-derived features inform the spatial structure of these texts in tandem with what Glissant has identified as a desacralisation of origins (1996a) and of confident rooting in ancestral (or atavistic) territory (1990). A central feature of the oral tradition as it impacts on the space of the written text is the performance of the conteur-author figure himself, a performance which not only creates a certain degree of theatricality, but in doing so also involves the audience-reader in the space of narration, either as an explicit participant in the production of meaning or implicitly as auditor. Most explicitly this dialogic feature is figured in the omnipresence of the conteur-audience exchange / misticraa. In Solibo magnifique this call-and-response motif is cited in the ‘Dits de Solibo’ section which forms a postface to the novel.

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(Chamoiseau 1988b: 233-234), but extends to the structure of the novel itself. Thus each section opens with an address, followed by a question and an answer, drawing in the reader as though including him or her in the space of a performance:

MES AMIS!

LE MAÎTRE DE LA PAROLE
PREND ICI LE VIRAGE DU DESTIN
ET NOUS PLONGE
DANS LA DÉVEINE...

(Pour qui pleurer?
Pour Solibo.) (1988b: 23)

Edward Brathwaite (1967a, 1967b, 1968) has suggested that musical models such as those of jazz may well provide cogent tools for analysing the structures of the Caribbean novel, both because jazz articulates the conflict between group and individual and because, through this tension, two narrative modes emerge: the antiphonic (call-and-response) exchange and narrative-as-relay (trading licks or the cycle of solos, in jazz terms). What both structures imply, I would argue, is a diegetic model of non-solipsistic interchange. The primary figure of this kind of narration is, of course, the contour's circle, a connection already suggested by Glissant:

Un des lieux de la mémoire antillaise a bien été le cercle délimité autour du conteur par les ombres de nuit. Aux frontières de cette ronde, les enfants éperdus, qui sont les relayeurs de la parole. (Glissant, 1990: 51)

The inclusion of this image amounts to the portrayal of a ‘real’ circle-of-auditors, but overlaid symbolically with the values of a Creole counter-culture resonant with circular structures of all kinds. Reminiscent at times of Nietzsche’s notion of ewige Wiederkehr and paralleled in Frankétienne’s spiralisme, Glissant’s narrative technique makes considerable use of non-linear structures: “je [convoque] une spirale, qui est comme un cercle qui toujours recommence”, as he puts it in Tout-monde (1993a: 554). Similarly, in her discussion of Malemort, Cathy Delpech has pointed to what she calls the novel’s “structure «cyclonique” (Delpech & Roelens, 1997: 168), while Celia Britton has examined the use of Glissant’s theory of relay (le relai) in terms of the narrative of a text such as Mahagonny.

Relation is, among other things, a principle of narration: what is “related” is what is told. And it is also what is relayed from one person to another, forming a chain or network of narrative “relations” [...] the relay, in other words, has a double significance: a
nonhierarchical diversity of structure and a break or spacing [my italics] in the relation between subject and language. (1999: 164)

Glissant’s works, especially from Mahagoni onwards, develop an indeterminacy of focalisation; thus for the first time, in this novel, the narrator figure of Mathieu Béluse becomes narrated himself, while by Tout-monde the status of narrator is completely obfuscated and fiction and identity exchange terms, as the following statements, with their proliferation of authorial voices, indicate:

Le déparleur, le poète, le chroniqueur, ne gagez pas que c’est l’auteur du livre, vous vous tromperiez à coup sûr. (1993a: 606)

Note du commentateur, qui n’est ni Mathieu Béluse ni Raphaël Targin ni Marie Celat ni ce chroniqueur, ce poète, ce romancier ni ce déparleur (609)

In Condé’s Traversée de la mangrove, meanwhile, the indeterminate diegetic space from which the conteur is absent is used as a device to relay the narrative point-of-view from one character to another and, as we shall see, to figure the uncertainty of a community contaminated by the arrival of an outsider, Francis Sancher, whose death, like that of Solibo’s, remains to all intents and purposes a mystery. “Ce que les gens racontaient était-il vrai?” wonders Lucien Évariste in the novel (Condé, 1989a: 228).

The use of circularity in Glissant’s novels, it is worth noting, is also a feature of his self-recycling œuvre as a whole: thus he describes Poétique de la Relation as “l’écho recomposé, ou la redite en spirale” (1990: 28) of an earlier work, Le discours antillais. What is also remarkable about many of the texts I am examining here is the omnipresence of intertextual allusions, or, more radically, the erasure of absolute generic boundaries altogether. It is an obvious feature of Glissant’s work that his fiction, especially in recent years (Tout-monde most notably), contains a large dose of theoretical reflection as well as references, both explicit and implicit, to his more ‘properly’ theoretical essais, while the latter are generally infused with the poetic themselves. Similarly, while Tout-monde is announced as a roman by its publishers, Glissant himself seems uninterested in applying such hard and fast labels to his works: “les éditeurs appellent ça un roman; donc je pense que le public peut le considérer comme tel”, he has stated in an interview (1996b: 129). Furthermore, the novel’s status as such is thrown into question by its sister-text, Traité du tout-monde

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(1997e), from which Tout-monde quotes and which it is, in a sense, about. In this respect it can be seen to resemble Gide's Les Faux-Monnayeurs (1926) and its companion piece Journal des « Faux-Monnayeurs » (also 1926), which create a text placed en abyme. I should also add that Chamoiseau's texts, Texaco in particular, often operate on the level of the metatextual, they describe their own creation in other words. Thus the last section of Texaco opens up the sources of narration (Estemome / Marie-Sophie Laborieux / Chamoiseau / marqueur de paroles...) to an indeterminacy of attribution, while referring in passing to Solibo magnifique (1992a: 491). Chamoiseau also quotes liberally from Glissant, most obviously in L'esclave vieil homme et le malosse with its “entre-dire d'Edouard Glissant” (1997b: 7). Similarly, there is a reference in Condé's Traversée de la mangrove to “le talentueux martiniquais, Patrick Chamoiseau” (1989a: 228). Such allusions underline an inherent intertextuality characteristic of the contemporary Francophone Caribbean novel, a criss-crossing of texts which creates a textual space eroding intra-textual boundaries, which is open to its textual Others, and which, in the case of Glissant at least, can be seen as a kind of “œuvre en archipel”.

More specifically, however, this combination of circularity and generic indeterminacy feeds on two Glissantian insights. In the first place, the resistance to a self-contained, linear, structure constitutes a refusal of the Western idea of Progress, which, as we shall see in chapter 6, bears a certain complicity to the implementation and ideology of colonisation; hence Glissant prefers what he calls “nomadisme circulaire” to the teleological projection of a “nomadisme en flèche” (1990: 24). Secondly, Glissant sees circular non-linearity as a feature of the Creole folk-tale's 'emblematic detour', that is the way it accumulates opacité (alterity, le Divers) as a ruse for undermining colonial notions of transparency (reduction to le Même). Repository of the values of a counter-culture, therefore, the conte créole is marked by what Glissant has called “les procédés de répétition, de redoublement, de ressassement, de mise en haleine, de circularité” (1996b: 121). Here textual and 'real' space come together in the sense that the subversion of narratorial legitimacy mirrors the subversion of legitimated territory: “La Parole du conte”, he argues, “est Parole du composite, de ce qui conteste, même sans le dire, toute idée de Genèse, de création du monde, de généalogie garantie par une filiation” (1996a: 265). This moment of

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subversion, of what I have called the contamination of community, will form the starting point for my examination of specific texts.

‘Chercher l’espace du monde': an opening

‘comme quand on regarde sur l’horizon, en essayant de se faire une lunette avec les mains jointes.’

Edouard Glissant (1996a: 320)

There is a recurrent image in Glissant’s works, to which I shall return in a later chapter, which figures paradigmatically the inadequacy of the self-contained island-perspective. This image, of a ‘gazer’ looking ‘outwards’, connects the walker of ‘la plage ardente’ (1990: 221-225) to the description of the protean Colino who, in Tout-monde, “ouvrait ses bras au large [et] planait sur l’étendue” (1993a: 22), as well as Glissant’s statement, in L’intention poétique, “j’ai vu ses yeux, j’ai vu ses yeux égarés chercher l’espace du monde” (1997d: 10). This image is related to conceptions of the island in the Caribbean and, in particular, the evolution of a notion of what Chamoiseau calls “l’île ouverte” (1997a: 232). Opposed to the Western idea of the island as a prison, which is echoed in Césaire’s evocation of “la calebasse d’une île” (1995: 88), is the ‘submarine’ unity linking islands together into an open archipelago:


As I have indicated, my chosen strategy for organising my case-studies will be to present them partly in terms of a progressive opening. Starting from the self-enclosed space of Rivière au Sel, I shall consider how the presence of a foreign influence at the heart of a small group - whether it be the outsider Francis Sancher in Traversée de la mangrove or the American music which disturbs the Afrocentric purity of the lewo in Pépin’s Tambour-Babel (1996) - suggests this same opening-up. After moving on to look at the more self-consciously in-between space of Chamoiseau’s
Texaco, I shall attempt to tackle Glissant's depiction of a tout-monde, that global structure of the imaginary which links and relates every conceivable point in the web of spatial connections.

This apparently progressive structure, however, although it does suggest something about degrees of ouverture in the Caribbean, revealing a difference for example between Chamoiseau's Martinican universe and the increasingly global perspective of Glissant, should not be taken as a truly linear argument. Thus although in Glissant's work, at least, it is possible to detect a kind of progression with repetition through just such an opening, it is clear that the same elements have been present right from the start of his literary and theoretical output, as the earlier quote from L'intention poétique illustrates. A more important organising principle perhaps will be a broadly thematic approach: my next chapter, for instance, will focus on the theme of community in the Caribbean, drawing links with some recent European theory, and focused around a reading of Condé's Traversée de la mangrove, together with an examination of the mangrove-image (from Césaire to Confiant). The crucial question of history and of historiography, for its part, will provide the theme of chapter 6, particularly in relation to Texaco, but with references to a number of other Caribbean writers, Glissant most notably. My final chapter, on the other hand, will be inspired by the postmodern science of chaos, which has proved so influential in recent years, both in scientific circles and in a variety of non-scientific areas.

There is a very specific reason for my decision to present chaos at the end: if there is a unifying thread here, bringing together language, history and poetics, it is, I would argue, the central issue of postcolonial writing, namely identity. How this theme is explored in terms both of the contemporary Caribbean and in terms of space, spatial categories and terms, will thus form a subtext for the last three chapters of this thesis. Furthermore I detect, in the structure of chaos, a tension between order and disorder, between mobility and temporary stasis, which echoes the tensions at the heart of the Glissantian project and thus figures the way I have been approaching Caribbean writing more generally. In this linking chapter I have attempted to outline this tension in terms of a dialectic between racination and uprooting, enracinement and errance, and through the literary description of contested, though persistent, filiation. Chaos, as a form of spatial relation, provides a way of

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167 A movement continued in the latter's Sartorius (1999), which describes a mythical African tribe.
articulating the double imperatives which are revealed in my analysis of texts by Condé, Chamoiseau and Glissant. Indeed, as I shall be arguing in chapter 7, chaos constitutes the most appropriate image for presenting a dialogue or negotiation between terms, rather than opposing them.
This chapter takes a number of themes already introduced in this thesis and develops them in relation to a literary text, Maryse Condé’s 1989 novel *Traversée de la mangrove*. The reading of Condé which I propose to pursue here will be informed by a form of what I have already referred to as the “double imperative” (Derrida, 1991: 77) which is particularly relevant to the contemporary Caribbean: the simultaneous creation and erasure of the idea of community. What I shall attempt to demonstrate is that in the writing of the contemporary Francophone Caribbean there is both a general revival of the idea of the communal (figured textually through the replacement of a solipsistic narrative voice by various forms of polyvocal or ‘relayed’ diegetic strategies) and, at the same time, a suspicion of the homogeneity which the idea of community often presupposes. The resulting tension entails the contamination, not so much of any real or pre-existing community, but rather of the possibility or notion of community as organic whole. I shall be arguing that this paradoxical situation is the product of, on the one hand, an ideological resistance to figures of closure and non-relation (Glissant’s notion of a community rooted in territorial atavism and supported by foundation myths), and, on the other, an aesthetic project which aims to recuperate certain elements of the Creole tradition - the central figure of the *conteur*, for instance - as part of a wider Caribbean culture.

In order to establish a literary-theoretical context for my reading of Condé’s seminal *Traversée de la mangrove*, I shall also attempt to situate her writing within the context of the Martinican-dominated literary scene in the contemporary Francophone Caribbean, illustrating points of both convergence and divergence with Glissant and with the writers of the créolité movement. In two respects, this chapter also points forward to future debates in this thesis, however. In the first place, I will be arguing, Condé’s Guadeloupean novel articulates a movement of opening which, as I have suggested, is characteristic of my chosen texts. Secondly, in its choice of the mangrove as image, this text also resonates with texts such as Chamoiseau’s *Texaco* and Confiant’s *Aimé Césaire: une traversée paradoxale du siècle* (1993a). A consideration of these two features will form a part of the present discussion.

I have argued, along lines suggested by Dash (1998), for a view of contemporary Francophone Caribbean writing as a reaction to, or reconsideration, of Caribbean
modernism. I also suggested that the latter was often characterised by what Glissant refers to as a ‘poetics of the source’ (1981: 255). There is a scene in Roumain’s *Gouverneurs de la rosée*, for example, which is described by Richard Burton as “locus classicus de la littérature antillaise” (1997: 107), in which the novel’s hero discovers a hidden spring:

Manuel se trouvait au bas d’une sorte d’étroite coulée embarrassée de lianes qui tombaient des arbres par paquets déroulés [...] Il monta vers le figuier-maudit, il sentait ce souffle bienfaisant lui sécher la sueur, il marchait dans un grand silence, il entrait dans une pénombre verte et son dernier coup de machette lui révéla le morne refermé autour d’une large plate-forme et le figuier géant se dressait là d’un élan de torse puissant, ses branches chargées de mousse flottante couvraient l’espace d’une ombre, vulnérable et ses racines monstrueuses étendaient une main d’autorité sur la possession et le secret de ce coin de terre. (Roumain, 1988: 106)

Manuel, as Dash informs us, “is on a quest for a lost paradise, a lost time and vision that will provide an alternative source of knowledge and confer a new set of meanings to the lives of the villagers of Fonds Rouge” (1998: 76). In this sense he becomes a kind of messianic figure, “Christ et Moïse à la fois” (Burton, 1997: 107), or what Chamoiseau & Confiant have called “un personnage salvateur” (1991: 175). The hidden spring, in Roumain’s novel, thus represents a ‘source’ of multiple symbolism: it both partakes of an *arché-ological* “anxiety for origins” (Dash, 1998: 82) and points forward to the redemption to come.

Reinforcing the symbolic rediscovery of this lost spring, potential site of physical and moral rebirth, is the vertical drive of rooting embodied in the giant *figuier-maudit* which, we are told, “se dressait là d’un élan de torse puissant” (1988: 106). This literary example can thus be seen as a paradigmatic instance of the search for what Fanon has called the “paradis perdu des origines” (1995: 97), a utopian project which, as this extract illustrates, is often linked to a discourse of racination. I would like to suggest here that Condé’s *Traversée de la mangrove* should be read, in part at least, as a resistance to the dual obsession with origins and roots, and that, as such, it belongs to a group of novels, of which Glissant’s *La Légarde* and Carpentier’s *Los pasos perdidos* are prime examples, in which the attempt to return to one’s ‘roots’ is subverted or thrown into question. A brief examination of the spatial stakes of these seminal texts should help to establish a theoretical context for my reading of Condé.

I have already pointed to *La Légarde* and *Los pasos perdidos* as turning points in the representation of space in Caribbean literature, in the sense that they mark the moment at which a degree of subversion invades the prevailing climate of a search
for 'authentic' origins. In addition to subverting certain forms of racination in Caribbean writing, however, Glissant also sees these texts as a break with the (Western) European literary tradition. In his essay 'Le roman des Amériques' (1981: 254-258), he identifies the trope of the source, to which I have just been referring, as fundamental to the emergence of a European literary tradition. "On peut dire que l’Europe littéraire s’est constituée autour de la topique de la source et du pré" (255), he asserts, going on to say that "le paysage de la littérature européenne est d’abord intimiste", whereas the space of the American novel, for its part, is "ouvert, éclaté, irrué" (255). Typically, Glissant draws a parallel, in this passage, between the description of space and modes of being and epistemology:

Il y a une parole du paysage. Qu’elle est-elle pour nous? Certes pas l’immobile de l’Être, apposé à un relatif que je serais, et confronté à une vérité absolue vers laquelle je tendrais [...] la parole de mon paysage est d’abord forêt qui sans arrêt foisonne. Je ne pratique pas l’économie du pré, je ne partage pas la tranquillité de la source. (255)

His choice of proliferating forest over tranquil source is thus aesthetic and ontological in equal measure: it stems both from a natural impulse (hence his notion of a ‘naturalised’ baroque (Glissant, 1990: 94)) and from a degree of self-conscious reflection, which, in this case, turns on a critique of Western solipsism (embodied in a space of ‘le paysage [...] intimiste’).

What Ghssant values in Carpentier’s writing, then, as part of a paradigmatically American aesthetic, is the persistent theme of the impossibility of working back through the labyrinth; the absence of an Ariadne’s thread with which to retrace one’s steps. "Dans le Partage des eaux", he remarks, "le héros ne réussit pas le retour aux sources. Quand il y parvient, il n’y reste pas et la deuxième fois, il ne trouve plus le chemin" (Delpech & Rœlens, 1997: 80). In a section of L’intention poétique (1997d) devoted to Carpentier, Glissant expands on this novel: the hero, as he informs us, attempts to escape the space of modernity “afin de gagner les espaces où chacun devient «maître de son temps» [...] la terre du premier âge” (131-132). And yet what Carpentier’s novel highlights is the problematic nature of the attempt to escape. “Voici déjà l’équivoque”, writes Glissant, “désormais retrouvé dans l’essentiel paysage de ses enfances, il en sera arraché par un avion parti à sa recherche; le monde moderne ne lâche pas sa proie” (132). The ineluctability of a Caribbean modernity, in other words, negates the recuperation of a primordial, Adamic, space.
Commentators such as Dash have identified a similar process of negation in Glissant's own work, while Burton has called Glissant “the first major French West Indian thinker to break away from the obsession with origins and rootedness that marks traditional Caribbean discourse” (Burton & Reno, 1995: 148). His first novel, *La Lézarde*, for example, narrates Thaël’s initiatory descent from the eponymous river’s source to the sea, a journey which echoes the birth of cultural and political self-awareness in Martinique (based around the real events of the 1946 elections):

\[\text{Ce peuple, si étroit dans ses îles, si abandonné, terré sous le manteau de mépris et d'oubli, il est venu au monde. (1958: 236)}\]

This symbolic re-awakening of “un peuple neuf et attentif” (236) to their place in the world, is not an unproblematic one, however, for when Thaël returns with his lover Valérie to his mountain home, a journey which involves following the river back upstream, the girl is torn apart by his dogs. It would be hard to imagine a more forceful erasure of the possibility of return to the Edenic space of the novel’s opening.

**The contaminated community**

At this juncture I should like to suggest that the notion of a lost origin, with its attendant projection of cultural roots, can be related to another mythical locus, that of the lost community, to which Jean-Luc Nancy, a recent theoretician of the idea of community, refers when he writes of “le fantasme de la communauté perdue” (1986: 35). The quasi-allegorical notion of a cultural source, in this equation, becomes the means by which the community comes into being and establishes its credentials in the first place. In addition to appealing to a primordial origin, communities of this kind have tended to be defined by a sense of organic or harmonious essence, a notion which can be traced back to Rousseau, whom Nancy has called “le premier penseur de la communauté” (29). Thus, says Nancy:

\[\text{Elle n'est pas seulement constituée d'une juste distribution des tâches et des biens, ni d'un heureux équilibre des forces et des autorités, mais elle est faite avant tout du partage et de}\]

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This essentialised model of community is additionally characterised by a lack of differentiation. The Republican ideal of (communal) fraternity, as expressed here, resonates with Glissant's identification of “la population homogène” as a characteristic of “le rêve atavique” (1996a: 161). We shall see on a number of occasions how my chosen texts resist this notion of undifferentiated population, in which the individual is merely part of a greater whole, replacing it with the image of what the créolistes have called a “mosaïque” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 27).

Now Glissant's assessment of an open and proliferating pan-American identity, to which I have already referred, needs, I think, to be taken together with his comments on mythes fondateurs, those originary narratives which “relient [...] la communauté et son présent à une création du monde” (in Delpech & Rœlens, 1997: 80) and which legitimise the claims of that community to territorial possession. According to Glissant, ‘atavistic’ Western cultures are anchored by the existence of a foundational text - the Old Testament, or epics such as The Iliad - which express “la certitude de la communauté élu s'établissant sur une terre élu qui ainsi devenait son territoire” (1996b: 37). Although this ‘certitude’ is a superficially unproblematic one, Glissant’s view is that it masks a number of deep-seated uncertainties. In the first place, for example, whereas the epic has traditionally been interpreted as “l'exultation de la victoire”, Glissant prefers to see it as “le chant rédempteur de la défaite ou de la victoire ambiguë”. The historical formation of community ‘foundation myths’, aligned here with the epic tradition, is thus a response to the “menace” threatening a community “non encore sûre de son identité” (36). Furthermore, there is an inherent weakness in the very “principe de l'épique traditionnel, selon quoi il y a déséquilibre communautaire quand il y a manquement aux sources, perversion de la «racine»” (1996a: 169). As we shall see, the threat to the community implied by the absence of sources and perversion of ‘roots’ or filiation will be a prominent theme in Caribbean writers from Condé (Traversée de la mangrove) and Glissant (Le quatrième siècle)
to García Márquez (Cien años de soledad, 1967). So-called ‘composite’ societies, on the other hand, such as those of the Caribbean, are characterised, for Glissant, by the absence of foundation myths, a fact which means that the formation or notion of community, though still an important one, is not fatally marked by the need for purity and the establishment of unimpeachable genealogical credentials.

This exemplary state of affairs, this already questioning equation of foundation and community, is a theme which Glissant locates in the work of Faulkner. In his Faulkner, Mississippi - as I pointed out in chapter 4 - Glissant argues that, rather than an expression of racial prejudice, Faulkner’s work should, on the contrary, be read as “la mise en question ou en vertige de cela-même qu’il s’est obstiné à soutenir et à confirmer dans sa vie «civile»: la légitimité absolue d’une fondation du Sud” (1996a: 31). Seen in this way, Faulkner’s œuvre becomes a probing of precisely the kind of exclusive communities which Glissant, as I have just stated, equates with ‘atavistic’ cultures. Faulkner’s subversive project proceeds, then, by destabilising the means through which the communitarian legitimacy is underwritten. Hence, says Glissant, Faulkner performs “la mise en vertige de la question de la filiation” (1996a: 69) and opens up the closed community by destroying once and for all the “sacré de la filiation” (1990: 71). Incest, rape, illegitimacy and especially ‘inter-racial’ mixing are all figures of this process of contamination or contagion; thus, in Faulkner’s Absalom, Absalom!, Glissant informs us:

L’inceste, l’homosexualité, sont des troubles de la filiation, qui signalent un impossible. L’échec réel de la filiation sera manifesté peu à peu quand nous découvrirons qu’elle est menacée et pervertie par l’intrusion ici du sang noir. (1996a: 252)

Now Faulkner, as we know, is one of the writers on whom Condé draws, both as a general point of reference, and, in the case of As I Lay Dying, as a specific model for Traversée de la mangrove. The specific issue of filiation and provenance, which Glissant sees as a central feature of the Faulknerian universe, is also highlighted in the novel; thus, for example, it is never clear where Francis Sancher comes from. Similarly, the suspicion of incest between Aristide and his sister Mira, together with

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168 Should it seem strange to term García Márquez a Caribbean writer, it is worth noting his statement: ‘it’s the only place where I really feel at home’ (García & Mendoza, 1988: 52).
169 Except inasmuch as they are borrowed myths, Christian, for example; on this point, cf Glissant (1996b: 63)
170 ‘I have read a lot of Faulkner - as I told you, he is one of my favourite authors - and, in particular, As I Lay Dying where everything is organized around Addie Bundren’s corpse’ (Pfaff, 1996: 74).
the rape of which Sancher stands accused, serve to contaminate the 'pure' ties which traditionally bind the community.

As I remarked in chapter 4, and this obviously reflects the themes of this thesis more generally, the theme of contamination in Faulkner is symbolised spatially: troubling the 'absurdly' geometric space of the Compson property in *The Sound and the Fury* (1956), therefore, is "'l'emmêlement sauvage de la dégénérescence, comme dans une pourriture de végétation qui ne régénère plus et qui abolit sûrement" (Glissant, 1996a: 63). The mangrove, we shall see in due course, is another such space and is co-opted in my chosen texts as a means to deconstruct the certitude of racination, while simultaneously affirming a certain Caribbeanness. In one of the most crucial of his later essays, "Lieu clos, parole ouverte" (1990: 77-89), Glissant similarly identifies the space of the plantation as a 'matrix' of créolisation, a paradigmatic site in the development of the Creole aesthetic. Here, despite the supposedly closed, hermetic, nature of this "Locus Solus" (82), "la prétention à l'extranéité [...] n'a pas empêché les contaminations" (81), contaminations which, although disavowed in the discourse of the coloniser, nevertheless allowed, or even encouraged, the development of a parole ouverte, a form of resistance, that is, which is articulated at the level of the verbal and the imaginary. The village of Rivière au Sel, in Condé's text, likewise fulfils this Glissantian notion of a lieu clos, which is contaminated to the very core by a mise-en-vertige of this very closure.

For Glissant, the literary form which best corresponds to this question of community, and to the questioning of community, is the epic. In Faulkner's work, he argues, "l'objet de «la question» est cette communauté (du Sud) et il est par conséquent clair que la parole épique, même sous la forme traditionnelle et pour nous périmée, est la plus apte à la poser" (1996a: 326). This version of epic, then, is anything but identical with that of the classical Mediterranean, drawing out instead the uncertainties which, in the traditional epic, lay dormant; in this way, Faulkner's œuvre can be seen to foreground "les ambiguïtés et les échecs de l'épique communautaire" (69). In many ways this new epic is typical of contemporary Caribbean writing: Walcott's *Omeros* (1990) is a transposition of Homer to St Lucia, while the story of Chamoiseau's *Texaco* is described by Marie-Sophie Laborieux as a "pauvre épopée" (1992a: 284). Condé herself has argued for a form of epic writing which is simultaneously part of the Caribbean mentality and yet which is subverted by the humorous nature of Creole narrative:
This new Caribbean epic, for Glissant, is thus a questioning, subverted, epic, not the reassuring epic of the classical period (1996a: 34): "la tension de l'épique traditionnel, qui réordonnait toute communauté particulière autour de son exclusive, ne peut plus jouer pour nous", concludes Glissant (304).

This subversion of exclusivity is also a feature of recent Western discourse on the community. Derrida's suspicion of the word itself, for example, refutes the notion of a community with firm boundaries enclosing a homogenous, 'harmonious' whole, while at the same time accepting the desire for such structures:

Je n'aime pas beaucoup le mot de communauté, je ne suis même pas sûr d'aimer la chose [...] si par communauté on sous-entend, comme souvent, un ensemble harmonieux, le consensus et l'accord fondamental sous des phénomènes de discordance ou de guerre, je n'y crois pas trop et j'y pressens autant de menaces que de promesses [...] il y a sans doute ce désir irrépressible qu'une «communauté» se forme mais aussi qu'elle sache sa limite - et que sa limite est son ouverture: une fois qu'elle croit avoir compris, receuilli, interprété, gardé le texte, alors quelque chose de celui-ci, quelque chose en lui de tout autre lui échappe ou lui résiste, qui appelle une autre communauté, qui ne se laisse jamais totalement intérioriser dans la mémoire d'une communauté présente. Expérience de deuil et de promesse qui institue la communauté mais aussi lui interdit de se rassembler, garde en elle la réserve d'une autre communauté qui signera, autrement, de tout autres contrats. (Derrida, 1992: 366)

The Glissantian critique of community, which I have explored above, resonates with many aspects of this Derridean scepticism towards 'closed' or consistent communities as well as with Lyotard's theorisation of the postmodern as a scepticism towards 'grands récits' (1979), those over-arching narratives which, in their attempt to connect (past) arché and (future) telos in a seamless and meaningful whole (the 'present' of the community), recall Glissant's mythes fondateurs.

The undifferentiated, originated, community, as both Glissant and Derrida have suggested, is built upon the principle of exclusion, as the etymology of the word (communis, a common defence) implies. The founding 'cry' of Western community conscience, for Glissant is thus also "le cri d'une conscience excluante" (1996b: 35). It is worth bearing in mind at this point Derrida's suggestion that "pure unity or pure multiplicity - where there is only totality or unity and where there is only multiplicity or dissasociation - is a synonym of death" (Caputo, 1997: 13). However, as I have
been hinting, this is not necessarily to say that the idea of community is redundant per se, on the contrary. What is sought are new ways in which the real need for some form of communal existence can be articulated despite the valid critiques which have been levelled by both Caribbean and Western thinkers against the traditionally exclusive, or unproblematically homogenous, view of what a community is. To quote Bhabha, for example, "the postcolonial perspective forces us to rethink the profound limitations of a consensual and collusive 'liberal' sense of community [...] the very language of cultural community needs to be rethought from a postcolonial perspective" (1990: 219). Community, in other words, is still very much on the agenda, but its terms, and the specific contracts which give it shape, need to be recast.

In the Caribbean, of course, the set of determining historical and sociological experiences creates a specific situation which cannot simply be transposed from, or onto, a Western model, though it is, as I have suggested, possible to view Condé and Chamoiseau as advocators of a kind of "open quasi-community". Having shown how Glissant undermines the confidence of a community centred around the myth of origins, then, it is important to remember - in line with the 'double imperative' characteristic of Caribbean thinking - that much of what he calls the "morbidité générale" (1981: 101) affecting Martinican society is a product of the failure, in the Francophone Caribbean at least, to achieve communality-through-resistance and the attendant need to reassert the social 'Nous':

Voici le Nous accablé, impossible, qui détermine en conséquence l'impossible du Je. La question à poser à un Martiniquais ne sera par exemple pas: «Qui suis-je?», question inopératoire au premier abord, mais bien «Qui sommes-nous?» (1981: 153)

It is precisely this insistence on the communal which leads to Glissant's dream of what he calls "le roman du Nous" (1981: 153), a vision which coincides with what I have already identified as one of the most striking features of recent Caribbean writing: the resurgence of a form of communal narration.

This 'communal narration' takes a number of forms. In the first place, the writer is almost inextricably seen as a part of the Caribbean space, its history and society; there is little place, here, for the solipsistic reflection of a Proust or a Kafka, for

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172 Cf also Dash (1990) and Chamoiseau's view that 'in Traversée de la mangrove, Maryse Condé foresees that, in our countries, the 'we' takes precedence over the 'I'" (1991: 392).
example. Indeed, as I shall attempt to demonstrate in my next chapter, the space-history equation is a thread connecting writers such as Glissant, Harris, Chamoiseau and Walcott, while Chamoiseau claims that, in *Traversée de la mangrove*, "Maryse Condé anchors her novel in this space [of the wake] at the heart of our history and culture, and of our memory" (1991: 391). Secondly, the texts I have chosen to focus on all present original solutions to the problem of performing this communality within the text, a spatialisation, that is, performed in and through the narrative itself. In *Traversée de la mangrove*, as we shall see shortly, the narration is divided between mourners at a wake; *Texaco*, meanwhile, deploys both a self-ironising 'authorial' voice (Oiseau de Cham/*marqueur de paroles*) and the juxtaposition of a number of different diegetic "sources", while *Tout-monde* develops Glissant's technique of 'relayed' narrative, destabilising the traditionally stable barriers between author, narrator and character. These techniques are reinforced by the more general point, made elsewhere, that these texts explore a Caribbean *espace vécu*, raising the group-space (market, town-suburb, *conteur-circle*) to the level of protagonist.173

What we are dealing with therefore is another version of Derrida's 'double imperative' - the subversion of a closed community side-by-side with the attempt to achieve a degree of solidarity in the region. In what follows, I propose to consider how the work of Maryse Condé, and *Traversée de la mangrove* in particular, articulates this tension and can be seen to constitute the first moment in what I have identified as a movement of opening in recent Caribbean fiction. Before going on to examine the text in some detail, however, I shall attempt to situate this novel both within the context of Condé's literary output and in relation to the wider context of *la nouvelle littérature antillaise*.174

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Maryse Condé and Traversée de la mangrove

Traversée de la mangrove marks a turning-point in Condé’s œuvre. It was written shortly after her return to the French West Indies, after a period of absence in Africa which saw the production of a number of highly successful novels, Une saison à Ribata (1981) and Ségou (1984-5) most notably:

J’ai cru à un certain moment que je me retrouvais entièrement dans la culture africaine […] Je suis revenue en Guadeloupe en 1986, c’est à dire que d’une certaine manière, j’ai compris ce qu’il y avait d’excessif dans cette attitude. Je crois que je me suis intégré à l’Afrique, mais je ne me proclame plus une femme africaine. Je suis caribéenne. (1998a: 72)

Condé’s former belief in an ability to ‘penetrate’ African culture is undone by her return to the Caribbean, a return which is figured, in the novel, through the arrival of Sancher (though, of course, the parallel is a symbolic rather than a strictly biographical one). More specifically, Traversée de la mangrove constitutes a new coming-to-terms with a language, Creole, and with a country, Guadeloupe, a moment of which she has said: “j’ai atterri dans un lieu de richesse, une sorte de forêt qu’il faut débroussailler” (1989b: 101). As such it is perhaps not typical of Condé’s works as a whole, but relates usefully to the project at hand.

Condé, it is important to remember, stands, to a large extent, outside the male-dominated literary scene of contemporary Martinique and she has taken pains to criticise the writing programmes of both Glissant and the créolité group. In fact she has been one of the most vociferous critics of the latter, co-editing the volume Penser la créolité, for example.175 Condé’s main objection to the theorisation of both antillanité and créolité, which, it might be suggested, is characteristic of a certain masculinity, stems, however, not so much from the spatial thematics which I have been outlining, as from a scepticism towards the idea of the mission-statements these movements have tended to embody and, in particular, towards what she sees as the didactic and prescriptive nature of their writing-models. In an article published around the time of the appearance of the 2nd edition of Eloge de la créolité, ‘Order, disorder, freedom, and the West Indian writer’ (1993), Condé suggests that creativity within French Antillean writing has been smothered by the desire to set up a literary order through the formalisation of an aesthetic project which, in the case of both Glissant and the

créolistes, but equally Césaire, she argues, results in a "confusion between political and poetic ambitions" (1993: 127). Similarly, while praising the literary revolution brought about by Chamoiseau and Confiant, she warns against the way in which the ideology of créolité has become a restrictive program:

 Créolité, which is the daughter of Antillanité, has many good points. It has allowed all West Indian writers to reevaluate their relationship to the French language. French is not the only language available to us; we also have Creole. However, Créolité should not be transformed into a cultural terrorism within which writers are confined [...] to each his or her own Créolité. (in Pfaff, 1996: 114)

While I am sympathetic towards Condé's desire that créolité should not become a form of 'cultural terrorism', I will be arguing that, in terms of space at least, there are over-arching points of contact with Chamoiseau and Confiant and that the literary production of these writers cannot simply be reduced to the admittedly more dogmatic pronouncements of the Eloge. It is worth noting that Glissant himself has voiced misgivings about the potentially rigid set of injunctions which this literary manifesto contains: "mes amis Raphaël Confiant et Patrick Chamoiseau se sont un peu trop hâtés dans leur «Eloge de la créolité»" he has said (1993c: 123), going on to warn against the potentially static nature of any '-ité'. On the other hand, it seems to me, both writers have since produced theoretical work which nuances their earlier statements. Chamoiseau's Ecrire en pays dominé (1997a) might serve as one example, if only because it provides a personal insight into statements which, expressed baldly in the Eloge, can at times appear presumptuous.

As far as Traversée de la mangrove is concerned, Condé's relationship towards the créolistes is perhaps best described as one of ironic distance. The novel contains a number of more or less sardonic references to the movement. Alluding to the debates about the Creole language which took place in Martinique in the mid 70s and out of which both GEREC [Groupe d'études et de Recherches de la Crioléphonie] and Eloge de la créolité arose, Condé writes that "notre société est une société métissée. Je rejette le mot «créole» que certains emploient" (1989a: 207). Again it is important to bear in

176 Cf also Condé (1998b: 108), 'I have no intention of arguing, here, for the total disengagement of the Caribbean writer. But maybe it is time for us to welcome the dissolution of the forced marriage between poetics and politics, the consequences of which have been ineffective if not disastrous. Writers as dissimilar as Julio Cortazar and Alain Robbe-Grillet have already reminded us that writers can only rule over words'.

177 A group led by Jean Bernabé at the Université des Antilles-Guyane (Martinique), whose views were disseminated in by the journals Espace créole and Mofwa. Cf Burton & Reno (1995: 153-154).
mind that Condé’s critique, as evidenced here, turns more on the label ‘creole’ than on the underlying notion of cultural, linguistic and ‘ethnic’ diversity which she acknowledges in her evocation of ‘une société métissée’. The figure of Lucien Évariste, a writer who in some senses resembles Mathieu in Glissant’s La Lézarde, also provides an ironic perspective on the movement: “il y a plus d’humanité et de richesse dans cet homme-là que dans tous nos faiseurs de discours en créole”, we are told (226). Similarly, when he arrives in Paris, he is hounded by literary critics asking: “as-tu comme le talentueux Martiniquais, Patrick Chamoiseau, déconstruit le français-français?” (228), an implicit criticism of the way in which, perhaps through no fault of his own, Chamoiseau’s spectacular success in France, culminating in the Prix Goncourt, has given rise to a monolithic view of what littérature antillaise should be.

Traversée de la mangrove can thus be seen as a kind of counterpoint to the ideology expressed in Eloge de la créolité. “Faudrait-il [...] voir dans ce livre une nouvelle mise en question de la créolité elle-même?”, Lionnet wonders (1993: 484). Balutansky’s response to this question is unequivocal: “no doubt about it” (1995: 101) she states. Whereas Condé’s text reveals the impossibility of a unified communitarian project, the créolistes, as she points out, argue precisely for a “conscience commune” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 40): “the fundamental irony of Condé’s novel is that its dead Caliban lays bare the possibility of ever recovering a «conscience commune» and the danger of pursuing it” (Balutansky, 1995: 105). One is tempted to agree here with Balutansky’s assessment of créolité insofar as the community described by Chamoiseau in Texaco is a more optimistic one, marked, partially at least, by the sense of a “conscience commune”, and the quest for a Glissantian ‘Nous’, though I think that it would not be difficult to demonstrate a degree of internal diversity within the urban mangrove of Texaco. The community of Texaco is indeed diverse by its very nature, while the term community is seen as alien, a dictionary definition.179

We shall see shortly how, as Balutansky also argues, differing views of the mangrove-as-image can be seen to crystallise the positions of Césaire, Condé and the

178 Condé’s reservations about the notion of créolité can also be seen to stem from an awareness that Creole is not a language practised with equal facility by all Caribbean writers. Cf Condé’s statement (1989b: 103), ‘ma connaissance du créole est très limitée.’

179 Cf Chamoiseau (1992a: 32), ‘Ti-Cirique avait déclaré un jour qu’au vu du Larousse illustré, nous étions - en français - une communauté’. The irony of this sentence, suggesting the inability of a Western (in this case French) term to represent the ‘open specificity’ of the quartier populaire, is fairly explicit.
créolistes. This difference, in terms of *Traversée de la mangrove*, comes down to the opposition between, on the one hand, the inextricable nature of the swamp in Condé - "on ne traverse pas la mangrove. On s'empale sur les racines des palétuviers" (1989a: 192) - and, on the other, its affirmation as an empowering hybridity in Chamoiseau and late Glissant. And yet the very difficulty in crossing the mangrove is not a view opposed by Chamoiseau. In his 'reflections' on Condé's text, he seems to agree with the impossibility of this *traversée*, while nonetheless arguing that the attempt is still a necessary one (1991: 395). In *Le discours antillais*, Glissant likewise states: “on me dit que le roman du Nous est impossible à faire [...] c’est un beau risque à courir” (1981: 153).

In accusing the créolistes of a reductionary stance, it seems to me, Balutansky is herself guilty of a degree of over-simplification: thus, in claiming that Condé's view is ironic where, by implication, the créolistes are guilty of self-importance, is to overlook the biting sarcasm of Conständ’s *Trilogie Tropicale* (1994, 1995a, 1997), with its highly ironic portrayal of the academic researcher's discourse, not to mention the self-conscious subversion of the authorial figure which pervades Chamoiseau's texts. And if it is true that the créolité school has been guilty of a dogmatic stance, it is important not to overlook both the strategic aims of the manifesto *Eloge de la créolité* and the internal differences which characterise the literary production of its exponents. It is an overly simplistic ploy, I would suggest, to judge the literary versions of créolité simply in terms of the *Eloge*, a text whose function is both polemical and often unrepresentative of the subtleties of novels such as *Solibo magnifique* and *Texaco*, both of which operate on an often self-parodic level. As far as Glissant is concerned, I would agree with Bongie when he argues that “[his] novels have always worked against, at the same time as they invariably embodied, the sort of authoritative, ideological imperatives to which a writer like Condé rightly objects and which abound in *Discours antillais*” (1998: 143).

A more serious criticism of the créolistes relates to the way in which they may have caricatured Césaire's position. Both Giraud, who has described créolité as “une rupture en trompe-l'œil” (1997), and Condé, have argued that Césaire's poetry prefigures some of the same concerns which the créolistes claim to have discovered (1998b: 108). Condé, it is worth noting, published a study of Césaire's *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (1978) and is wary of jettisoning the aesthetic achievements of Négritude, while remaining critical of certain aspects of the movement itself. Elsewhere, however,
she reveals a deeper debt and admiration for créolité than her otherwise critical comments might at first suggest. I have already alluded to her complimentary attitude towards the stylistic innovations of Chamoiseau and Confiant. Condé has, moreover, also indicated an affinity of perspective when she speaks of the Caribbean identity as “the affirmation of a personality that was neither African, nor American, nor European, to use the terms of the manifesto *Éloge de la créolité*” (Pfaff, 1996: 109). In addition, she has underlined the importance of the way in which a forced re-evaluation of the literary relationship to the French language has been brought about in the wake of créolité, a re-evaluation which Condé, tells us, informed the writing of *Traversée de la mangrove*.

Quand je suis revenue en Guadeloupe en 1985, c'était le début de l'école de la créolité. Cette école m'a obligé à me poser des questions sur les langues maternelles à ma disposition [...] au fur et à mesure, le créole est venu ainsi investir le français, m'aider à briser la prison des langues dans laquelle j'étais enfermé. (1998a: 86)

This admission ties in with what Chamoiseau & Confiant, as we have already seen, have said about Condé in *Traversée de la mangrove*, namely that “pour la première fois, elle s'efforce d'analyser son rapport à la langue française” (1991: 152). Finally, Condé’s critique of the attitude of the créolistes towards Césaire has to be modified by her admiration for Confiant’s study of the Négritude writer: “je vais vous dire que j'aime beaucoup le livre de Raphaël [...] il ne faut pas prendre ce livre comme une sorte de démolition. Il faut prendre ce livre pour une sorte d'acte d'amour et pour un acte de respect” (1998a: 75). Condé, fortunately, is even-handed in her assessment of this aspect of créolité, unlike Annie Le Brun, whose reaction (1996) to Confiant’s study of Césaire can only be described as hysterical.

This is not, of course, to say that Condé’s novels can be assimilated, either stylistically, still less thematically, into the writing of antillanité or créolité. It is clear, for example, that her works are set apart from those of Glissant, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, in particular, through their representation of women, though this is too broad a theme to tackle satisfactorily here. In terms of space, however, I would nevertheless maintain that there are pertinent similarities, particularly as regards the resistance to naïve rooting and closure, the themes with which this chapter concerns itself. The criticisms she has levelled against créolité in particular should not, then, blind us to the numerous points of solidarity between Condé and these writers, some of which have, as I have indicated, been pointed out by Condé herself. Although it is
not my intention to demonstrate an identity between Condé and either Glissant or Chamoiseau, therefore, I do want to situate Traversée de la mangrove within a general movement of reaction, expressed spatially by the opening of the closed community, against Afrocentric, monolingual, models of belonging. This attitude is summed up in a statement which recalls Glissant’s notion of errance: “in the final analysis, it is very bad to put down roots. You must be errant and multifaceted, inside and out. Nomadic” (Pfaff, 1996: 28).

I have argued that the question of community raised in recent Caribbean fiction throws up a double imperative: on the one hand, a profound desire to counter the isolationism for which the Enlightenment tradition of the primacy of the individual, not to mention the ‘dividing practices’ of colonial practice, can be seen to blame, and, on the other, the refusal to allow any restitution of a collectivity, which such an opposition suggests, to coalesce into a homogenous whole. Ffrench, in his article on Traversée de la mangrove (1997b), has shown how Condé’s text presents a number of striking similarities with recent theorisations of the community, in ‘Western’ thinking, which argue precisely for an open system of relations variously described as “communauté sans communauté” (Derrida 1994: 331), a Community of Those who have Nothing in Common (Lingis, 1994), a Coming Community (Agamben, 1993), or a Community at Loose Ends (Miami Theory Collective, 1991). Central to these formulations, it seems to me, is the presence of what Glissant has called “une identité questionnante, où la relation à l’autre détermine l’être sans le figer d’un poids tyrannique” (1981: 284), giving a mode of communal existence defined by Relation, not exclusion, which, to quote fFrench, “is mirrored [...] by the stress on a non-unified, relational community in the works of Nancy, Blanchot, the Miami Theory Collective and others” (1997b: 94).

Communities, I argued earlier, are often anchored in the idea of a common source. Now a resistance to the image of a return to an intact source, a characteristic trope of Caribbean modernism from Roumain to Césaire on which the utopian rebirth of the community is predicated, is figured in subsequent texts by the notion of contamination by an external agent, reinforcing an already latent, but frequently disavowed contamination from within. Thus, Traversée de la mangrove can be seen as

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180 For a detailed discussion of this term as, in a sense, hybridity’s opposite, cf Bhabha (1994: 112): ‘Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority)’ [my italics].
"an allegory of the intrusion of the stranger into the community" (ffrench, 1997b: 95). This insight, it seems to me, strikes at the heart of Condé's text and ties in with what Glissant has had to say about 'agents of contamination' in Faulkner's work. The figure of Quentin Compson, says Glissant, "symbolise cet ailleurs", going on to state that "une personne, autant qu'un pays, est l'ailleurs" (1996a: 325). Both are comments that might as well apply to Francis Sanchez / Francisco Alvarez-Sanchez (it seems appropriate to highlight his double identity for now). Francis / Francisco, as Mira tells us "venait d'Ailleurs. D'Ailleurs. De l'autre côté de l'eau [...] D'Ailleurs" (Condé, 1989a: 63), the insistent repetition of 'Ailleurs' underlining his position as intruder. It is also worth noting that a similar process of contamination characterises Pépin's Tamber-Babel (1996), where the hero's awareness of the 'other' musics - jazz and blues (233), Steel Bands, Ravi Shankar and Salsa (214), Miles Davis and Wynton Marsalis (137) - troubles the projected Afrocentric purity of the guoka (gros-ka) drumming tradition to give a kind of musical Babel, which parallels the self-pronounced cultural diversity of the créolité group's vision of the Caribbean to which Condé can be seen to subscribe, in spirit if not in letter.

In addition to its function as an opening-device, I would suggest, the trope of 'intrusion', 'contamination' or 'contagion' relates to two Caribbean paradigms: on the one hand, the opposition of purity to hybridity/métissage/criolisation, to which I have already alluded on a number of occasions, and, on the other, differing visions of the island-space. One dominant representation of the island, as I indicated in chapter 4, is that of a prison, a space of isolated self-enclosure. "L'île de la Guadeloupe est une sorte de cocon, de ventre, d'utérus, dans lequel on pourrait aisément s'endormir", Condé has written, adding that "on pourrait absolument s'enfermer dans ce petit univers très douillet et oublier, en fait, les réalités du monde et même celles, très dures, du pays" (1989b: 102). The second image presents the island as both inextricably part of a larger constellation, a vision which Glissant terms a pensée archipélique (1996b: 43), and infinite in itself: thus, as Glissant argues "notre terre est démesure. Je le sais, moi, qui en quelques pas saurai en faire le tour, mais qui jamais

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ne peux l'épuiser" (1981: 277), while, in the introduction to Tout-monde, we are reminded of Gani, "un enfant d'esclave, [qui] marronne sur un espace infinitésimal, sans qu'on puisse le retrouver" (1993a: 11).

The first view, of an island-prison, is everywhere in Traversée de la mangrove; thus, for example, Guadeloupe is described as "la calebasse de cette petite île" (29), an allusion to Césaire's description of Martinique as "la calebasse d'une île" in his Cahier d'un retour au pays natal (1995: 88). Rivière au Sel is likewise described as "ce village [...] perdu au fin fond des bois" (37). The view of island as prison, though in different ways, is both a Western representation, as Chamoiseau has suggested (1997a: 235), and a feature of the Caribbean modernism epitomised by Césaire and Roumain. In the case of the latter, I have argued, the desire to escape the handicap of an island-prison is figured in a utopian vision of the source or spring. In the case of Traversée de la mangrove, this question of a poetics of the source is suggested through the character Carmélien, who, significantly, quotes from Roumain's Gouverneurs de la rosée (1989a: 174-175). Seeing himself in terms of Manuel, Carmélien, we are told, "se mit en tête lui aussi de découvrir une source nouvelle" (175). Against this notion of purity, however, Condé sets a degree of cultural diversity through Carmélien's own awareness that "la Guadeloupe a changé [...] à présent, Nègres, mulâtres, Zindiens, c'est du pareil au même" (183). In other words, Condé's text poses the question of boundaries, geographical, mental, narrative, linguistic and terminological. The subversion of these boundaries is contained within most of the characters whose narratives constitute the bulk of Traversée de la mangrove. Thus Man Sonson, who in many ways stands for the isolation of Rivière au Sel - "cet endroit que je n'ai jamais quitté" (1989a: 81) - and who states unproblematically that "les Blancs nous ont mis en esclavage", also wonders whether "il faut déraciner de nos têtes l'herbe de Guinée et le chiendent de nos vieilles rancœurs", whether "ces mots-là, noirs, blancs, ne signifient plus grand chose!" (82).

Traversée de la mangrove illustrates the tension between these two views, between, on the one hand, the closure of a small community, Rivière au Sel, and, on the other, the desire of its inhabitants to escape the narrow confines of this space, not by the positing of an alternative space (a mythological 'originary' Africa), but through the relation to other islands of the Caribbean. The contamination which Francis Sancher brings to Rivière au Sel allows this tension to become an enabling force. Condé has
said of Sancher: “I saw a marginalized stranger who was rejected by everyone but two women, Mira and Vilma. After his death people realize that he was, in spite of himself, a force within the village” (Pfaff, 1996: 71). It is thus important to note that many of the characters come to recognize the stiflingly enclosing nature of the island-community and thus of the potential for the second, more liberatory, view of the island as part of a larger network. Against the insistent fear of the outside - “l’ailleurs” - which, as we have seen, characterizes Mira’s early assessment of Sancher, is the repetition of the word “partir” which marks the end of Aristide’s section (Condé, 1989a: 79). Aristide’s desire to escape - “oui, il quitterait cette île sans ampleur” (79) - is mirrored in Lucien Evariste’s intention to leave “cette île étroite pour respirer l’odeur d’autres hommes et d’autres terres” (227). Vilma Ramsaran, for better or worse, also announces: “je quitterai Loulou et Rivière au Sel. Je prendrai mes garçons avec moi” (109). The growing sense of dissatisfaction with the claustrophobic atmosphere of Rivière au Sel thus gives way, in many characters, to a more mobile view of existence, diametrically opposed to the prevailing attachment to rooting and origins. Thus, for example, Aristide reflects that “les fleurs n’ont pas de patrie. Elles embauchent sur tous terrains” (79), a comment highly reminiscent of Glissant’s use of the jelly-fish image in Tout-monde where he writes:

Vois-tu, Pino, les méduses nagent partout dans le monde, elles choisissent les endroits où les enfants tournent autour d’elles, les méduses n’ont pas de pays d’origine, elles ne préfèrent ni les mers chaudes ni les eaux grises, ni les fonds en abîme ni les écumes qui tourment dans l’air. (1993a: 41)

The dichotomy between notions of stasis and mobility is highlighted in the views of Rivière au Sel’s inhabitants towards Carmélien Ramsaran, who has been to study medicine in France. “Quoi, un Ramsaran médecin! Les gens ne savent pas rester à leur place” (21) is the reaction of a group of people who will later be described as “hypocrites” (197). If mobility can be seen as one form of threatening contamination in Traversée de la mangrove, however, then so is the question of racial impurity disturbing filiation and the positing of sources, a feature which Glissant has identified as characteristic of Faulkner’s work. Thus we read that “si certain d’entre eux avaient gardé leur sang pur et avaient été chercher leurs compagnes aux Grands Fonds dont ils étaient originaires, nombreux étaient ceux qui s’étaient mariés dans des familles nègres ou mulâtres de la région. Ainsi des liens de sang s’étaient tissés” (23). The

Cf also Chamoiseau (1997a: 235).
racial hybrid, which here, as in Chamoiseau's work, is a synonym of beauty, underscores an affirmation of the in-between as resistance to received notions of métissage as contagion. Significantly, in Rivière au Sel, it is generally the outsider figures who exhibit this characteristic; Moïse, for example, is described as "mi-chinois, mi-nègre" (1989a: 39), while Mira, an object of both male desire and general derision, is a chabine "à la peau et aux cheveux dorés" (47). Mira's relationship with Sancher, meanwhile, is criticised by inhabitants of Rivière au Sel - their anonymity serving to reinforce the notion of a general mistrust - on the grounds that "c'est un vagabond qui est venu enterré sa pourriture chez nous! On ne sait même pas si c'était un Blanc, un Nègre, un Zindien. Il avait tous les sangs dans son corps" (229).

Rivière au Sel, therefore, is seen as a place of misplaced xenophobia, a closed community resistant to the outsider and marked by a spurious sense of spatial belonging. The hostile environment of this place is underlined by Moïse, who informs us that "seul celui qui a vécu entre les quatres murs d'une petite communauté connaît sa méchanceté et sa peur de l'étranger" (39), while later, we are told, "les arbres de Rivière au Sel s'étaient à nouveau resserrés autour de lui comme les murs d'une géôle" (47). Similarly, Moïse informs us, "les gens de Rivière au Sel détestent les étrangers" (212). Sancher is, of course, just such an étranger: we are first introduced to him as an "inconnu" (31), then as "Francis Sancher qui sortait on ne sait d'où" (35). Moïse himself, though he will come to befriend Sancher, is struck by his "fort accent étranger" (33). The insidious presence of a camp mentality which these comments imply will later be deconstructed by Sancher. Thus, when Loulou tells him that "[ils appartiennent] au même camp. Dans les livres d'histoire, on appelle nos ancêtres les Découvreurs. D'accord, ils ont sali leur sang avec des Négresses; dans ton cas je crois aussi avec des Indiennes" (127), Francis retorts, saying: "tu as tort. Nous ne sommes plus du même camp et je vais te dire que je n'appartiens plus à aucun camp" (127). The final irony, of course, is that of the various inhabitants of Rivière au Sel, Sancher, more than many, has claim to ancestral roots here, in the former Saint-Calvaire plantation (235).

Although Sancher is, as I have suggested, an agent of contamination, then, the community of Rivière au Sel is already internally contaminated. The narratives which make up the text reveal that the outside, that otherness for which Sancher stands,

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184 Describing Péloponèse, for example, one of the first inhabitants of Texaco, Chamoiseau writes of 'l'enchantement de son hybride beauté' (1992a: 361).
although disavowed, is already present within the community. His arrival as outsider subsequently throws into question the very notion of outsider in the first place, raising the question of who really belongs here anyway. Despite being in many ways representative of a “pays perdu”, then, Rivière au Sel is simultaneously a haven for outcasts of all kinds, a place of multiple ethnicity and diverse origins, from the Ramsaran family, with its Indian ‘roots’, to the Lameaulnes. Sancher, in other words, is not the only character whose contact with the outside world is perceived as a threat - his death and the ensuing reflections on its significance merely serve to expose a number of internal contradictions already present within the village.

Some critics have chosen to see Sancher as a kind of redeemer: Ellen Munley, for example, in her psychoanalytical reading of the novel, calls Sancher “the healer of hearts and minds in Rivière au Sel” (1992: 158). She later describes Emile Etienne’s project for a book based on the personal memories of Guadeloupeans as “the map [...] to navigate towards the light” (166). This assessment seems to me an overly optimistic one: Sancher is not simply the messianic saviour or ‘opener’ of this closed group, although his presence is undoubtably a catalyst. As Chamoiseau has observed, “Francisco Sanchez is not a hero, nor even the novel’s main character. He is central, but the center seems to encompass the other characters as well. *Traversée de la mangrove* is a collective adventure that implicitly interrogates the concept of hero and the notion of heroism” (1991: 392). Indeed Sancher is almost an anti-hero - diametrically opposed to Manuel, the messianic hero of Roumain’s *Gouverneurs de la rosée* - who almost inadvertently brings about the opening of perspectives to which I have referred. *Texaco*, it seems to me, presents an interesting parallel through the figure of the *urbaniste* who, as an intruder - “cet étrange visiteur” (1992: 22) - will finally come to be accepted as a kind of saviour, hence his nickname of *le Christ*. Chamoiseau’s use of this Biblical allusion is clearly ironic, however: not that the town-planner is the opposite of a redeemer, but in another sense it is he who is redeemed by his encounter with the Creole aesthetic of the Fort-de-France suburb. The space of Texaco, after all, is that of an already in-between ‘urban mangrove’ (more on this later), far removed from the ‘lieu clos’ of Rivière au Sel. The foundation of Texaco is thus in one sense necessary, but the narrative of *Texaco*, while it draws on a quasi-messianic structure, also subverts the very notion of foundation and salvation, both typically Western concepts.
Sancher, unlike Chamoiseau’s *urbaniste*, does not seek to intervene in the life of the village. Although he affects the lives of the villagers, particularly, but not exclusively Mira and Vilma, he seems to crave solitude and a reprieve from his wanderings: “je ne suis pas venu pour planter des enfants et les regarder marcher sur cette terre”, he tells Man Sonson, “je suis venu mettre un point final, terminer, oui, terminer une race maudite” (Condé, 1989a: 88). In a sense, then, his aim - insofar as we can determine - is the opposite of the contamination he ultimately brings about. And yet, in his death, the ‘quasi-community’ is forced to reflect on its composition and its function. Playing what ffrench has identified as the rôle of a scapegoat (1997b: 99), he therefore provides, through the narrative at least, the focus of a community-in-death, echoing Nancy’s comment that “la mort est indissociable de la communauté, car c’est par la mort que la communauté se révèle” (1986: 39). The difference, perhaps, in the case of *Traversée de la mangrove*, is that the death in question is not of a *bona fide* community member (whatever that might actually mean) but that of an opaque stranger: “the centralizing, focal point is absent, but also, significantly, is a foreign element” (ffrench, 1997b: 96). The means by which Condé performs this absent centrality, I would suggest, are primarily given though an equation of space and narrative.

**Community space, textual space**

The preceding comments relate mainly to the description of a community-space which, as we have seen, is marked by tensions of various kinds. As I argued in my last chapter, Condé’s project bears a resemblance to the writing of Glissant and the créolistes through its desire to write the ‘real country’, of which these tensions form a significant part. One prominent use of the mangrove image, then, is as a symbol for Guadeloupean society as a whole. Consequently, as Munley argues, “the mangrove thicket [is] a metaphor for present-day Guadeloupe” (1992: 156). Similarly the title of an earlier volume of stories, *Pays-mêlé* (1985), is a play on words reflecting on the West Indian country to which Condé had just returned: Guadeloupe is seen as both marked by racial admixture, *sang-mêlé*, and by a large degree of social and economic hardship, a reference to the creole expression *mwen mêlé* which means ‘I have
problems’.\textsuperscript{185} The text’s ambitions are obviously more than just representational, however. Condé’s perception of the problems of Guadeloupean isolationism make of \textit{Traversée de la mangrove} a partially symbolic work, a feature which the various metafictional elements of the text serve to reinforce. In Condé’s simultaneously real-and-allegorical text the notion of communal fraternity is, as we have seen, markedly absent. The ‘community’ of Rivière au Sel is marked by rivalry, mutual hostility and isolation and yet in a sense, the community comes into existence through its \textit{rassemblement} around the corpse of Francis Sancher and through the textual space of the narrative itself.

An important feature of contemporary AntiUean writing, as I argued in my previous chapter, is the use of textual space - typographical, structural (formal) and diegetic, as means to reinforce the notion of a Caribbean aesthetic. \textit{Traversée de la mangrove} consists of a series of some twenty recollections of the deceased by mourners at a wake. These subjective accounts, pieces of a puzzle of identity, are flanked by two sections, entitled \textit{Le serein} (dusk) and \textit{Le devant-jour} (dawn), which are narrated by an unidentified voice. The narrative thus both evokes and performs the space of a wake, or \textit{veillée}, a circular structure which evokes “la ronde des prieuses” (Condé, 1989a: 48). As ffrench has pointed out, Condé’s narrative also constitutes a “\textit{traversée de la nuit}”, adding that:

> Within that generalized passage there are multiple circular patterns of regression and return. The linearity of a passage from beginning to end, relating the story of one character is complicated by this dual structure whereby the story progresses through superimposition of different versions of the same event. (1997b: 96)

Condé’s novel, therefore bears the dual imprint of a nocturnal aesthetic, or “parole de nuit”,\textsuperscript{186} and a circularity typical of the \textit{contour}-tradition.

Circularity, which can be seen as the legacy of a Caribbean story-telling tradition, is, here, opposed to the linear chronology: “instead of telling the story in a linear fashion, I decided to relate it from the viewpoints of different narrators. The reader will never exactly know who Francis Sancher is. He is like a puzzle with several pieces missing” (Condé, 1989a: 72). By Condé’s own admission, the narrative technique she adopted in \textit{Traversée de la mangrove} was a departure from the preceeding novel, \textit{La vie scélérate} (1987), where although the narrative is a reconstruction, and

\textsuperscript{185} Cf Pfaff (1996: 58).

\textsuperscript{186} Cf Ludwig (1994).
hence not purely linear, it is still "chronological" (Pfaff, 1996: 72). In *Traversée de la mangrove*, then, the hegemony of the monocular viewpoint is broken, its focal point strangely displaced. This does not mean that the identity of the various characters is fundamentally thrown into question, whereas Glissant's subversion of perspective seeks, albeit playfully, to erode the frontiers of identity, in *Tout-monde* at least. At the same time, however, Condé does shatter the possibility of reconstituting Sancher: he will always remain a puzzle, just as the myths of origin and purity will remain myths.

Now we have already seen the importance of the wake for Caribbean culture: the conteur-space, which is the privileged expression of the wake, is both a referent and an aesthetic tool. The figure of the conteur, a character in numerous novels, from Chamoiseau's *Solibo* to Cyrille in *Traversée de la mangrove* is also the archetype of a mode of narration which connects the Caribbean to the wider space of the Americas through the common experience of a plantation society. Condé's comments on epic and the conteur tradition suggest, furthermore, that she is writing within a pan-Caribbean culture in a way which aligns this text with those of Glissant and the créolistes where the importance of forms of what I have called 'communal narration' is paramount. *Tout-monde*, in a similar way, foregrounds Glissant's preoccupation with 'relaying' techniques, which are prefigured in *Mahagoni*. What these various techniques do is to create a more democratic form of story-telling in which the narrative thread is carried from one section/voice to the next. The resulting weave of voices both undermines the authority of the omniscient narrator and sets up a quasi-community of speaking subjects.

In *Traversée de la mangrove*, a not dissimilar process can be seen to operate: the novel's circular structure suggests a community, albeit a community-in-death. This relational structure does not just function through a process of implication, however, by the bringing-together, or juxtaposition, of a group of people whose interests and opinions often seem at variance with one another, but also structurally and linguistically, through the space of the text. Linguistic links, as in *Tout-monde*, imply a tissue both of text and of communal existence. Linguistic fragments and images provide the connecting tissue of the novel: thus, for example, Cyrille's opening "Yé krik, yé krak!" (Condé, 1989a: 153) is prefigured at the end of the preceding section (151). The novel is, of course, also given structural coherence through the two flanking sections which lend the whole a distinctive architecture.
What Condé seems to be doing, with the aid of textual space in *Traversée de la mangrove*, is to articulate a number of contradictory viewpoints as a means to bringing out tensions, rather than providing hard-and-fast solutions. It is useful to remember that, like *Solibo magnifique*, Condé’s text describes a moribund society: the wake, which I have identified as a focus of Caribbean-Creole culture and aesthetics, is presented as a dying occurrence - “les veillées, je croyais qu’elles n’existaient plus” remarks Joby (1989a: 91). As such, reinvesting the contour-space becomes part of the potential revitalisation of the Caribbean which, in another way, is suggested by the opening of the community, and not the return to a naïve, Rousseau-like, harmonious ensemble.

I have already referred to the metafictional status of Condé’s text. Now the use of spatial representation as a metaphor for the hermeneutic process, for example, is a characteristic feature of many contemporary novels from the French Antilles. Christophe Lamiot in his article ‘A question of questions through a mangrove wood’ (1992), has identified a number of parallels between *Traversée de la mangrove* and Chamoiseau’s *Solibo magnifique* (1988b). In his analysis, the mangrove swamp of Condé’s text becomes a self-conscious comment on the reading process: the reader thus becomes a kind of detective (like the ‘real’ detectives of Chamoiseau’s tale) whose task it is to piece together the puzzle of the narrative. In its turn, however, the narrative puzzle also becomes a comment about identity: “the reader will never exactly know who Francis Sancher is”, as Condé has said (Pfaff, 1996: 72). Crossing the mangrove is a hazardous undertaking, we have seen, but so is the activity of interpretation.

The notion of difficulty, in *Traversée de la mangrove*, also extends to the writing-process. Vilma’s comment, “on ne traverse pas la mangrove” (Condé, 1989a: 192), is a response to Sancher’s admission that he is working on a novel - also entitled *Traversée de la mangrove* - a project which will, of course, never come to fruition. Now this kind of *mise-en-aborde*, from Gide to Robbe-Grillet and beyond, has tended to function as a way of destabilising textual authority: here it turns the novel inside-out to give a kind of Möbius-strip of a text. Just as Sancher is a kind of displaced presence, so the stability of meaning and narrative authority are thrown into doubt. There is an implicit link with the notion of racination here. Condé has said, in an interview that “to seek one’s ancestors is to search for oneself [...] any literature is a search and an expression of self that always implies the knowledge of one’s ancestors [...] people don’t write for any other reason” (Pfaff, 1996: 73). At the same time,
however, *Traversée de la mangrove*, clearly disrupts this kind of search. The desire to search for answers is, Condé suggests, a human impulse, but nonetheless problematic. What is undermined in this epistemological allegory is the possibility of unambiguous knowledge, an erasure which also negates the notion of any finished or reassuringly unproblematic project in this community.

*Texaco*, at first sight, differs in the sense that the inhabitants of the eponymous suburb are united, at least in their struggle against a neo-colonial order in Martinique, though yet again their ‘victory’ is not absolute: Texaco remains threatened by the rigidity of the “concrete jungle” its has become and by the ever-present menace of Martinique’s assimilationist legacy. What ultimately links these texts, over and above their specifically geographical and socio-historical differences, is the determination to maintain a degree of openness. Sancher thus performs a contamination of an assumed, but inoperative community (to borrow the English title of Nancy’s text), which is at the same time its paradoxical coming-into-being. The impossibility of a community in the traditional (i.e. exclusive) sense of the word is thus the very condition of its possibility. Condé’s novel advocates a community of sorts but wonders how, at the same time, it is possible to look outwards in a motion which refuses the self-enclosed, self-satisfied perspective of the atavistic tradition/community. Hence the importance of Sancher’s provenance: his presence disrupts the received notions of belonging, the community revealed through the “mini-narratives” (ffrench, 1997b: 96), turns out to be one of multiple desire, shot through with the diverse ethnic and class tensions of Creole society, which Condé was to ‘rediscover’ in the writing of this novel.

The primary image around which these questions are focused is, of course that of the mangrove-swamp. This image resonates with other uses of the mangrove in Francophone Caribbean literature. A few remarks about the mangrove-metaphor will serve to situate *Traversée de la mangrove* within this corpus. The relationship of Caribbean Négritude with the mangrove was an uneasy one. The movement’s attitude towards the mangrove, with its strong odour and slow-moving waters, can be characterised as one of repugnance, and rests on the notion that such swamps are places of stagnation, whereas scientific research has now shown that the mangrove is

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177 Cf Bob Marley’s 1973 album *Catch a Fire* (London: Island Records), which contains a song of this name.
an essential part of the Caribbean ecosystem, a breeding ground for aquatic creatures of all kinds, as well as a vital intermediary zone protecting erosion of the land by the sea.\textsuperscript{188} That Césaire, lover of the mighty baobab tree, should have espoused the former view, should perhaps come as no surprise; in his collection \textit{Moi, laminaire...} (1982), Césaire paints the mangrove as a place where nothing can advance, an immobile swamp:

\begin{verbatim}
On tourne en rond. Autour du pot.
Le pot au noir bien sûr.
Noire la mangrove reste un miroir.
Aussi une mangeoire.
La mangrove broie-tapie à part.
La mangrove respire. Méphitique. Vasard. (30)
\end{verbatim}

Pépin, as Confiant has shown, sees this resistance to the mangrove as a desire for historical ‘progress’ on Césaire’s part, a progress which seems impossible in the “territoire du «non-temps», le royaume de l’ombre et de l’opacité” which the swamp represents. “C’est dire”, he continues “à quel point elle s’apparente à une histoire qui s’essouffle, qui n’avance pas, qui s’égare malgré l’ardente volonté du poète”\textsuperscript{189}

Césaire’s distaste towards the mangrove is countered in the quasi-ecological impulse of the créolité movement whose architects famously vaunted their “mangrove de virtualités” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 28) as a sign of the complexity which characterises the state of créolité.

Nous penchons vers elle riches de toutes les erreurs et forts de la nécessité de nous accepter complexes. Car le principe même de notre identité est la complexité. Explorer notre créolité doit s’effectuer dans une pensée aussi complexe que la Créolité elle-même (28)

The mangrove is seized upon by the créolistes as a symbol of both diversity and in-betweenness. For in addition to the teeming life which its superficially turgid waters conceal, the \textit{palétuviers} themselves are able to survive both in and out of water, thanks to their aerial roots. Hence the in-between resistance of the “mangrove urbaine”, a term which Chamoiseau borrows from the sociologist Serge Letchimy (1984, 1992) and develops in \textit{Texaco}. The moral of the story is that the hybrid or in-between is both necessary to the survival of cultures and more widespread that has often been admitted, that hybridity/\textit{métissage}/créolisation should be celebrated and not dismissed as

\textsuperscript{188} Cf, for example, ‘Mangrove, forêt sacrée’, \textit{Antilla}, 738 (23\textsuperscript{rd} July 1997), 15-17.
freakish or invalid. At the same time, of course, the mangrove is a typically Caribbean space - to assert it is also to assert the specific validity of a Caribbean culture, which, if we accept the créoliste critique of Césaire, is obfuscated in Négritude poetry in favour of an Afro-centric universalism.

Césaire’s reluctance to embrace this feature of Creole culture is targeted by Confiant in the last section of his Aimé Césaire - une traversée paradoxale du siècle, a work which self-consciously echoes the title of Condé’s novel. In this section, ‘Méditations sur une mangrove qui se meurt’, Confiant calls on Césaire - who, he argues, prefigures créolité in many ways (hence his identification in the Eloge as an anti-créole rather than an anti-créole (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 18)) - to recognise Martinique’s mangrove-like culture:

Ce pays est mangrove, Aimé Césaire!  
Ce peuple est mangrove, cette langue est mangrove, cette culture est tourbe, gadou, bayot, marigot. (299)

The mangrove is of central importance in terms of this chapter because, to quote Confiant again, “la mangrove nous a guéris de la soif des origines” (300). The inextricably interlinked roots and branches of the palétuviers suggest the kind of rhizomatic structures which, in Glissant’s terms, disturb the discourses of racination and filiation.

In addition, however, the mangrove partakes of what I have already identified as the ecological thrust of créolité and, to an extent, antillanité. Indeed the link is made explicit by Confiant when he mentions the créoliste support for the anti-industrialist ecological organisation ASSAUPAMAR (300). It comes as no surprise, then, that the image of the mangrove threatened by the encroaching tourist network of roads and concrete edifices in Martinique should resurface in Glissant’s Tout-monde. Similarly, Confiant warns that “notre Martinique-mangrove est menacée par les poseurs de béton” (303). I shall return to these instances in later chapters, but it seems appropriate to signal at this point the dual function of the mangrove-image. Its importance, I would suggest, stems both from the ecological impulse to protect a feature of the Caribbean landscape, especially as it reflects elements of a Creole aesthetic, but also because, in its complexity, it evokes the multiplicity which is the

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Caribbean archipelago and hence, in another sense, the folly of subscribing to a simple notion of roots or 'la soif des origines'.

This further double imperative echoes my reading of Condé's contaminated community in *Traversée de la mangrove*. But where does Condé stand in this debate? I have already indicated that a degree of caution is required when attempting to align Condé's work with any school of writing. Most obviously, Condé's treatment of the mangrove, although far from Césaire's disgust at stagnation, appears less optimistic and celebratory than that of the *créolistes*. Vilma, we remember, states: "on ne traverse pas la mangrove. On s'empale sur les racines des palétuviers. On s'enterre et on étouffe dans la boue saumâtre" (1989a: 192). Condé's assessment of Guadeloupe, then, as focused in the mangrove metaphor, reveals an acute awareness of both social and inter-personal problems which, in Chamoiseau's work, for example, are portrayed in more positive terms, as obstacles which characters such Marie-Sophie Laborieux seek to surmount, albeit 'unheroically'. Her desire to distance herself from the *créolistes* ideological statements can perhaps be explained, partially at least, by her lengthy absence and the consequent lack of involvement with, for example, the struggle to revalorise the Creole language which took place in the late '70s and early '80s in Martinique. Bearing these differences in mind, however, we can still detect a degree of affinity on her part as regards the diversity of Caribbean cultures which the contemporary metaphor of the mangrove symbolises. Indeed, as we have seen, Condé questions, precisely in terms of this image, the quest for roots. We shall see in the remaining chapters how this critique is developed by Chamoiseau and Glissant, and how it relates to other spaces and themes.
CHAPTER SIX
Spatialising History: the City

'Or, je suis dans l’histoire jusqu’à la moindre moelle'
Edouard Glissant (1994a: 27)

This chapter takes as its theme the writing of history in the Caribbean, the construction of an alternative history which speaks to the lived experience of Caribbean peoples. I shall attempt to demonstrate that what emerges as a reappropriation of the local past begins as a critique of the paralysing influence exerted, through the agency of colonial and neo-colonial power, upon the imaginary, leading Fanon to proclaim “je suis sur-déterminé de l’extérieur” (1995: 93). The stakes of this historical approach to the Caribbean concern the ability of (post)colonial peoples to mobilise the past as a route to self-consciousness and the construction of a common culture. Thus, if my discussion of *Traversée de la mangrove* centred on the question of the community-in-space, around questions of belonging and purity, then the present chapter concerns itself with issues of collective memory and, more specifically, with how this relates to, or opposes itself to, more official forms of documentation and to the overarching notion of History. It is, of course, significant for my purposes to note that both the contested forms of Historical representation and modes of resistance to these are perceived by Caribbean writers in spatial terms. Consequently I will attempt, in what follows, to highlight a new writing of History (or histories) in the Caribbean - in terms of a new conception of the 'real' space of the island and of the wider archipelago - but also how the idea of History itself is dismantled through the strategic deployment of textual and imaginary space(s).

As in the previous chapter, I propose here to concentrate on a major literary text of the last 15 years as a focus for these themes. My chosen text, Chamoiseau’s *Texaco*, is significant for a variety of reasons. The year of its publication, as I have already stated, stands as a watershed in the development of Caribbean literature: in 1992 Chamoiseau was awarded the prestigious *Prix Goncourt* for the novel (his earlier inclusion in Gallimard’s *Folio* series having already led *France-Antilles* to celebrate the
symbolic victory of having “un noir dans la collection blanche”), while in the same year Walcott won the Nobel Prize for literature. This period in the French Antilles was also dominated by the heated debate over the notion of créolité, which first exploded in 1989 with the publication of Éloge de la créolité and was reinforced by the appearance of a English-French edition in 1993, which served to raise the movement’s profile in North American academic circles. As the major work of this most prominent of contemporary movements in Caribbean writing, Texaco is an unavoidable milestone, even if many critics have come to see it as a retrograde step for Chamoiseau stylistically speaking. It is nevertheless his most ambitious work to date and constitutes the clearest statement of the themes with which this chapter concerns itself.

The present chapter thus develops two interlocking thematic strands: on the one hand an exploration of the notion of History as it appears both in Western critical discourses (of postmodernism and postcolonialism) and in recent Caribbean writing and, on the other, a spatial reading of Texaco as it relates to the self-avowed concerns of créolité. Both of these strands are tied together through the specific space of the city and as such refer back to my discussions of urban space in previous chapters, particularly in terms of urban peripheral zones (shanty-towns and their equivalents) as forms of third space, hybrid pockets of resistance to the dominant order of neo-colonial authority and globalised capital. The urban mangrove of Texaco, as we shall see, constitutes just such an oppositional third space. At the same time as Chamoiseau’s text seeks to set up a set of counter-values, however, a Creole culture properly speaking, this culture is never seen as a monolithic entity, unlike the French colonial presence it seeks to oppose. Texaco, and the notion of créolité which underpins it, is a self-conscious “enveloppe mentale” (Bembé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 13), a process of constant questioning, which refuses to believe unequivocally the means of its own relation. As a result, the approach adopted by Chamoiseau borders on the postmodern, and transcends the largely oppositional, binary, stance which characterised Négritude, while still retaining its force of resistance. What I hope to demonstrate in my discussion of Texaco is how the notion of space, and particularly that of a third space or hybrid space, performs a negotiation
between apparently contradictory positions - between the reinstatement of history and its erosion, between patterns of rooting and nomadism, enracinement and errance - how it articulates a number of double imperatives, that is.

Before we proceed to a more detailed examination of the stakes of créolité and the spatialised histories which constitute Texaco, however, I propose to give an account of the place which History occupies within contemporary Caribbean discourse, the criticisms which have been levelled at the concept, and the alternative strategies for presenting the past which have been adopted in recent texts. This new engagement with history, which I shall be outlining below, takes issue with the distorting ahistorical vision of Caribbean modernism and is best summed up by Glissant’s assertion, cited above: “or, je suis dans l’histoire jusqu’à la moindre moëlle” (1994a: 27). Thus, as the authors of Eloge de la créolité put it, “notre littérature [...] s’émeuvra de son passé [...] elle sera historique” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 38). There is no place here for a simple restitution of historical chronology, however; the agenda of contemporary Caribbean writing demands both an alternative perspective on the past, which we shall see in relation both to Texaco and to a number of other texts (from Glissant’s Le quatrième siècle to Walcott’s Omero), but also a critical vision of traditional historiography. Crucially, what is given fresh impetus is the creative act of re-membering, an idea expressed by the Guyanan Wilson Harris when he says that “a philosophy of history may well lie buried in the arts of the imagination” (1999: 156). The rôle of space in this context is simultaneously a means of providing new sources for reading the past, a kind of topographical record, and a metaphorical instrument for severing the umbilical cord of a linear (temporal) chronology in the first place.

What I want to suggest here is an ambiguity at the very heart of the project of writing Caribbean history. For many of the region’s writers, History (with a capital H) is a parasite. The Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén, for example, has gone so far as to call it a tapeworm," echoing Walcott’s complaint that “we make too much of that long groan which underlines the past” (1993: 6-7). Overattention to the litany of conquests and oppression which form the official chronicles of Caribbean History can lead to the paralysing sense of inadequacy of which Glissant, as we shall see, has spoken. On the other hand, the history of exploitation in the Caribbean is not so
easily forgotten and in fact the thrust of much recent Caribbean writing, as I have suggested, is necessarily historical. Thus, although “the Caribbean sensibility is not marinated in the past” (Walcott, 1974b: 18), “the apples of its second Eden have the tartness of experience” (5). Consequently, discussions of history in the Caribbean are often articulated in terms of a tension between the desire to revisit the past and the desire to escape it, between the necessity of reclaiming an ‘authentic’ local history for the Caribbean and the sceptical attitude towards such a notion which Glissant has termed the Caribbean ‘quarrel with History’ (1981: 130).

So what form does this quarrel take and what is its relation to Western critiques of History? One relevant criticism which has been levelled at the concept in postcolonial theory, and which ties in with this Glissantian perspective, stems from its collusion with the notion of Progress: Bhabha, already cited in chapter 1, has argued that “the grand narratives of 19th-Century historicism on which its claims to universalism were founded - evolutionism, utilitarianism, evangelism - were also, in another textual and territorial time/space, the technologies of colonial and imperialist governance” (1994: 195). The whole ideological basis for a universal History is thus exposed as suspect, its supposed objectivity simply a veneer masking hierarchical assumptions about racial and cultural supremacy. In making such assumptions, therefore, Western History has colonised the past; Caribbean history becomes little more than an annex of European History, what Glissant calls an “histoire subie” (1981: 88), “une histoire non assumée” (108). Its ‘events’ meanwhile are simply a succession of conquests and governors. The authors of 1989’s * Eloge de la créolité* put this neatly: “notre Histoire [...] est naufragée dans l'Histoire coloniale”, they say, “ce que nous croyons être l'histoire antillaise n'est que l'Histoire de la colonisation des Antilles” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 36). In other words, to quote Harris, “the West-Indies, history-wise, appear [...] to be little more than an adjunct of imperialism” (1999: 176). Another objection relates to the unified and linear continuity of the colonial history books, for in their attempt to order events into a teleological sequence, they have tended to obscure the Caribbean’s multiple and diverging histories. This critique is fuelled by the (familiar poststructural) notion that History is not a privileged form of discourse, but another kind of fiction and, as Walcott reminds us, “everything depends on whether we write this fiction through the memory of hero or of victim” (1974b: 2).

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However the ‘quarrel with history’ is not simply a question of upending a conventional or dominating representation of the past. Opposed to the colonial view of historical continuity, then, which forces the Caribbean to play periphery to Europe’s centre, is the syncretic or hybrid vision of a composite history: “notre Histoire”, say Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, “est une tresse d’histoires” (1993: 26), where histoires are stories as much as histories. The notion of a singular or universal history (in the Hegelian mould) is consequently undone by a multiplicity of dissenting voices, or in the words of Glissant, “là où se joignent les histoires des peuples, hier réputés sans histoire, finit l’Histoire” (1981: 132).

The consequences of such a view are not unproblematical. One major difficulty is the near impossibility of speaking about ‘the Caribbean’ as any meaningful kind of entity, for wherever one looks, to language, history, art or politics, “the spectrum of Caribbean codes is so varied and dense that it holds the region suspended in a soup of signs” (Benitez-Rojo, 1996: 2). It has, of course, been suggested that since the Caribbean is the site of ‘créolisation’ par excellence, its very diversity (defined by Glissant as “la différence consentie” (1981: 191)) becomes its common term, its defining feature. However, just as the relationship between French and Creole languages amounts to more of a ‘diglossic’ tussle than an equal partnership, these multiple codes do not necessarily coexist benignly. This ‘soup’ is not an even synthesis of free-floating signs, it is no ‘melting-pot’; instead it contains its fair share of what Guillermo Gomez-Peña, in a phrase which will inform my reading of Glissant in chapter 7, calls “stubborn chunks”, caught up in a constant process of negotiation.

One central feature of this negotiation is the construction of narrative(s) of the past, for in the absence of an objective view of the past, the writing or rewriting of history - as a means to galvanise a people’s sense of community - assumes a projective rôle, or what Glissant has termed “une vision prophétique du passé” (1981: 132). This function is of particular significance in the Francophone Caribbean, since Martinique, Guadeloupe and some of the smaller islands such as St Martin remain French overseas territories and are even integrated into the European Union. Unlike other Caribbean states which achieved independence either by revolution (as in Haïti) or through the process of decolonisation, the position of the French West Indies constitutes what Glissant has called a “colonisation réussie” (1981: 155). For
Glissant, the official version of their past forms a series of missed opportunities, that alienating “non-histoire” (1981: 131), whose effect is to persuade the French West Indian both of his impotence and of “the disinterested generosity of France”, a fatal combination. The link with metropolitan France is presented as somehow inevitable (economically, politically and culturally), while the islands’ Caribbean-ness (or antillanité) is played down, only to resurface in the shape of exoticism, the Caribbean as a postcard paradise of white sands and coconut palms.

Instances of resistance to French rule, Glissant claims, as well as links with the rest of the Caribbean, have also been erased from the collective memory. In Le discours antillais Glissant cites the example of colonel Delgrès, who in 1802 blew himself and his 300 men up in the powder store of Fort Matouba in Guadeloupe rather than give in to the French soldiers surrounding it. Inevitably, however, a kind of ideological blockade - or “blocus idéologique” (131) - meant that the news of this event never really entered the collective consciousness and when slavery was abolished in 1848, the official declaration claimed that it was the inhabitants of Guadeloupe themselves who had demanded the reinstatement of slavery in 1802, the year of Delgrès’ act of defiance. For Glissant, this manipulation of the past is symptomatic of the way History has been used to maintain a state of “mental slavery”. As Glissant declares, “tout reste à découvrir de l’histoire antillaise de la Martinique” (1981: 27).

In the narrative fiction and theoretical writings of some of the most prominent Francophone Caribbeans, a number of challenges to official history make themselves felt. The absence of events such as the Matouba incident from the collective consciousness is countered by a rewriting of Caribbean history to include the voiceless heroes of Caribbean past, protagonists of “un combat sans témoin” (177). We are reminded of Théodorus, a character in Texaco who exclaims “Quelle Histoire, mais quelle Histoire? Où sont les nègres là-dedans?” (1992a: 97). It also sidesteps the predictable perspective of French history: Glissant’s Le quatreème siècle, for example, goes back to 1788, but makes no mention of 1789. Of course clearly identifiable Caribbean heroes (in Martinique at least) are few and far between - the figure of Victor Schoelcher, revered in Martinique as the man responsible for the abolition of

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slavery, is a not unambiguous one if we accept Glissant’s criticism that the bestowal of French citizenship was largely a means of negating resistance and thus maintaining the old structures of domination. In addition to this lack of real heroes, in the traditional sense, there is the problem of the lack of records. The Longoué family, in Glissant’s novels, provide a response to this double absence, for they include both the archetypal figure of the nègre marron or runaway slave (maroon in English), whose obstinate refusal constitutes a kind of indirect heroism on the margins of plantation society, and that of the quimboiseur (simultaneously seer and witchdoctor - or papa feuille) who, like the conteur or griot, is responsible for the transmission of oral memory.

The impossibility, for Glissant, of fully recovering the past, therefore, leads to a concentration on the act of creative remembering which in a sense also validates the use of literature and story-telling. But while it is true that the ambiguity between histoire as story/history dismantles the controlling apparatus of a unified, objective history, it does not by the same token completely evacuate the problem of the ‘real’ or of ‘truth’. To deny the objectivity of history, in other words, is not to efface the reality of violence and of oppression. And yet many objections to the claims of créolité arise precisely from the perceived tension between an appeal to plurality on the one hand and authenticity on the other: for while its “mosaïque constitutive” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 27) seems to embrace a liberal multiplicity of viewpoints, some turn out to be more ‘valid’, more ‘real’ than others. This amounts, in my view, to a paradox or double imperative rather than a contradiction, and a paradox which is perhaps characteristic of the postcolonial condition: how is it possible to forge an identity or sense of community without recourse to essentialist categories whose complicity with colonial and racial prejudice are all too apparent? One provisional solution, as we shall see, is the theorisation of hybridity and créolisation, which occupy the problematic zones in-between such categories. In terms of our specific discussion of history, though, what we are dealing with is a dissolution of the dichotomy between fiction and reality. Given the saturation of the Martinican consciousness by Western History, detailed by Glissant in Le discours antillais, a geo-culturally specific (i.e. Caribbean) ‘reality’ has to be sought by way of the détours of popular culture, “dans ses arts, ses résistances, ses héroïsmes, sans stèles, sans statues, sans monuments, sans documents” as Chamoiseau puts it (1994a:

186 Cf Bob Marley’s ‘Redemption Song’, on his 1980 album Uprising (Island Records).
14), where these *détours* contain subliminal traces of the lived past in the guise of the imaginary. And for Glissant and Chamoiseau in particular, the figure of the *conteur* occupies the privileged position between experiential reality and story-telling, while their ‘fiction’ often undertakes a self-referential undermining both of the writer - unable to ‘mark’ or fix reality - and of the possibility of a reality unmediated by the poetic imagination. The intersection of these critical impulses is partially contained in Chamoiseau’s notion of a *trace-mémoire*, that “espace oublié par l’Histoire et par la Mémoire-une” (1994a: 16), which reunites the process of creative remembering with spaces and the activities conducted in them.

In this process, then, there is a sense of inhabiting the cracks in the discourse of official History, which is exemplified, in the novels of Glissant, Chamoiseau and others, by the subversion of chronology. Glissant’s 1975 novel *Malemort*, for example, seems to follow no logical time sequence at all despite an apparently complicated system of dating: consecutive sections are labelled ‘(1788) (1939)’, ‘(1945-1946)’, ‘(1938/1958)’, ‘(1944, 1960, 1973)’ and so on. Or rather: Glissant’s use of the chronology escapes a certain (Western) tradition of linear succession, favouring “les procédés de répétition, de redoublement, de ressassement, de mise en haleine, de circularité” (1996b: 121) which are more typical of the oral, *conteur* tradition and accompany what Delpech, in her study of the text, has called its “structure «cyclonique»” (Delpech & Rœlens, 1997: 168). *Texaco*, as we shall see later, sets up what at first sight looks like a colonial-style chronology only to knock it down again: periods of time are identified not by reference to European History, but in terms of building materials: straw, *bois-caisse*, fibrociment and concrete. The novel’s quasi-Biblical overtones are likewise subjected to characteristic irony: a section entitled ‘Le sermon de Marie-Sophie Laborieux’ takes place not “sur la montagne”, but “devant un rhum vieux” (1992a: 43).

What is also subverted in the Caribbean is the idea of filiation, whose confident linearity draws obvious parallels with the Hegelian, teleological view of History and which for Glissant, as we have seen, is the process whereby ‘atavistic’ cultures legitimise their (sectarian) claims to territory. This baroque subversion, which Glissant sees as characteristic of such ‘novels of the Americas’ as Marquez’s *Cien...
ños de soledad or Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* - not to mention his own novels - is epitomised by Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* where the attempt to establish a clear genealogy (in true Biblical style) runs aground. In this view of the Americas, any search for a pure or Edenic origin is negated, often violently. In Glissant's first novel *La Légende,* as we saw in my last chapter, Thaël's initiatory descent from the river's source to the sea, which echoes the liberatory awakening of post-war Martinicans - "un peuple neuf et attentif" (1958: 236) - to their place in the world, is an irrevocable loss of innocence, sealed, at the novel's end, by the death of Valérie.

The writing of history into literature, therefore, encounters not just the idea of an alternative history (which could enable the formation of a sense of collective endeavour, of community), but the possibility of an alternative type of history: non-linear and perhaps also non-hierarchical. "The struggle against colonial oppression", says Bhabha, "not only changes the direction of Western History, but challenges its idea of time as a progressive, ordered whole" (1994: 41). A well-worn argument in postcolonial criticism identifies the complicity of objective History and Realist narrative; it comes as no surprise, then, that the Caribbean challenge to History makes use of non-realist narrative techniques (as we have seen with reference to *Malemort*): circularity, polyphony, indeterminate point-of-view and so on. Not that Western literature is a stranger to these techniques, of course: indeed, says Glissant, "à une Histoire ainsi éclatée [...] il était normal que l'intelligence occidentale apposât une Littérature diffractée, qui diffuse dans toutes les directions mais dont personne ne pourrait se proclamer maître du sens" (1981: 142). However, one of the most interesting modifications to an orthodox mode of History in Caribbean writing takes the form of a movement from the temporal to the spatial. In my first chapter I attempted to demonstrate how thinkers from Foucault to Lefebvre have tipped the scales in favour of a spatial view of being. In the wake of what Soja has called "the reassertion of space in critical social theory" (1989), I argued, the temporal progression typical of nineteenth-century historiography has been modified by a new interest in the geographical and relational nature of social interactions. Again, this trend is a familiar one from postmodern theory and well expressed by Jameson when he says that "different moments in historical or existential time are [...] simply filed in different places; the attempt to combine them even locally does not slide up and down a temporal scale [...] but jumps back and forth across a game board that we
conceptualise in terms of distance” (1991: 373). Such an idea comes close to the Caribbean notion I mentioned earlier of the incommensurability of diverse histories, the impossibility of uniting them under the banner of a single or universal History. What Jameson says about a conception of history based on distance, or spatial separation, also recalls Glissant’s notion of Relation, and of history as transversalité (1981: 134). This view puts the accent on connections between Caribbean islands, and hence on the possibility of a pan-Caribbean identity - albeit one based on differentiation - and not just on the line connecting past conquests and present citoyenneti. In the remainder of this section, then, I should like to outline a number of ways in which the challenge to History is articulated in terms of space and spaces.

The first category of space I want to mention is landscape, which in the works of Glissant (and others) performs a double function. One the one hand it provides a means of access to the unwritten past: “le paysage” he says “est son propre monument. [...] C’est tout histoire” (1981: 21). In this sense it becomes a kind of alternative chronicle, the pages of a past which is still present, but in danger of being forgotten, the alienation caused by assimilation to France reflected in a schism between man and his entour. On the other hand the landscape or natural world, as I have already suggested, provides the metaphorical raw materials with which to undermine History itself. According to Walcott, “visual surprise is natural in the Caribbean; it comes with the landscape, and faced with its beauty”, he says, “the sigh of History dissolves” (1993: 7). The landscape - in its abundantly chaotic profusion and in the heterogeneous juxtaposition of flora and fauna - presents an alternative to Western logic. In Glissant’s Le quatrième siècle, Mathieu, a young historian, questions the quimboisur Papa Longoué about the past, but in terms of an imposed rationality: “le jeune homme le forçait à suivre le sentier «du plus logique», et voici qu’il raisonnait en que, en donc, en après et avant, avec des nœuds de pourquoi dans sa tête, noyés dans une tempête de parce que’ (1964: 47). Despite this line of inquiry, Papa Longoué’s narrative proceeds according to an entirely different logic, chaotic and opaque. The possibility of knowing the past in Glissant’s works, then, encounters the (temporal) opacity of memory, to which Glissant alludes when he says that the Caribbean consciousness is not in search of its temps perdu but instead experiences a temps éperdu (1981: 254). Significantly, however, it also runs up against a kind of spatial

\[20^\text{Cf, for example, Bhabha (1984).}\]
opacity best illustrated by the image of the forest which opposes the colonial desire both for transparency and linearity:

La forêt du marronage fut ainsi le premier obstacle que l'esclave en fuite opposait à la 
transparence du colon. Il n'y a pas de chemin évident, pas de ligne, dans ce touffu. On y 
tourne sans transparence, jusqu'à la souche premiè. (1981: 150)

Chamoiseau and Confiant, in their Lettres créoles, make a similar point when they claim 
that Caribbean literature (in the French-speaking islands) “n'a pas une Histoire 
come dans les vieilles aventures, elle s'émeut en histoires et mieux, elle sillonne en 
tracées” (1991: 12), going on to explain, in a footnote:

La chose est frappante: à côté des routes coloniales dont l'intention se projette tout droit, à 
quelque utilité prédatrice, se déploient d'infinites petites sentes que l'on appelle tracées. 
Elaborées par les Nègres marrons, les esclaves, les créoles, à travers les bois et les mornes 
du pays, ces tracées disent autre chose. Elles témoignent d'une spirale collective que le plan 
coloniale n'avait pas prévue. (12)

Opposed to the dominance of the line and of clarity (typical goals of the kind of 
History I have alluded to) is the spatial logic of Papa Longoué, expressed in the 
movement of the wind, of uncertain passages, of shifting sands: “le passé” writes 
Glissant in Le quatrième siècle “n'est pas dans ce que tu connais par certitude, il est 
 aussi dans tout ce qui passe comme le vent et que personne n'arrête dans ses mains 
fermées” (1964: 146). In recent years, an increasingly persuasive model for this kind 
of mobile uncertainty, and one which has proved attractive to Glissant as well as 
thinkers such as Cuba's Benitez-Rojo, has been that offered by chaos, in the sense 
of chaos-theory. This non-linear science, this “connaissance en réel abîme”, seeks 
to identify “dynamic states or regularities” within “the (dis)order that swarms around 
what we already know of as Nature” (Benitez-Rojo, 1996: 2). Significantly Glissant, 
whose concern is to apply this notion to problems of culture and poetics, sees the 
relations within what he calls our chaos-monde as fundamentally spatial, defined in 
positional terms, since “les cultures de notre époque vivent plusieurs temps différends

201 The theme of marronage, already an important feature of Négritude poetry, is omnipresent in more 
recent French West Indian writing, particularly in the works of Glissant, who has dubbed the nègre 
homme et le molosse (1997b) narrates the disappearance and pursuit of an old slave turned marron, while 
Burton's Le roman marron: études sur la littérature martiniquaise contemporaine (1997) takes the 'myth' of the 
nègre marron as the keystone for his analysis of Glissant, Chamoiseau and Confiant. Finally René 
Louise's Manifeste du marronisme moderne (1998) is an attempt to expand the idea into a broader 
'philosophie de l'esthétique des artistes de la Caraïbe et de l'Amérique latine'.

mais en subissant les mêmes transformations" (1996b: 83). I shall return to Glissant's application of the notion of chaos, as a means to negotiating identitarian double imperatives, in my next chapter.

The archipelago - or 'the repeating island' in Benítez-Rojo's memorable formulation - is another suggestive figure of a kind of postmodern repetition within difference, one which has far-reaching implications for the possibility of a Caribbean identity. It has also led Glissant to develop a distinction between a pensée système and a pensée archipelique, of which he says the following:

La pensée archipelique convient à l'allure de nos mondes. Elle en emprunte l'ambigu, le fragile, le dérivé. Elle consent à la pratique du détour, qui n'est pas fuite ni renoncement. Elle reconnaît la portée des imaginaires de la Trace, qu'elle ratifie. Est-ce là renoncer à se gouverner? Non, c'est s'accorder à ce qui du monde s'est diffusé en archipels précisément, ces sortes de diversités dans l'étendue, qui pourtant rallient des rives et marient des horizons [...] la pensée de l'archipel, des archipels, nous ouvre ces mers. (1997e: 31)

Glissant's yoking-together of philosophy and space in terms of the Caribbean cultural imaginary, suggests an opening-up of perspectives which is a recurrent theme in this thesis.

Another important instance of space acting as what one can only provisionally call metaphor is that of the sea. "The sea is History" (1992: 364) is the title of one of Walcott's poems, but this is a history of chaotic unpredictability or, in the words of Benítez-Rojo, "uncertain voyages of signification" (1996: 2). Glissant, in similar vein, sees the Caribbean sea as "une mer ouverte, une mer qui diffracte, là où la Méditerranée est une mer qui concentre" (1996b: 14). Could it be, he suggests, that the great monotheistic religions, whose creation myths express a deep-rooted philosophie de l'Un, were engendered by this concentrating space, whereas the Caribbean became a space of diversification, a crucial junction in what Gilroy terms 'the Black Atlantic'? It is not so much that history disappears, therefore, as that monolithic conceptions of History are diffused or diffracted in their collision with New World spaces.

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Creole histories, Creole spaces

The specific conjunction of space and history, with which this chapter concerns itself, is evoked by Walcott in the closing lines of his New World epic *Omeros*. Echoing Glissant's notion of a *mer ouvert*, Walcott here performs a translation from a Mediterranean space to the open-endedness typical of a Caribbean imaginary:

> Achille put the wedge of dolphin
> that he'd saved for Helen in Hector's rusty tin.
> A full moon shone like a slice of raw onion.
> When he left the beach the sea was still going on. (1990: 325)

This movement of opening is not a self-sufficient one, however. In the writing of Glissant, Condé and the créolistes, as we have seen, moments of up-rooting are generally balanced by parallel moments of racination. In what follows I will attempt to demonstrate how this parallelism is constructed spatially, in *Texaco*, as a form of in-between negotiation. Seeing this as a co-dependent system, I want to suggest, is a productive way of reading texts by Chamoiseau and others, and provides a counter to those critics who seek to interpret them reductively as either affirmations of absolute cultural difference or as forms of some free-floating postmodernism. It is thus possible, I would argue, to consider the theorisation of *créolité*, for example, as a tension between, on the one hand, an appeal to a more authentic 'reality' and, on the other, a suspicion of such notions in the first place, a 'double imperative' rather than a fatal, and logically inadmissible, contradiction, that is.

Chamoiseau's presentation of history in *Texaco* performs this double imperative along lines already outlined thus far. Before we go on to examine this novel in some detail, however, it is worth considering how it fits into the historical vision of the *créolité* movement of which it is both an exemplar and an expansion. The notion of a Creole identity, which is theorised in *Eloge de la créolité* and elaborated in *Texaco*, sets itself up, in the first place, as an alternative to the chronicle of an official History imposed from the outside. Thus against the alienation of such an imposed vision - "déportés de nous-mêmes à chaque pan de notre histoire scripturale [par] la domination de l'aillleurs" (1993: 14), Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant call for a new form of collective endeavour. This new collectivity will require an accompanying

204 Cf the reference to 'notre authenticité' (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 43).
205 Créolité is described as 'questionneur de tout' (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 24).
sense of its place in history, or as they put it: "la mémoire collective est notre urgence" (1993: 37). Thus, instead of simply refusing the historical vision, as was the case with Caribbean modernism, Chamoiseau and the other signatories of *Eloge de la créolité* suggest the need for an alternative account of the Caribbean past - "dessous les dates, dessous les faits répertoriés" (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 37) - precisely the kind of account which forms the backdrop of Marie-Sophie Laborieux’s narrative in *Texaco*.

This alternative Caribbean history, as I have suggested, is not simply constructed in opposition to a Western world-view, however. It is not to be found in a set of conventional records, that is, but is only accessible through an attention to the unwritten, fleeting and contingent modalities of an oral culture. It inhabits the interstices of colonial History, therefore, the nooks and crannies of Western chronicles. The writing of both créolité and Glissant has no use for such forms of documentation at all, either in terms of content or in terms of form and style, and this is largely because the history of Creole Caribbean culture cannot be measured in relation to a linear set of conquests or singular events of any kind. The Caribbean history these writers explore is a cyclical one based on repeated patterns of suffering, a continuum of *durée* rather than a series of events or breaks in the continuum. In his ‘Letter to Chamoiseau’ (1998: 213-232), Derek Walcott highlights the theme of *durée* in *Texaco*, the cyclical insistence of suffering and obdurate endurance as an alternative to the Western procession of victories and landmarks which constitutes linear History:

> Every island is circumscribed by that oceanic sadness called History, but the *histoires* recorded in *Texaco* are not related to the march, the rhythm, of some optimistic chronology which leads from slavery to emancipation to colonialism to independence, or the demand for it; rather, these events are simultaneous, they have only one meaning and one tense: perpetual suffering, habitual agony [...] it is this monody that increases the quality of myth in rejecting a linear law and calendar: it is *l’histoire*, not History but the story, the fable, the rumour, as opposed to times, dates and places. (1998: 219)

Similarly, as the authors of *Eloge de la créolité* argue, the ‘truest’ version of Creole history is a cyclical one incompatible with the linear narrative:

> Dessous les ondes de choc de l’histoire de France, dessous les grandes dates d’arrivée et de départ des gouverneurs, dessous les aléas des luttes coloniales, dessous les belles pages blanches de la Chronique [...] il y a eu le cheminement obstiné de nous-mêmes. (1993: 36-37)
The alienation of Western History, to which the cyclical narrative is opposed, is compounded by a collusion between linear History and other forms of linear thinking: Hegelian teleology and the ideology of colonial Enlightenment. In Martinique at least, the alienation borne of an imposed History, is not just a scriptural problem, then, it is also spatially inscribed, a fact which a short walk through the centre of Fort-de-France will confirm. Reading the landmarks and, above all, the statues of what Chamoiseau calls l'En-villa, reveals an experience common to a number of postcolonial cities: official monuments and edifices fail to speak to the realities of a local past. Thus the most prominent statues in the Martinican capital can be seen to symbolise various stages of colonial exploitation. The French occupation of Martinique in 1635, for example, is commemorated by the figure of d'Esnambuc looking out over the Baie des Flamands, while the recently beheaded statue of Napoléon's wife Joséphine, located on the 'Savane', serves as a reminder of the reinstatement of slavery in 1802 (she is generally believed to have helped bring this event about in order to protect her family plantations near Trois-Îlets). Similarly the 'monument aux morts', mentioned by Chamoiseau in Solibo magnifique (1998b: 29), is a memorial to those Martinicans who died in the name of France to pay the so-called 'impôt du sang' during WWI. Even the statue of Schœlcher, which stands in front of the Palais de Justice, is tarnished with all the ambiguities surrounding the way in which the abolition of slavery in 1848 was appropriated as an act of French benevolence, that "générosité métropolitaine" to which Chamoiseau refers ironically in Texaco (1992a: 113).

Nowhere in the monumental text of Fort-de-France, therefore, is a record of the local, Creole, history to be found. It is as though, to borrow Glissant's phrase quoted in the last section of Texaco, "la mémoire historique" has been scratched out, "raturée" (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 491). "L'histoire créole" becomes "l'histoire des choses omises" (Bullo 1994: 77). The Creole historical vision will be first and foremost a form of restitution, therefore, though never a confident, unquestioning one. For, as Chamoiseau's urbaniste declares (echoing the author's discussion of the monumental in his book on the Guyanan penal colonies (1994a)), this vision must draw on "cette richesse irremplaçable que demeure la mémoire", going on to say that "la ville créole qui possède si peu de monuments, devient monument par le soin porté à ses lieux de mémoire. Le monument, là comme dans toute l'Amérique, ne
s'érigé pas monumental: il irradie” (1992a: 431). The writing of memory will never be seen as a full recuperation of the truth or of the real, but rather as a fragile and opaque activity, subject to the vagaries of the writing process itself. As the Chamoiseau figure in *Texaco* admits: “j’écrivis de mon mieux ce Texaco mythologique, m’apercevant à quel point mon écriture trahissait le réel” (1992a: 497).

The restitution of a more ‘authentic’ basis for a Creole culture, albeit mediated by the vicissitudes of unreliable sources, is nevertheless a primary objective of both créolité and of *Texaco*. As Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant point out, this means embracing all aspects of Creole culture, irrespective of conventional notions of aesthetic suitability:


Now Chamoiseau’s fiction, as I have already suggested, constitutes an exploration of a range of Creole spaces, each of which corresponds to one of the features of Creole culture mentioned above which have been ignored in the writing of the Caribbean. In so doing, Chamoiseau reconfirms the affirmation contained in *Eloge de la créolité*: “nous faisons corps avec notre monde” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 39).

Despite the overt specificity of this pronouncement, however, this spatialisation must also be seen as part of the wider programme of insertion into a poetics of the Americas, the desire to “embrasser cette dimension américaine, notre espace au monde” (22). As such it constitutes not a self-enclosed vision, but rather a relational particularism in line with créolité’s notion of a “spécificité ouverte” (27).

The specific historical focus of *Texaco* concerns a crucial moment in the development of Caribbean, and by extension, American, cultural space, namely the transition from a rural to an urban culture, and can therefore be seen as paradigmatic for Chamoiseau’s work as a whole. For although in recent texts he has portrayed both a rural distillery (*Elmire des sept bonheurs*) and the forest of marronage (*L’esclave vieil homme et le molosse*), he has mainly concentrated his interest on urban spaces (the vegetable market, Fort-de-France’s *Savane*, *Texaco* and the other *quartiers populaires*). Unlike many Martinican writers, then, as Confiant has remarked, “Patrick

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286 The Glissant original is (1981: 133).
Chamoiseau est plus enraciné dans un créole urbain, sa vision du monde est plus une vision urbaine” (Confiant, 1992: 67).

This restitution of the town within Creole letters can be seen as a response to what Burton has identified as “le biais rural du roman martiniquais” (Confiant, 1992: 14). The concentration on rural spaces, it is worth noting, is a defining feature of Glissant's work with its notion of a parole du paysage (1981: 255). “Je me demande s'il y a une seule évocation de Fort-de-France dans l'œuvre de Glissant”, Burton wonders; and yet Chamoiseau’s fascination with elements of popular culture as they express themselves in an urban environment bears a debt to the Glissantian vision of the Caribbean which infuses his entire œuvre. As Chamoiseau himself has stated, “c'est [Glissant] qui m'a alerté sur les djobeurs, ça a donné Chronique des sept misères; c'est lui qui a abordé l'étrange situation des Conteurs, ça a donné Solibo magnifique” (Confiant, 1988: 25). Indeed the figure of the djobeur, like that of the driveur, is a practitioner of a modern form of marronage, a “nègre marron d’En-ville” (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 459). In this way it is possible to see Chamoiseau’s writing programme as a development of Glissantian concerns in the context of a Caribbean city-space.

Chamoiseau’s decision to write about the universe he grew up in (a period charted in Une enfance créole: I et II) bears a double significance. It reflects his desire for a certain authenticity of experience, as “un Foyalais de souche”; it is part of the attempt, referred to earlier, to write the ‘real country’. It relates furthermore to the dual necessity of describing “le rapport à l’entour” (Glissant, 1981: 243) and “crier le pays dans son histoire vraie” (15), hence Glissant's advice, quoted as an epigraph to Texaco, “Gibier...tu n' es qu'un nèg-bouk: c'est de là qu'il faut parler” (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 11). It also has a counter-cultural resonance, however: rather than repeat the romantic myth of the nègre-marron, which characterises not only the Négritude movement, but also, to a lesser extent, Glissant's work, Chamoiseau prefers to concentrate on the quotidian resistance of Fort-de-France’s disadvantaged poor, filtered through the values of a Creole opacité. In Texaco, I want to argue, this urban setting also becomes part of a historical vision aimed at elucidating the development of Creole culture: the theme of resistance and survival is translated from the archetypal location of the plantation or ‘bition’ to the modern space of the En-ville and its popular satellites, which form the two poles of Chamoiseau’s ville créole.

Once again, the concentration on spaces as an expression of history underlines the theme of durée opposed to the punctuation of Western History. For Chamoiseau and Confi ant, in Lettres créoles, the history of créolisation and the matrices which give it birth, are more significant than isolated instances of revolt: the creole town is the last in a series of such matrices which include the hold of the bateau négrier and the space of the plantation with its nocturnal conteur-circle. Instead of a Western chronicle, the construction of a creole narrative of the past draws on two non-Western sources: the oral transmission of memory to which I have just referred, characterised by circularity and opacity, and the spatial inscription of the past contained in the Glissantian landscape. Thus, as Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confi ant point out: “les paysages [...] sont les seuls à inscrire, à leur façon non anthropomorphe, un peu de notre tragédie, de notre vouloir d’exister” (1993: 37). Both features run counter to traditional historical means of documentation: “notre histoire (ou nos histoires) n’est pas totalement accessible aux historiens” (37). If, then, as I have suggested on several occasions, the history of exploitation (geo-physical and economic) as well as the (mental) exploitation wrought by History are both implemented spatially, and spatially legible, then the means by which this exploitation is resisted are also spatial.

The analysis of space in Texaco which I want to propose here is based on a double perspective, already outlined in previous chapters, which can be described as two interconnected readings of space. The first reading takes the form of an exposition of the spatial vision contained within the text, particularly in the journal entries of the urbaniste and Marie-Sophie Laborieux, and which I have identified as a transformation of Glissant’s lecture du paysage (1981: 260). This vision is performed in terms of what Lefebvre calls la représentation de l’espace. The second reading concerns not so much the representation of an external spatiality as the spatiality of the text itself, or what Lefebvre calls un espace de représentation. The fact that both forms of space relate to one another makes of Texaco a highly metafictional, as well as a representational, piece of writing. Thus, for example, the fragmentary nature of Chamoiseau’s montage technique is already announced by discussions of non-linearity and multiplicity within the text itself. The congruence of this dual reading parallels the double take on history which I am also seeking to explore here: an alternative presentation of the past (a historicised reading of space) and a deconstruction of History’s powers of representation (articulated through a fragmentary textual space).
Texaco: urban mangrove

'Toujours le mouvement inarrêtable aura dépeuplé le lieu clos pour amasser dans les marges des villes sa population, ce qui sera resté, ce qui reste, c'est l'obscur de cette mémoire impossible, qui parle plus haut et plus loin que les chroniques et les recensements.'

Edouard Glissant (1990: 86)

Texaco is an epic, but crucially, as the novel's heroine Marie-Sophie Laborieux, puts it, a "pauvre épopée" (1992a: 284). It describes the foundation of the quartier populaire which gives the novel its title, a suburb of Fort-de-France which was chosen by Chamoiseau because, as he himself explains, "c'est le dernier en date des quartiers populaires, un territoire conquis de haute lutte par les chômeurs de la canne à sucre" (Confiant, 1992: 55). Drawing on what he refers to as "[le] réel antillais" (62), Chamoiseau's novel, I have suggested, reinstates the validity of a Creole history, or even, to quote Jack Corzani, "l'entrée d'un monde dans l'Histoire" (Confiant, 1988: 31). Despite being rooted in a historical vision which, we have seen, is a cornerstone of the créolité movement, however, Texaco is far from the kind of historical 'fresco' as which it is sometimes portrayed. Instead it sets out a history which is an alternative, both in form and content, and not a subset of Western History.

In the first place, then, the history of Martinique contained in Texaco is the history, not of the traditional Caribbean chronicle, but rather a subterranean one composed of "des histoires dont aucun livre ne parle, et qui pour nous comprendre sont les plus essentielles" (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 49). As Pépin has stated, "Texaco est avant tout l'histoire de l'en dessous, la révélation de l'invisible", an "histoire souterraine" (Confiant, 1992: 8). The narrative of Texaco is based on the memories of a number of characters, primarily those of Marie-Sophie Laborieux and her father Estemome. Taking its cue not from a written history, then, but from the unrecorded histoires of collective memory and the story-telling tradition, Texaco foregrounds the uncertain nature of oral narrative as a means to historical transmission, playing on the ambiguous double-meaning of histoire (history/story). In the second place, however, this history is presented as a multiple and fragile affair, a counter not just to the substance of History (with a capital 'H') but also to its formal means of representation. Texaco is a mosaic of histoires whose conflictual evidence sits uneasily with the unified objectivity of the Western chronology of dates and events behind
which the historian-as-writer seeks to conceal himself. Chamoiseau, by announcing himself as an unreliable, or at best subjective, marqueur de paroles, and not the omniscient writer-God of Realist narration, sets out to destabilise the authority of information, not to mention his own power as author, which the text offers up for scrutiny.

The spatiality of Chamoiseau's novel, then, as the vehicle of these two features of Creole history, bears a dual significance: it functions both as an alternative means of access to the unwritten past and, as I have been arguing, as a tool with which to undo the Western logic of a unified, linear, universal History. Before we go on to consider how the kind of spatial strategies for exploding this History, some of which have already been outlined in relation to Glissant's critique of History, are deployed in Texaco, I propose to set out some features of Chamoiseau's reading of the space of Martinique, and of what, in the novel, he calls "ce nouvel enjeu qu'était l'espace urbain" (1992a: 493).

I have described Texaco as an epic, but, as Chamoiseau himself says, it is the tale of a "fondation foudroyée" (1992a: 383) and not the confident epic of classical foundation myths which, as we saw in previous chapters, are equated by Glissant with atavistic cultures. For within the overt foundational narrative, expressed by a kind of cultural rooting, is a parallel discourse of deracination. At first glance the quasi-mythical foundation of Texaco does not seem so far removed from the epics of old, however: the superficial opposition of the popular, Creole, suburb to the town-centre, or En-ville, symbol of colonial oppression seeming to reinforce the struggle of disenfranchised workers to establish themselves on the margins of neo-colonial power in a movement of self-assertion. Thus a large portion of the urbanistes's notes concern the need to recognise a distinctively Creole form of spatiality, radically different from that expressed by the more classical town-centre with its Cartesian geometry and monumental architecture:

Elle [Marie-Sophie Laborieux] m'apprit à relire les deux espaces de notre ville créole: le centre historique vivant des exigences neuves de la consommation; les couronnes d'occupation populaire, riches du fond de nos histoires [...] Au centre on détruit le souvenir pour s'inspirer des villes occidentales et rénover. Ici, dans la couronne, on survie de mémoire. Au centre, on se perd dans le moderne du monde; ici, on ramène de très vieilles racines, non profondes et rigides, mais diffuses, profuses, épandues sur le temps avec cette légèreté que confère la parole. (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 218)

Au cœur ancien: un ordre clair, régenté, normalisé. Autour: une couronne bouillonnante, indéchiffrable, impossible, masquée par la misère et les charges obscurcies de l'Histoire. (236)
A central feature of the reading of space performed throughout *Texaco* thus constitutes the validation of a different culture, while the novel's structuring device concerns the attempt to bring about a “mutation de l'esprit” (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 300) which would allow the suburb or peripheral zone its own existence beyond the confining logic of a Western perspective.

The opening of *Texaco* announces the arrival of the *urbaniste* figure who, as I have already stated, is closely modelled on a real-life urban sociologist, Serge Letchimy, whose pioneering article ‘Tradition et créativité: les mangroves urbaines de Fort-de-France’ (1984) provides a reference point for Chamoiseau’s reading of the space of Texaco in the novel. The ‘mutation de l'esprit’ evoked by the *urbaniste* is also articulated by narrative means: the town-planner of the novel’s opening stands for the “mairie moderne, qui détruisaient les quartiers populaires pour les civiliser en clapiers d'achélèmes” (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 19). In the view of the mairie, what Glissant has called one of the “lieux stratégiques de l'aliénation” (1981: 47), Texaco is little more than a tumour, an offence to civil propriety, while its aim is to “rationaliser son espace, penser son extension et conquérir les poches d'insalubrité qui le coiffaient d'une couronne d'épines” (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 40-41). It is only through contact with Marie-Sophie that *l'urbaniste* comes to see Texaco not as an eyesore, an insalubrious tumour, but as an expression of the Creole way of life and, crucially, as a repository of “ses pauvres histoires” (212).

Reading the space of Texaco becomes a central mode of access to the unwritten past. Thus the town-planner who, a convert to the Creole cause, earns the epithet of *le Christ*, realises what the forces of order and rationalisation have failed to, then, namely that Texaco represents the very logic of the Caribbean (Creole) people, their history and aesthetics:

On n’a fait que pleurer l’insalubrité de Texaco et de ces autres Quartiers. Moi je veux m’inquiéter de ce qu’ils disent. Je les entends épeler l’autre poème urbain, au rythme neuf, déroutant, qu’ils nous faut décoder et même accompagner... Prendre leur poétique sans craindre de se salir les mains des états de sa gangue. Quelle barbarie ce serait de raser ce système, et quel recul sans nom. (186)

The spatial language of the town-centre, on the other hand, which is symbolic, like its monumental architecture, of neo-colonial authority, evokes little of the “mémoire des lieux” (255) which is so crucial to understanding Texaco. Indeed this centre reeks of artificiality, of the rectilinear Cartesianism which Césaire, in *Cahier d’un retour au*
pays natal, called “son fardeau géométrique de croix éternellement recommençante” (1995: 72). Thus, as Marie-Sophie points out, “les rues étaient toutes droites et se coupaient carrées. Rien n'évoquait une ville. Tout était fabriqué sans souci de mémoire” (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 213). Moreover, for Chamoiseau, the En-ville as a symbol of centralised power is a translation of older structures of domination: “l’En-ville, c’était une Grand-case. La Grand-case des Grand-cases” (1992a: 107). And whereas the grid of the central district evokes nothing but the imposition of a colonial ideology based on rational order, Texaco, with its fragile paths (urban equivalents of the forest tracée) and chaotically baroque structure, embodies uncertain histories and what Chamoiseau calls “un désordre de paroles à la fois obscures et fortes” (411).

At first sight then, Chamoiseau seems to be opposing Creole and non-Creole spaces in a simple binarism. And yet, I would argue, to support this view of the novel is to overlook the overarching concept of a ville créole which, in Texaco, encompasses both quartier populaire and En-ville and which necessitates a dynamic, relational, negotiation between the two. Moreover this superficially oppositional structure, even when it appears as a binarism, is not a classical opposition of the form A≠B. The space of Texaco, crucially, is not of the same order as that of the town-centre, but, as the town-planner realises, presents a different kind of space altogether. It is perhaps what Foucault would have called un espace autre or even, as I will be arguing, a version of third space. The central relationship in this context is the encounter between Marie-Sophie Laborieux and the town-planner (or Christ) which forces the latter to rethink his approach to the space of Texaco. “Face à la ville créole”, concludes the town-planner, “l’urbaniste créole doit oublier La ville”, in favour of a new approach to urban spatiality, or what he calls “urbanisme créole” (300). It is this assertion of a new mode of thinking the city, and not simply the opposition of different urban zones, upon which a reading of Texaco must focus. Burton, for example, who criticises Chamoiseau’s view of Fort-de-France in the novel, seems to me to conflate too easily the description, or notion of En-ville (which is crucially defined as “non pas une géographie urbaine [...] mais essentiellement [...] une sorte de projet” (492)) with the central areas which occupy the same space. For Chamoiseau, I would argue, and a cursory glance at his other works (Une enfance créole in particular, but also Martinique for example) confirms this: the En-ville is a latent project, a site of humanity, which the foundation of Texaco illustrates rather than opposes.
Texaco can thus be seen to contain a two-step project: first a kind of opposition of cultural difference, but simultaneously an attempt to overthrow the very binarism which such oppositional forms suggest, through the positing of a Creole system of thought which is itself non-oppositional as well as internally diverse. Indeed, one of the architects of créolité, the linguist Jean Bemabé, has said that “la créolité est au-delà des oppositions simplistes mises en œuvre par une pensée dominatrice situant l’Homme dans un rapport antagonique avec la nature, l’histoire” (Confiant, 1992: 6). In other words, this view of créolité would stress the organic, almost ecological stance of the movement, with its relational, non-exclusive philosophy. It is here that the notion of the mangrove comes into play, for the mangrove is both an in-between space, symbolic of the hybrid, syncretic, view of the Caribbean which I have been outlining in this thesis, and an essential part of the Caribbean eco-system. The association of créolité with the ecological ASSAUPAMAR group, to which I have already referred, underlines the dual significance of the mangrove-metaphor as central image-system of the movement.

Instead of a static opposition, then, Texaco’s evocation of in-between spaces, symbolised by the mangrove, must be read in terms of Glissantian Relation, as the expression of what the créolistes have termed “une dynamique constante” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 50). Through the image of the mangrove, then, Chamoiseau presents Texaco, En-ville and countryside as co-dependent spaces. For Texaco itself, as the urbaniste comes to recognise, is a kind of urban mangrove, an area of interface (or negotiation, we might say) which, contrary to received wisdom, is essential to the equilibrium of Caribbean culture, just as the mangrove swamp, initially perceived as stagnant and non-productive, turns out to be the vital regulator of a tropical eco-system:

Je compris soudain que Texaco n’étaient pas ce que les Occidentaux appellent un bidonville, mais une mangrove, une mangrove urbaine. La mangrove semble de prime abord hostile aux existences. Il est difficile d’admettre que, dans ses angoisses de racines, d’ombres moussues, d’eaux voilées, la mangrove puisse être un tel berceau de vie pour les crabes, les poissons, les langoustes, l’écosystème marin. Elle ne semble appartenir ni à la terre, ni à la mer un peu comme Texaco n’est ni de la ville ni de la campagne. Pourtant, la ville se renforce en puisant dans la mangrove urbaine de Texaco, comme dans celle des autres quartiers, exactement comme la mer se repeuple par cette langue vitale qui la relie aux chimies des mangroves. (1992a: 336)

208 Cf Confiant (1993a: 300).
The hybridity of the mangrove as a form of *third space* is indicated by Chamoiseau’s insistence on its intermediate nature - “ni de la ville ni de la campagne”, a structure which recalls Derrida’s “double impératif contradictoire” (1991: 77), not to mention the idea of Créoles as “ni Européens, ni Africains, ni Asiatiques” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 13). The intermediate nature of this urban mangrove makes of it what Derrida, as I indicated in chapter 3, has called an “espace de la relation” (1996: 39).

The choice of Texaco, however, irrevocably marked by the stain of multinational capital, also underscores the importance of the *third space*, in the Lefebvrean sense, as a form of resistance, not only to direct forces of neo-colonialism (the mairie, the CRS and so on), but also more indirectly to the threat posed by late capitalist enterprise (tourism in particular) which, for Glissant, Chamoiseau and many others, is seen as eroding the economic, and by extension cultural, autonomy of Creole Martinique. Texaco is, after all, described by Marie-Sophie as “mon œuvre, notre quartier, notre champ de bataille et de résistance” (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 39), while she herself is a “femme-matador” (40). Both of these images are reinforced elsewhere in Chamoiseau’s œuvre by the figure of *le vieux guerrier* (1997a) and by the reference in *Texaco* itself to “une guerre bien ancienne” (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 20).

I have argued throughout this thesis that space interacts in complex ways with epistemological and narratological structures. If the equation of history and identity is the predominant theme of much of recent Caribbean literature, then space and spatial metaphor is the vehicle and filter of its expression. Just as the suburb of Texaco constitutes an urban mangrove, then, the interface between a historical continuum (the rural backdrop of slavery and resistance) and an urban modernity, so Texaco the text forms a kind of epistemological mangrove, a space which negotiates between the fluid and untraceable swell of the sea and the *terra firma* of (self-) knowledge. For the mangrove is that third type of thing (Plato’s *triton genos*), which, while it throws into doubt the divisions borne of binarism, does not negate the usefulness of either term.

In what follows, then, I shall attempt to demonstrate how the third space of Texaco’s urban mangrove is reinforced, echoed, paralleled in the space of the text itself. As the urbaniste informs us, for example, the relational dynamics of the *ville créole*
imply a refutation of the linear evolution which sidelines syncretic patterns of interaction:

La Dame m’a enseigné à percevoir la ville comme un écosystème, tout en équilibres et en interactions. Avec des cimetières et des berceaux, des langues et des langages, des momifications et des battements de chairs. Et rien qui progresse, ou qui recule, aucune avancée linéaire ou quelques évolution darwinienne. Rien que le tournoiement hasardeux du vivant. (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 329)

How does Chamoiseau deploy textual space as a means of reinforcing his self-anounced validation of impure identity, knowledge and history? Texaco functions on a number of narratorial levels. The primary source of knowledge about the foundation of Texaco is Marie-Sophie herself, but her story is also partly that of her father, as well as composed of other, more distant fragments of memory, the Noutéka, folk tales and sayings. This sense of infinite regression is compounded by Chamoiseau’s montage technique which consists of setting a superficially linear unfolding side-by-side with other textual voices, principally the journal entries of Marie-Sophie and the urbaniste’s ‘notes’, which, to quote Bernabé, make of Texaco a novel "linéaire en sa trajectoire, baroque en son énonciation" (Confiant, 1992: 9). The linearity of the narrative is also broken up by the Chamoiseau’s own intrusive metafictional gloss. This final feature amounts to a self-conscious admission that he, in the rôle of marqueur de paroles, has organised the body of the text in such a way that even the seemingly direct narration of Marie-Sophie becomes filtered by an authorial figure whose own reliability is open to question. There is ultimately no origin, no epistemological degree zero in this text.

What this entails, however, is not a rejection of knowledge absolutely, it does not negate the truth-value of any of the narratives individually, that is. Instead it proposes a relational version of history in which no single version or narrative is allowed to take precedence over the other. The history of Texaco is not a grand récit, in other words, but a multiple weave of diverse histories, that “tresse d’histoires” of which Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant have spoken (1993: 26). This absence of a unified History is a lesson which Marie-Sophie learns early on:

Oh Sophie ma doudoune, tu dis «l’Histoire», mais ça ne veut rien dire, il y a tellement de vies et tellement de destins, tellement de tracées pour faire notre seul chemin. Toi tu dis l’Histoire, moi je dis les histoires. Celle que tu crois tige-maîtresse de notre manioc n’est qu’une tige parmi charge d’autres... (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 117)
The weave of *histoires* is a conscious attempt in *Texaco* to provide a counter-history, but, in line with the hybrid vision of *créolité*, the aim is also to "dénouer leur Histoire en nos mille cent histoires" (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 74). And yet since this mosaic of *diversité* (Bernabé, Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1993: 54) is seen as the defining feature of *créolité* itself, the performance of a composite historical narrative still retains its force as an expression of the Creole identity with which Chamoiseau invests the space of *Texaco*.

Now the narrative structure of *Texaco*, whose chaotic textuality undoes the scientificity of Western History in favour of more uncertain oral histories, is a response to the question posed by Marie-Sophie Laborieux to the author figure:

Oiseau Cham, existe-t-il une écriture informée de la parole, et des silences, et qui reste vivante, qui bouge en cercle et circule tout le temps, irriguant sans cesse de vie ce qui a été écrit avant, et qui réinvente le cercle à chaque fois comme le font les spirales qui sont à tout moment dans le futur et dans l'avant, l'une modifiant l'autre, sans cesse, sans perdre une unité difficile à nommer? (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 413)

The montage technique, to which I have just referred, with its juxtaposition of multiple narrative viewpoints, is compounded by a baroque circularity operating at both micro (sentence and word) level and macro (text) level. In terms of sentence structure, *Texaco* exhibits the features of the *conteur*’s baroque discourse, as in the following example:

*C’est Labadie qui tombait papillon, quand le papillon échoua sur une lampe on la vit gueule brûlée un samedi gloria, mi Aristide déguisé en bossu pour aller pichonner sa doudou sans que madame le sache jusqu’à ce que l’En-ville chante Bossu-bossu, donne-la-bosse-à-ton-corps sur les côtés devant-derrière.* (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 334-335)

Pépin has described this proliferating syntax as an “écriture dense et vivace qui prend appui sur une première phrase (le plus souvent courte) et qui soudain se met à danser comme un balet de guêpes inopportunément dérangés” (Confiant, 1992: 9). The text’s narrative circularity, meanwhile, is most obviously performed by the episode of the arrival of the town-planner, which, introduced at the outset (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 19), returns towards the end of the novel (483). The stone thrown at the *urbaniste* is also a focus of indeterminacy, the absence of a unified narrative dissolving linear certainty: "qui avait donc lancé la pierre? Les réponses à cette question furent tellement prolifiques que la vérité vraie nous échappa toujours" (20). All of these features, it is clear, stem from the Creole *conteur* tradition, embodied by Marie-Sophie in her rôle as "L’Informatrice" (494), of whom we are told the following:
Elle parlait d'une voix lente, ou parfois très rapide [...] Elle avait des périodes de voix-par-claire comme certains grands conteurs. Dans ces moments-là, ses phrases tourbillonnaient au rythme du délire, et je n'y comprenais hak: il ne me restait qu'à m'abandonner (débarrassé de ma raison) à cet enchantement hypnotique. (494)

Marie-Sophie's proliferating discourse, which informs the very tissue of Chamoiseau's writing style, relates to Esternome's invocation, "pense aux courbes. Les caraïbes vivaient une courbe" (159), a statement which ties together the poetics of what Glissant calls "le roman des Amériques" (1981: 254) and crélité's formulation of Caribbean identity.

This narrative circularity also pertains to the historical vision of Chamoiseau's novel, however, in the sense that it subverts the teleological thrust of Hegelian History, that logical unfolding of universal Reason which is explicitly resisted by the insistence on opacity and indeterminacy. It recalls what Chamoiseau describes as "cette eau dévalante de l'Histoire" (123) which, we are told later, "n'avance pas comme un fil mais comme une chien ferré, qui va devant, qui boule en arrière, qui frissonne, qui dérape et qui vire droit-cassé" (375-376). Thus, although the chronology which opens Texaco seems at first sight to suggest a linear narrative of traditional form, closer inspection reveals a number of ironic twists which are all the more effective because they operate under the guise of a more conventional textual strategy. The notion of a parallel Creole history, challenging the primacy of a singular, linear History, is introduced through the typographical strategy of italicising 'imaginary' events within the structure of a known and dated historical chronology. More significantly the sections of the text, its apparently linear skeleton, are organised in terms of building materials which are simultaneously an expression of the quotidian reality espoused by the writers of créolité and a deflation of Historical progression. After all the devastating effects of bétonage which constitute the endpoint of Texaco's chronology mean that this succession of materials can in no way be seen as the optimistic progression on which Western History is predicated. The life of Texaco, as the urbaniste declares, contains "rien qui progresse, ou qui recule, aucune avancée linéaire ou quelque évolution darwinienne. Rien que le tournoiement hasardeux du vivant" (329).

As I have indicated it is not only history which is seen as hybrid or multiple in Chamoiseau's novel. The indeterminate nature of space - the mangrove, the interstice and its many textual correlatives - also reflects the insistence of créolité on hybrid
ethnicity, a notion which underscores the view of Caribbean identity as multiple. The
notion of créolité, according to Chamoiseau, derives from what he calls “le fait de
nous être trouvés, à un moment donné de l’histoire, à la confluence de plusieurs
peuples, de plusieurs cultures, de plusieurs langues” (Confiant, 1992: 59). Similarly
the notion of ‘unfinished identities’ which I raised in chapter 3 is echoed in
Chamoiseau’s statement, in Elmire des sept bonheurs, that “l’être humain est incomplet”
(1998a: 29). For Elmire, in common with many of Chamoiseau’s protagonists, is
characterised by an impossible-to-fix hybridity which undoes epistemological, or
ontological, fixity:

Il essaya de l’évoquer. La chose fut difficile. Sorte de chabine, mais aussi câpresse, mais
aussi mulâtresse, mais aussi koulie, mais aussi caraïbe, mais aussi négresse, vaguement
chinoise et syrienne, une beauté variable, fluide comme une acclamation de l’océan vers le
ciel. (1998a: 33)

Elmire, as archetypically Creole, stands for the ‘variable’, ‘fluid’ nature of Caribbean
identity and a loss of origins. Similarly, in Texaco, Mme Latisse, the owner of the
haberdashery where Marie-Sophie works, is a mulâtresse, whose ethnic make-up is
illegible: “distraction favorite des clientes: déterminer son origine. Mulâtresse-

In Texaco the evocation, and validation, of multiple origins and hybrid ethnicity on
a personal level is also extended to the level of the social. The eponymous quartier is
home to a diverse range of inhabitants, symbolising créolité’s refusal of singular origin:

Pêcheurs attardés, djobeurs, dockers du port, muscles de service dans hangars et magasins,
réveurs sans origine dont l’identité n’était que l’étiquette de leur rhum préféré, Caribéens en
exil, mulâtres tombés, voyageurs qui menaient à Texaco une de leurs sept vies avec une
concubine et un chapelet d’enfants, plus deux-trois particuliers à propos desquels j’aurai le
temps d’avancer le détail. (35, my italics)

This loss of origin, as we saw in relation to Traversée de la manque, is expressed
spatially by a critique of racination. At the same time, however, the notion of rooting
per se is never refused out of hand. And yet Chamoiseau’s presentation of Texaco’s
multiple histories, it seems to me, has all too often been characterised in binary
terms. Burton, for example, criticises the novel for what he sees as its inflexible

209 Cf Glissant’s insistent repetition, with regard to a literature of the impossible in the work of
Faulkner, that ‘Cela est difficile’ (1996a: 302), ‘Mais cela est difficile’ (314), as well as what he calls ‘la
difficile Relation’ (305). Cf also Chamoiseau’s own statement, in an interview with Alain Bullo,
opposition between the world of the mornes and that of the plaine, between the peripheral suburb of Texaco and the central En-ville. He even goes so far as to say that “Chamoiseau succombe au dualisme réductionniste que la créolité reproche [...] à la théorie de la négritude” (1997: 199-200). In so doing, I would argue, Burton seems to disregard the element of mediation between the two, the privileging of space as a vector of the in-between. For to my mind, the spatial schema deployed by Chamoiseau in Texaco is best described not as a binarism, but as a tripartite structure, a feature identified by Christine Chivallon in her article ‘Eloge de la spatialité’ (1996). This triple structuration, of course, relates to the other triadic, or hybrid, patterns explored in this thesis which set themselves up in opposition to binary thought-systems. The defining characteristic spatial form of the Chamoiseau text is that of the in-between, the third space or interlectal space. Thus the spatial indeterminacy of the mangrove becomes what Chivallon calls “cette troisième figure identitaire” (35) mediating between l’identité-racine and l’identité mobile. It constitutes, in other words, “une synthèse entre la cohésion et l’éparpillement collectifs” (35).

Texaco, and Chivallon has been one of the few critics to emphasise this point, contains both a call for cultural cohesion, an “espace créole de solidarités neuves” (Chamoiseau, 1992a: 410), and what she terms an “éloge du désordre et du multiple” (1996: 31) without privileging either. Thus while Chamoiseau’s novel points towards a degree of fluidity, “multilingue, multiraciale, multi-historique, ouverte, sensible à la diversité du monde” (1992a: 243), this mobility is never seen to efface the need for a form of community: “l’unité du peuple [...] est en effet bien trop présente pour faire disparaître toute idée d’ordre, de lignes fédératrices ou de cohésion” (Chivallon, 1996: 40). Rather than oppose these seemingly contradictory demands, Chamoiseau’s novel is, as I have suggested, built on “des triades plutôt que des dichotomies” (40). And in terms of identity it is the notion of the rhizome which encodes this thirding evoked in the mangrove-image. For the rhizome is a non-territorial conceptualisation of being, a manner of belonging which is rooted, but non-exclusive, and which performs “une négociation entre d’un côté le mouvement et le multi-appartenance, et de l’autre l’ancrage et la stabilité” (41).

The idea of negotiation introduced by Chivallon recalls the use of this term in postcolonial theory by Bhabha and others. It is also a feature of créolisation, which, in Glissant’s definition, means the possibility of being simultaneously “là et ailleurs,
enraciné et ouvert [...] en accord et en errance” (1990: 46). This co-dependent dialogue as a form of negotiation between enracinement and errance which, as we have seen, underpins much contemporary writing from the French Antilles, is figured spatially by the natural images of the mangrove and the rhizome, but is perhaps best captured in the poetics of what Glissant calls a chaos-monde. The notion of chaos, which Glissant will explore more fully in texts from Poétique de la Relation to Tout-monde, nevertheless appears in embryonic form in Texaco. Existing outside the grid-logic of the town-centre, Texaco represents what Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant call “le chaos de cettehumanité nouvelle que nous sommes” (1993: 22). And crucially, for Chamoiseau, chaos becomes the vital impulse linking Texaco and Creole culture to the wider space of a tout-monde: “sans chaos, comment comprendre le monde d’aujourd’hui. Lorsque nous parlons de la créolité, nous voulons parler de cet état-là, où l’on se trouve en un lieu chaotique”.

I have attempted to point up here a certain ambiguity within the project of créolité relating to the apparently contradictory (double) imperatives of, on the one hand, the search for truth or authenticity and, on the other, an almost postmodern drive to do away with such notions in the first place. I have focused in particular on the way in which Chamoiseau defines Creole identity and culture in terms of the history-space equation. Ultimately, however, it is chaos which, I believe, constitutes the key conceptual tool for articulating the Caribbean’s multiple histories, spaces and identities and the superficially conflictual demands which each of these generate. The theorisation of chaos in Caribbean writing, and that of Glissant in particular, will therefore form the theme of my next, and final, chapter.

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CHAPTER SEVEN
Spatialising Identity: the chaos-monde

'J'ai vu ses yeux, j'ai vu ses yeux
égarés chercher l'espace du monde'
Edouard Glissant (1997d: 10)

The writing of the contemporary Francophone Caribbean is shot through with multiple demands. In terms of the preceding chapters these could be summarised as, firstly, a drive towards the communitarian in parallel with a suspicion of the 'closed' community and, secondly, an assertion of historical consciousness side by side with a deconstruction of History-as-notion. Now these tensions, which, following Derrida, I have called ‘double imperatives’, are primarily articulated, as I have contended, in terms of a preoccupation with the spatial which forms the overarching focus of this thesis. Consequently my reading of key texts here has adopted the organisational strategy of a progressive opening, from the isolated community of Condé's Rivière au Sel, through Chamoiseau's investigation of urban spaces to the wider perspective of a Glissantian world-space which forms the subject of this chapter. But as I have also argued, spatiality and thematics exist in a necessary dialogue with one another, so that each of these spatial investigations has simultaneously explored a number of problematics relevant to the Caribbean. Here it is the spatiahsed representation of identity, simultaneously imaginary and textual, and formulated specifically in terms of a dialogue between the local and the global, with which I intend to engage.

A moment of opening lies at the heart of Glissant's project. It is suggested by Thaël's initiatory descent of the eponymous Lézarde river in his 1958 novel and resurfaces in the guise of the walker-figure in the 'plage noire' section of Poétique de la Relation. Likewise, in Tout-monde, we read that “Colino-fou-en-tête [...] nous ramassait en foule dans l'espace délimité à l'infini par ses bras” (1993a: 22), while, in Faulkner, Mississippi, Glissant urges an “appréciation de l'aUleurs: comme quand on regarde sur l'horizon, en essayant de se faire une lunette avec les mains jointes” (1996a: 320). A few examples among many, these images constitute an often repeated appeal, in the Glissantian œuvre, for a kind of worlding, an acknowledgement of what he calls an “espace du monde” (1997e: 213). In more recent texts, meanwhile, the movement
announced in *La Lézarde* with the birth of a Martinican people whose destiny is “d’avoir crié vers le monde” (1958: 236), has culminated in the notion of a tout-monde. At the same time, however, we find a parallel insistence on the irreducibility of the particular and the local, a desire to stave off “la mondialité réalisée par le bas” (2000a). Far from constituting a contradiction, we shall see in due course how the dialogue between this world-space and the opacities of a local imaginary becomes the generator of Glissant’s conception of relational identity.

Crucially, though, and this insight informs the argument of the present chapter, Glissant’s tout-monde is also a chaos-monde. Just as the tout-monde is defined as “notre univers tel qu’il change et perdure en échangeant” (1997e: 176), so his notion of chaos-monde reflects “le choc actuel de tant de cultures qui s’embrassent, se repoussent, disparaissent, subsistent pourtant, s’endorment ou se transforment, lentement ou à vitesse foudroyante” (1997e: 22). I want to argue here that chaos, in the Glissantian sense, can be seen as the meta-concept capable of articulating, at a theoretical level, both the fluid process of cultural interaction which is the defining characteristic of créolisation and the spatial metaphor of identity given in the notion of rhizome. What both notions suggest is a way of being which is dynamically constituted, a system which permits both change and continuity, rooting and errance. The central notion of créolisation, for example, is defined by Glissant as “un processus continu capable de produire de l’identique et du différent” (2000a), while, in terms of identity, the perceived dichotomy between sedentary belonging and nomadism, between self-assertion and hermetic alterity, can be dissolved in favour of a more fluid approach in which what I see as ‘stubborn chunks’ of identity persist within the chaotic soup of the tout-monde. Consequently I propose to examine the question of identity, together with the attendant poetics of créolisation and rhizomatic vegetation, through the filter of both a chaotic imaginary and a chaotic textuality.

In terms of Glissant’s overall trajectory it is important to realise that this perspective is not the exclusive property of his late period; it is not suddenly discovered, that is, but forms a recurring feature of his writing. Glissant, by his own admission, makes a virtue of theoretical re-cycling: thus *Poétique de la Relation* is described as “l’écho recomposé, ou la redite en spirale” (1990: 28) of earlier works *L’intention poétique* and *Le discours antillais*. More specifically, in *Introduction à une poétique du divers* he says that “depuis mon premier ouvrage de prose [...] j’ai posé [...] la problématique du chaos-monde” (1996b: 82). It comes as no surprise, then, to find
him asserting, in Soleil de la conscience: "il est un temps d'ouverture chaotique, de pressentiment anarchique de l'histoire, de mâchage furieux des mots, de saisie vertigineuse des clartés qui, cependant qu'on naît à soi, vous balancent au bel avant du monde" (1997c: 21). What we do find, however, is that this dialogue becomes more explicitly articulated in the post-1987 period, from Mahagonny onwards, that is. Although, as Belugue has pointed out, then, "ce balancement entre le lieu incontournable et Tailleurs, cet aller-retour entre le soi et l'autre, et du lieu au monde [...] exprime le sens d'une recherche poursuivie depuis quarante ans, posée en filigrane et en jalon dans toute l'œuvre", it is "jamais aussi clairement exprimé que dans les derniers ouvrages que sont Tout-monde et Traité du tout-monde" (1999: 51).

Whereas I have tended to draw mainly on texts such as Le discours antillais for my analysis of Martinican space and society in previous chapters, therefore, it is the more recent works, including Glissant's latest novel Sartorius (1999), which form the backbone of the present discussion.

Both an exposition of Glissant's relational thinking and a reading of literary texts, this chapter also functions as a kind of summary of the thesis as a whole, however, for in Glissant's multi-faceted œuvre I detect the basis for a distinctively Caribbean philosophy, with its own terminology and theoretical style. Ultimately, it seems to me, the importance of Glissant derives both from the spatial nature of his work, embodying as it does "une philosophie qui place le rapport à l'espace au centre de toutes les préoccupations" (Belugue, 1999: 51), but also from the fact that the relational thrust of his thinking provides a perspective capable of articulating the numerous ambiguities of what we might provisionally call the postcolonial experience and which I have identified as forms of 'double imperative'. In the first place, then, Glissant's writing can be seen to reflect the overarching spatial thrust of this thesis; in the second place, more importantly perhaps, the negotiational aspect of Relation, figured variously as "aller-retour" (1997e: 183) or "double portée" (1990: 197), underpins my negotiational approach to questions of identity and to that of the (Francophone) Caribbean more specifically.

In keeping with the literary thrust of my investigations, I shall be focusing on one novel in particular. As well as an important expression of the globalised imaginary of the later Glissant, Tout-monde is, of all his works, the one which has provoked the greatest split in critical opinion and as such throws up a number of intriguing questions to which I shall be returning in due course. Whereas Chris Bongie, for
example, praises the novel as "his [...] most aesthetically satisfying work of fiction" (1998: 181), Burton finds Glissant floundering in a didactic backwater, damning the novel a roman à thèse which betrays "l'essoufflement d'une pensée qui ne fait plus que tourner en rond" (1997: 99). Peter Hallward, meanwhile, has adopted a more radical stance, arguing that Glissant has relinquished the search for a "national specificity" (2000: 118), so characteristic of his earlier works (La Lézarde in particular), in favour of a disengaged willingness to "go with the flow" (9). Paradoxically, he believes, the increased emphasis on Relation ultimately mutates into its logical opposite, a philosophy which is "singular or non-relational through and through" (7).

It should be obvious by now that I am unwilling to agree with this overall assessment, but some form of response is necessary given the backlash which has greeted Glissant's theories as they gain greater currency in academic circles. Broadly speaking I shall be arguing that attending to the poetics of chaos provides both a response to some of Glissant's detractors and the most cogent means of articulating the spatial dynamics at work in his texts. Moreover, as my reading of Glissant's later works should indicate, the dynamics of relational identity are accompanied by forms of an innovative chaotic textuality which confirm Glissant's reputation as both a novelist and a theoretician of note. A survey of some of these techniques, from Mahagoni to Sartorius, should give the measure of a body of work in which the boundaries between philosophy, literature and politics are increasingly blurred. Before we proceed to explore the way in which chaos-theory is deployed by Glissant and other Caribbean writers, and how this theorisation relates to textual practices which I shall be calling 'chaotic', it is worth setting out a few features of Glissantian Relation both as a vector of identity and as the organising principle of his representation of space.
Both of the preceeding text-based chapters have been built from the juxtaposition of a space and a theme. Thus my discussion of Condé analysed the ‘Lieu clos’ of Rivière au Sel in terms of the notion of community, while Chamoiseau’s *Texaco* was read both in terms of the city-space and as an exploration of history. In my concluding analysis of Glissant’s recent work I shall be examining the movement towards the real-and-imaginary space of a global *tout-monde* in tandem with a (chaotic) theory of identity, the question upon which, perhaps more than any other, postcolonial Caribbean writing hinges. And if identity, whether interpersonal or cultural, is also the cornerstone of Glissant’s project, then what I want to suggest is that the dual engagement of identity is figured through various dialogic sets of spatial metaphor - rooting and nomadism, trees and grasses, gardens and sands.

We have already seen how, in the thinking of Lefebvre, the insistence on the ‘production of space’ pulls both a mental/philosophical representation of space and the ‘real’ working out of geo-physical spaces into its orbit. In Glissant’s analysis this fundamental concept is summarised in the statement, introduced in the opening pages of *Poétique de la Relation*, that “la pensée s’espace réellement au monde” (1990: 13). It is this notion, I would argue, which fuels his critique of the Caribbean in terms of both colonial Cartesianism and anti-colonial re-rooting in a mythical *ailleurs* (i.e. the Africa of *Négritude* poetry). Why? Because both succumb to the temptation to essentialise notions of identity and value in terms of an ‘absolute’, or universal, space. Thus the idea of *Relation* can be defined as a questioning of this kind of ‘absolute space’ on the grounds that it tends to assimilate the particular to the universal in a movement towards *le Même* (1981: 190), a generalising process which underpins both the colonial imposition of Western values and *Négritude*’s oppositional attempt to ‘rediscover’ a universal ‘blackness’ in the space of a lost Africa.

In this sense, what we have already seen as Glissant’s suspicion of rooted, ‘atavistic’ cultures resists both originated or filiated communities, such as those of the
Mediterranean, but equally the confidently self-assertive thrust of Négritude identity figured in the Césairean image of the phallic volcano or vertical tree. This leads Glissant to base his version of a pan-American identity on a poetics “non pas de l’arbre mais de la végétation”, which he finds in the paintings of Wilfredo Lam. Instead of singular verticality, he proposes a jungle of diverse and intertwined herbage, one of the dominant images of his Mahagoni. Vertical filiation thus becomes horizontal étendue (1990: 59-77), the slip-sliding of relational space and errant nomadism.

On first sight Glissant’s recent thinking appears as a refusal of roots and of settling of any kind, prompting some critics to see a novel such as Tout-monde, for example, as an unproblematic celebration of migrancy. And yet, as the notion of rhizome reminds us, the suspicion of rooting does not equate to a refusal of racination per se. The rhizome after all is not a negation of the root, but rather a hybrid modification based on the critique of the single root or racine unique. What Glissant is proposing, it seems to me, is not an abdication of the Self or of location, but rather a willingness to open out the singular root into a multi-relational system of roots. Just as Lam’s work is simultaneously “peinture de l’enracinement et peinture de l’envol” (1981: 230), so the rhizome becomes an open-ended root-system which maintains “le fait de l’enracinement, mais récuse l’idée d’une racine totalitaire” (1990: 23). Similarly, as we shall see below, vegetation in Glissant’s later novels is not simply opposed to arborescence, but subverts it. Consequently, to read a novel such as Mahagoni as either a re-affirmation of the singular root or as a manifesto of anarchic grass, incompatible with the continuity of “les arbres qui vivent longtemps” (1997b: 13), is to misrepresent what I see as Glissant’s insistent desire to relate the two.

While the mahogany tree, in Glissant’s 1987 novel, retains its force of rooted mystery, it comes to be seen as increasingly imbricated, in the manner of the surrounding herbage:

La plante résistait, mais quelque chose avait bougé dans les profondeurs [...] le tronc continuait en une résille multipliée de fines racines, courant l’une sur l’autre, brillantes dans leur couleur marron, qui enveloppaient absolument une roche ensouchée dans la terre. (1997b: 181)

These images are, fortunately, not simply an evocation of relational identity, although this is the major thrust of my investigations here; the metaphorical interrelation of

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roots and branches, trees and grass, is also used as a correlative for other Glissantian thematics. Space, that is, becomes the nexus around which the key terms of Glissant's thinking are articulated. As Dash points out, for example, this relation of *l'arbre unique* to *herbage* in *Mahagony* serves to reinforce the thematics of *marronage* with which the novel concerns itself. The mahogany is not ultimately a solitary tree, therefore, but "multiplié en tant d'arbres dans tant de pays du monde" (Glissant, 1997b: 193); likewise, its resistance is relayed, just as Gani's *marronage*, less heroic than that of the original *Négateur*-figure, is made possible by the help of various women who deposit food and other items (Dash, 1995: 169). In *Sartorius*, meanwhile, the imbrication of roots becomes a metaphor for the chaotic web of ancestry, "comme si ce fondateur s'était confondu dans les branches et les feuilles de cet arbre imposant, qui ressemble à un baobab aux entrelacs de plus en plus serrés et inextricables" (1999: 209).

Consequently, it seems to me, Glissant's *œuvre* can be summarised as a double impulse: in the first place, a reassertion of a specifically Caribbean *lieu* which, in its constitutive opacity, resists generalising universals,²¹² and, in the second, a desire to relate, or 'relay', this particularism both to other spaces and to a space of the Other. This process, it is worth noting, is reflected in the notion of *antillanité*, which Glissant has described as "dans ce lieu d'où nous levons, femmes et hommes de la Caraïbe, la volonté de rassembler et diffracter les Ante-Îles qui nous confirment en nous-mêmes et nous rallient à un ailleurs" (1990: 212). *Rassembler et diffracter*: we shall see in what follows how this spatial figuration parallels a discourse of identity in terms of a dialogue capable of preserving the Self and the local while enabling its relation to the outside and to a notion of alterity. In particular I shall be seeking to demonstrate how the dialogic element of Glissant's thinking undermines accusations of dilution or sublimation which some critics have levelled at his notions of chaos and *tout-monde*. In fact, I shall be arguing, chaos is precisely the notion which, contrary to initial expectations, relates the specific to the whole, and *vice-versa*, maintains gardens - "la part secrète du poème" - in the mobile sands which make up "le tournoi ivre des engageures du monde" (Glissant 1997e: 11).

²¹² Cf Glissant (1981: 249): 'contre l'universel généralisant le premier recours est la volonté rêche de *rester au lieu* [...] notre lieu, c'est les Antilles'. In *Sartorius*, meanwhile, *a pensée du relatif* is seen as opposed to a 'rêve universel [...] l'avancée des idées du progrès' (1999: 229).
A theory of Caribbean chaos

‘Les pensées inquiétantes ne sont pas condamnées, ni les pensées incertaines’

Edouard Glissant (1999: 33)

“Vina is always leaving people and places,” Salman Rushdie has said about the heroine of his latest novel, *The Ground Beneath her Feet* (1999a). “We all have conflicting dreams within us”, he continues, “the dream of home and the dream of leaving home. Societies depend on the idea of home for their very existence so the dream of departure has always been less socially acceptable and yet that is what all our moves are about [...] I wanted to put what is often considered marginal - leaving, departure - at the centre of the novel” (1999b: 15). Rushdie’s description of Vina, so reminiscent of Glissant’s errant protagonists, reveals a strategy of reversal - *putting what is often considered marginal at the centre* - which seems to be a characteristic feature of postcolonial fiction. Thus the buzzwords of current (Francophone) Caribbean writing - métissage, créolité, opacité and so on - can all be seen to reappropriate terms, images or ideas seen to be denigrated in colonial and neo-colonial discourse, with their values of transparency and purity.

The recent Caribbean interest in chaos-theory, with its emphasis on the unpredictable, is a case in point. As Harris points out:

Chaos is misconceived as an archaic phenomenon. Whereas it may be visualised as portraying an ‘open’ universe. Continuities running out of the mystery of the past into the unknown future yield proportions of originality, proportions of the ‘genuinely new’. (1999: 49)

What I hope to demonstrate is that, in Glissant’s work in particular, the notion of *an open universe* does not imply the anarchy with which chaos is traditionally associated. Instead the recently articulated field of chaos-theory is taken by Glissant as an affirmation of relational dynamics and as a metaphor of identity. Articulated spatially this can be seen as a tension between home and departure, that open dialectic of place and displacement (*enracinement* and *errance*) to which Rushdie points. Additionally I intend to show how this dialogue can be related to the postcolonial opposition of various kinds of stew imagery - chowder, ajiaco, migan - to the ubiquitous and homogenising cliché of the ‘melting-pot’, but also how this figures the difference
between chaotic créolisation and other forms of syncretic thinking - métissage, for example - which reveal themselves as predictably non-chaotic.

Now chaos-theory, which James Gleick has called “the century’s third great revolution in the physical sciences” (1998: 6), reverses a number of the assumptions upon which traditional science bases its methodology; or as Gleick puts it, “where chaos begins classical science stops” (3). Classical science, he explains, proceeds on the seemingly common-sense belief that small influences can be discounted: given approximately accurate input data, the argument goes, it is possible to achieve approximately accurate end-results. Chaos theory’s most celebrated image, on the other hand, that of the butterfly whose flapping wings on one side of the world provoke a storm on the other, suggests that the act of approximation can lead to serious miscalculations. This so-called ‘butterfly-effect’, which owes its genesis to the meteorologist Edward Lorenz, illustrates the pitfalls of Newtonian determinism. Lorenz’s belief that sheer computer-power would enable him to deduce the outcome of weather-systems was undermined by the shock discovery that re-running his simulation program with minimally different data produced not slightly different but wildly divergent patterns.

The implications of Lorenz’s chance encounter with chaos ran deep, forcing him - and those who were to come in his wake - to the realisation that many systems display so-called sensitive dependence on initial conditions and, as a result, do not behave in ways which can be completely described in linear terms. Chaotic interference, Lorenz’s findings seemed to suggest, could no longer be discounted as a marginal phenomenon, as some kind of freak occurrence to be ironed out in the equations, an inconvenient but ultimately irrelevant factor-x. Hitherto chaos had to be admitted at ground-level, not just consigned to some theoretical store-cupboard. The idea that “you don’t need to take into account the falling of a leaf on some planet in another galaxy when you’re trying to account for the motion of a billiard ball on a pool table on earth” (15) might hold for many practical situations, but certainly not in all; ultimately, the unwillingness to build uncertainty into scientific modelling could only ever produce “caricatures of reality” (16).

Glissant has underscored the affinity between this representational aspect of chaos-theory and his own way of thinking, pointing out that “les physiciens du chaos affirment qu’on ne peut continuer de mettre le monde en équations rassurantes et linéaires” (1993c: 122). First and foremost, then, chaos-theory sets out to limit the
claims of scientific discourse; it is in this sense perhaps best seen as “a radical acceptance of vulnerability”, to borrow Spivak’s description of deconstruction (1990: 18). In Glissant’s terms chaos-theory thus constitutes a kind of pensée archipélique, a non-système capable of admitting fragility and uncertainty. As a form of poetical non-système, then, chaos partakes of “cette double portée, d’une théorie qui tâche à conclure, d’une présence qui ne conclut (ne présume) de rien” (1990: 197). We might view this representational modesty as a generalised version of the double imperatives which, as we have seen, pertain to Glissant’s description of history, but also to notions of identity and truth. As we saw in relation to Texaco, to question the notion of History is not to evacuate the necessity of a historical vision; similarly the questioning of dogmatic knowledge does not imply the impossibility of knowledge per se. As Luis Buñuel puts it, “I would give my life for a man who is looking for the truth. But I would gladly kill a man who thinks he has found the truth”. Or, as Glissant has it in Le discours antillais, “l’important n’est pas dans la réponse, mais dans le questionnement” (1981: 149).

Chaos-theory undermines the primacy of generalising conclusions based on averages and approximations which seek to subsume the contingent into the abstractable. Thus chaos’ emblematic ‘butterfly effect’ stands for “l’esthétique [...] d’un Chaos [...] dont le moindre détail est aussi complexe que l’ensemble” (Glissant, 1990: 45). In geo-political terms this equates to Glissant’s assertion that “ce qui se passe dans un petit pays est aussi important que ce qui arrive dans un empire” (1993c: 122), his warning that “il n’y aura plus de culture sans toutes les cultures” (1997c: 13-14), or even Césaire’s plea in Cahier d’un retour au pays natal for those “sans qui la terre ne serait pas la terre” (1995: 112). The virtue of chaos as a theory, then, lies in the fact that it re-affirms Relation, where this is defined as “ce possible de l’imaginaire qui nous porte à concevoir la globalité insaisissable [...] en même temps qu’il nous permet d’en relever chaque détail, et en particulier de chanter notre lieu, insondable et irréversible” (1997e: 22). Rather than abstract essences, then, it is ultimately the necessary interaction between all the elements in a given system, together with the dynamic movement between lieu and globalité, which governs the identity of elements, none of which can safely be discounted.

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213 Western thought, for Glissant, is dominated by pensées-de-système whose ultimate aim is to ensure predictability. Cf Glissant (1996b: 85).
There is a double movement at work in chaos-theory. On the one hand, the closer we look, the more chaotic the world actually appears: the movement of coffee in a cup, the rising of hot air, even the swing of the pendulum turn out to be irregular and unpredictable. When Galileo found regularity in such movements, Gleick argues, it was “because he already had a theory that predicted it [...] the story about Galileo dropping balls off the tower of Pisa, as a piece of myth, is a story about changing intuitions by inventing an ideal scientific world where regularities can be separated from the disorder of experience” (1998: 40-41). Chaos theory refuses to ignore that disorder. On the other hand, however, “le chaos n’est pas «chaotique»” (1990: 108), as Glissant puts it. Unlike the ancient notion of chaos as that anarchic state which precedes the creation of an ordered, harmonious universe, chaoticians seek to examine both chaos and order together. Chaos becomes a way of articulating the complex relational dynamics between elements in systems, no longer a scapegoat for experimental ‘noise’, to be eliminated wherever possible. In other words there is a method to the madness, a kind of patterning at the very heart of apparent disorder which can be tracked, if not captured. Hence Gleick’s description of chaos as “order masquerading as randomness” (1998: 22). Most important perhaps - and here it is possible to discern a disciplinary similarity with Caribbean writing - is the realisation that a peripheral position may well have the most to say about global processes and situations. As a result, some of the norms which go to define what is central and what is peripheral may well need rethinking. Chaos may well not be a marginal phenomenon at all; in which case, as the mathematician Stanislaw Ulam whimsically remarks, “to call the study of chaos ‘non-linear science’ [would be] like calling zoology ‘the study of non-elephant animals’” (Gleick, 1998: 68).

In the Caribbean, this opposition to classical norms has been eagerly adopted as both generator of images and a methodology, though not, it should be added, as a legitimization-device. Cuban novelist and critic Benítez-Rojo deploys chaotic thinking as a means of constructing an alternative geo-cultural model of the Caribbean, the archipelago recast as ‘repeating island’ (1996), a notion which refers

\footnote{Both Glissant and Benítez-Rojo self-consciously preempt the notion that their models make any claims to scientificity. Their aim is not to use chaos to lend some air of pseudo-scientific authenticity to the project of cultural and literary analysis, but as a kind of theoretical springboard. Of course, chaos can also be seen as a paradigm-shift or mutation within the world of scientific discourse and as such an example, rather than a legitimization, of a postmodernised mode of description.}
explicitly to chaos-theory’s emphasis on iteration and self-similarity. How appropriate then that Michel Hénon should have found, in his study of stellar orbits, “complete disorder mixed with the clear remnants of order, forming shapes that suggested ‘islands’ and ‘chains of islands’” (Gleick, 1998: 147). Indeed Benítez-Rojo sees chaos as the ideal producer of inter-disciplinary perspectives, providing “a space in which the pure sciences connect with the social sciences, and both of them connect with art and the cultural tradition” (1996: 3). For him it suggests a new (non-linear) way of reading “whose end-result is not to find results, but processes, dynamics, and rhythms that show themselves within the marginal, the regional, the incoherent, the heterogeneous, or, if you like, the unpredictable that coexists with us in our everyday world” (3). This way of conceiving culture in terms of flows in an interactional space recalls Gilroy’s notion of a ‘Black Atlantic’ with its “rhizomorphic, fractal structure” (1993b: 4). It is perhaps not insignificant, then, that these two theorists were among the first to acknowledge explicitly a debt to Glissant’s work.216

As Celia Britton has shown, however (1999: 14), there are subtle differences of emphasis in the way Glissant and Benítez-Rojo, in particular, have deployed chaos-theory. The Cuban’s project seems to be to find a new way of discerning repeating features which might constitute a specific, though never essentialised, Caribbean culture, over and above national and geographical boundaries. Glissant on the other hand, seems to have moved away from earlier attempts to define a nascent antillanité. In his recent writings he appears less concerned with determining the existence of a specific culture beneath the turbulent surface of what Benítez-Rojo has memorably called the Caribbean “soup of signs” (1996: 2), and focuses instead on a poetics of chaos which articulates a vision of global cultural interactions as well as generating new narrative techniques. Ultimately, in Glissant’s baroque vision, “rien n’est plus beau que le chaos” (Ludwig, 1994: 111).217 What I am concerned to show here, however, is that the model offered by chaos - precisely because it places the local and the global, the particular and the general, on an equal footing - becomes an analogue and support for other central figures in Glissant’s writing which articulate this same dialogue, especially in terms of relational conceptions of identity.

216 Benítez-Rojo describes Glissant as one of his ‘predecessors’ (1996: xi), while Gilroy quotes from or refers to Glissant on several occasions (1993b: 1, 75, 31, 236).
217 Cf also Glissant (1997e: 61): ‘La terre est un Chaos, le Chaos n’a ni haut ni bas, et le Chaos et beau’.
Chaos, as we have seen, is largely, though not exclusively, equated with the disorder, and, in Glissant's terms, the baroque profusion of a world marked by relation and intrication. Now the major producer of chaotic disorder, for Glissant, is of course créolisation, that process of linguistic, and by extension, cultural interaction. In 'Le chaos-monde: pour une esthétique de la Relation' (1996b: 81-107), Glissant stresses the importance of unpredictability as a hallmark of créolisation. In so doing he draws a useful distinction between créolisation and métissage, a distinction which, as we have seen, relates to different accounts of hybridity. While créolisation keeps the dialectic open and unpredictable, then, the notion of métissage is seen as deterministic: "la créolisation", says Glissant, "c'est le métissage avec une valeur ajoutée" (1996b: 19), or, put another way, "le métissage sans limites, dont les éléments sont démultipliés, les résultats imprévisibles" (1990: 46). In fact it is precisely in these terms that he constructs his critique of créolité, arguing that Chamoiseau, Confiant and Bernabé run the risk of privileging state over process (1993c: 123), being over becoming. Recently Glissant has been increasingly outspoken in his attempts to distance himself from the ideology of créolité.

Enfin, je suis tout à fait contre le terme «créolité» bien que les écrivains de la créolité se réclament de moi comme étant leur père spirituel. Je crois que l'idée de créolisation correspond mieux à la situation du monde [...] Il me semble que la créolité érige le multilinguisme et le multiethnisme en dogme ou en modèle [...] je suis contre les modèles. (Glissant, 2000)

It is important to note here that Glissant's criticisms are aimed more at créolité as concept than at the fiction which it has accompanied and given rise to.\(^\text{218}\) Thus, as we have seen in previous chapters, writers such as Chamoiseau present a more nuanced

\(^{218}\) Cf Glissant (1996b: 104): 'Il y a une différence, oui, entre les œuvres de création et les manifestes. Mais je crois que c'est dans les œuvres littéraires, et non dans les tentatives théoriques, que l'approche de la totalité-monde se dessine d'abord [...] je ne pense pas que ces écrivains-là soient en quête de «racine unique».'
examining in the next section, however, these texts are tied together through, among other things, a discourse of what I have chosen to call ‘chaotic’ identity.

The notion (and projected space) of a tout-monde dominates the three novels I propose to group together. The ‘story’ of Mahogany, for example, although largely rooted in Martinique and in the fictional marronnage of three individuals - Gani, Maho and Mani (whose names are, of course, derived from the eponymous mahogany-tree) - performs the same movement of global relation which forms the very substance of the later texts. The narrative of ‘opening’ in La Lézarde, to which I have referred on several occasions, is alluded to by Mathieu Béluse who describes it as “l’écume d’une vague naissante, le balbutiement de cette parole des peuples qui commençait à lever sur l’horizon du monde” (1997b: 121). Here, however, it is filtered through the eyes of a Mathieu who has travelled the world. Tout-monde as a concept is now explicitly articulated, then: ‘le Tout-monde’ is the title of the novel’s final section,222 while elsewhere in the novel we find an invitation to “rêver le tout-monde, dans ces successions de paysages qui, par leur unité, contrastée ou harmonique, constituent un pays” (168).

Glissant’s paradigmatically spatial assertion that “un pays d’île ne se trouve pas s’il n’y a pas d’autres îles” (170) also underscores the relational principle which infuses the text. This organising principle connects both the various forms of marronnage - “la même figure d’une même force dérivée de son allant normal” (20) - and a number of different places, from the Andes, to Australia to Samarkand (166-167). In this way, forms of physical displacement (marronnage, errance) parallel flights of the imagination - ‘rêver le tout-monde’ as Mathieu has it. The ability to juxtapose these kinds of events and spaces runs counter to the tendency of the young Mathieu, as we saw in Le quatrième siècle, to impose a Western logic of singularities and rigidly linear chronologies. Here Mathieu, as one of the narrative voices, admits his former inability: “je n’établissais pas relation entre ces arbres” as he puts it (17).223 But also, as only one of the narrators - “un parleur parmi d’autres” (26) - he is forced to admit his lack of omniscience. What ultimately the narrative of Mahogany describes perhaps is the breakdown of order which, perceived in Malemort and La cas du commandeur as a

222 Significantly, the other two sections are symbolic place-names: ‘Le Trou-à-Roches’, which recurs in Tout-monde as ‘le trou-bouillon’, and ‘Malendure’.
223 Cf also pp14-15 for a more detailed ‘confession’: ‘le jeune homme que j’étais n’associait pas les éléments donnés ensemble dans un tel lieu [...] Dans le déval de histoires, de datations, de regroupements [...] je n’établissais pas les équivalences, les distances de temps et de générations, je ne distinguais pas les actes solitaires’.
lack, now becomes affirmative: "La recherche de l’ordonnance cédait donc à la contamination", writes Mathieu (27). This idea is confirmed by the proliferation of images which will become the chaotic spatial vocabulary of Tout-monde: “maelström”, “dévalé” (14), “charivari” (15), “tohu-bohu” (61) among others.

The tendency towards Glissantian chaos, and tendency it is, is also reflected spatially in the (symbolic) description of trees and grasses to which I referred earlier, a technique of what we might call Relation as imbrication reflecting what, in Sartorius, Glissant will refer to as “l’intrication de toutes choses” (1999: 245). In many senses, it is true, the mahogany-tree stands for cultural memory, resistance and ensouchement, hence “aucun de vous ne devine combien de temps pour déraciner un mahogani, passer à autre culture si ce n’est à déculture généralisée” (91). And yet, as Britton has indicated, “the ‘rhizomatic’ conception of identity developed in Poétique de la Relation informs the whole of Mahagoni and Tout-monde” (1999: 171). Even the mahogany-tree is implicated in this process. Thus, “les hautes racines tordues sont envahies d’une brousse qui interdit d’avancer. L’arbre fait corps avec son socle de branches, de lianes” (1997b: 172). Or again, in the section entitled ‘La descente’, “les arbres sont de toutes sortes mêlés, qui font de l’ombre dans l’ombre” (79). This use of plant-tree metaphors, I would suggest, presages the more explicitly articulated notions of chaos and of identité-rhizome which we will see in Poétique de la Relation and Tout-monde. In particular they recall the notion of iteration, that simultaneous producer of sameness-and-difference which characterises both créolisation and images such as Benítez-Rojo’s ‘repeating island’. “L’arbre”, Glissant writes, “épelle la forêt, dont il multiplie partout la profondeur” (13), while “les arbres qui vivent longtemps changent toujours, en demeurant” (16), a statement highly reminiscent of definitions of both créolisation and chaos-monde already cited.

By the time we reach Tout-monde, then, the intrication of rooted plants (the mahogany and the three ebony trees) and proliferating grasses becomes more explicitly formulated as rhizomatic vegetation, a notion which, borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari’s Mille Plateaux is theorised in Poétique de la Relation as a metaphor of identity. Thus “banians, rhizomes, figuiers-maudits” are all seen as forms of “la même désordonnance du chaos, sous des espèces identiques et
d'ancrage d'où la relation devient possible" (1999: 52). Consequently the act of conceiving the tout-monde in terms of spatial relations involves imagining "la relation entre le lieu où l'on est, d'où l'on élève la voix et tous les lieux possibles du monde" (Glissant, 1998a), or as he puts it in Sartorius, "l'éclat d'un peuple est d'arrimer la beauté de son lieu à la beauté de tout l'existant et de tous les lieux" (1999: 21). In a double movement which recalls the interdependence of Détour and Retour (1981: 28-36), Glissant, in Tout-monde, traces the errant trajectories of his numerous protagonists, from place to place, but almost always in relation to the Martinican landscape which for many of them - Thaël and Mathieu Béluse most prominently - constitutes their point of departure.

In this way, the mornes of Martinique intersect with "les indéfinissables matins de Mississippi lourds de brume et de lueurs sauvages" (1993a: 194), the Nile with a sugar-cane field, Baton-Rouge with Balata (277), and Place Fürstenberg in Paris with a bench on Fort-de-France’s Savane (278). Significantly, as quotations from the Traité du tout-monde (which are used self-consciously within the text) reveal, this juxtaposition and interpenetration of places becomes a mode of relation between identity and space. Thus, in Tout-monde, we are told first that "tous les lieux du monde se rencontrent" (1993a: 31), and then that "nos identités se relaient" (185).

The chaotic dialogue, to which I have already alluded, between order and disorder, becomes absolutely crucial here: "le chaos est beau", says Glissant, but only "à condition qu'on essaie par l'imaginaire d'en pister, d'en tracer non pas les lois mais les invariants" (1996b: 134). Glissant, then, invites us to view the individual-in-space as a relational construct, part of a shifting network, or 'soup' of signs perhaps, which, despite entropic tendencies, is never an entirely free-floating system. Individual identity, as an exclusive expression of l'identique, is undermined in a number of different ways therefore: never evaporating completely, however, it is also in a sense a 'stubborn chunk'. In terms of chaos-theory this model is perhaps best translated by the notion of the 'strange attractor', a point in a dynamic system whose unstable

225 Cf Glissant's interview with Lise Gauvin, 'L'écrivain et le souffle du lieu', reprinted in Glissant (1996b: 129): 'il y a des séries d'histoires entrecoupées, qui sont racontées dans ce livre, des séries de parcours, des séries de trajets, une forme d'errance des personnages, mais qui ont tous un point de départ qui serait la Martinique et un point d'arrivée qui serait aussi la Martinique'.
227 Cf also Glissant (1997: 59).
228 Cf also Glissant (1997: 68).
229 Cf also Glissant (1996b: 102): 'dans ma relation à l'autre, aux autres, à tous les autres, à la totalité-monde, je me change en m'échangeant, en demeurant moi-même, sans me renier, sans me diluer'.
boundaries are described by "loops and spirals" which are "infinitely deep, never quite joining, never intersecting", to quote Gleick (1998: 140).

In Tout-monde the wanderings of Mathieu Béluse, Thaël, and a whole host of other characters, named and unnamed, real and fictional, follow similarly spiralling paths, making of them a kind of cultural tumbleweed, caught up in the tussle of "cette succession ininterrompue de tourbillons et de fixités" (1997e: 180). On the one hand their voyages parallel Glissant’s description of "les pensées de déplacement, qui sont aussi de pensées d’ambiguïté et de non-certitude" (1996b: 130). On the other Glissant argues for errance as "cela même qui nous permet de nous fixer" (1997e: 63): his characters put down temporary roots, prompting them to reflect on the simultaneous irreducibility and connection of places, "le souffle du lieu" (1993a: 141), but also their mise en relation.

Within the chaos-monde, then, which is variously described as "maelström" (18), "tourbillon" and "cyclone" (21), with its "charivari de pays" and its "dévirades d’imprévu" (20), Glissant seeks to identify the repeating elements, chaos-theory’s constants or ‘invariants’, which he equates to lieux-communs. Thus the tracing of paths in the maelström, which is performed in Tout-monde, implies a kind of chaos-as-relation, in which, as I indicated earlier, submerged patterns lurk within apparent randomness. Examples abound in this novel as they do in other texts of Glissant’s from this period. The subterranean flow of hot water, for example, from which the section ‘L’eau du volcan’ (71-103) takes its name, recalls Glissant’s discussion of volcanic sands in Poétique de la Relation (1990: 135-142), and Brathwaite’s statement “the unity is submarine”. Likewise, when Mathieu Béluse and Pino argue in Vernazza about jelly-fish, Mathieu describes their mysterious migratory habits in similarly chaotic, relational terms adding that "les méduses n’ont pas de pays d’origine" (1993a: 41).

Of course global nomadism is not the only valid method by which Glissant poses his challenge to exclusive forms of identity. Mycéa, for example, we are told, “ne parcourt pas dans les espaces” (1993a: 13), but performs her own form of displacement through language as well as spatially in the microcosm of the

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201 Quoted in Glissant (1990: 11).
202 An exploration of linguistic forms of resistance and subversion cannot be entertained here, but the interested reader need look no further than Britton’s highly eloquent and incisive Edouard Glissant and
Lamentin mangroves. Similarly, in Glissant's latest novel *Sartorius*, we read that "Oko et Anandoo furent les premiers de Batoutos à s'étendre vraiment sur les espaces du monde, l'un errant et l'autre immobile" (1999: 64). Indeed, in the Glissantian view of a *chaos-monde*, large and small spaces can be seen as having the same properties, just as, in fractal mathematics, scale precedes size. Hence we read in *Mahagoni*: "j'avais quitté l'infini de ce pays minuscule pour le si minuscule infini qui fait notre Terre" (1997b: 21). Here Gani's *marronage* symbolises the global *errance* which constitutes its spatial cousin: "l'enfant dans sa dernière course avait reproduit sur la terre d'alentour *la figure du monde*" (62). Ultimately, however, the most radical form of displacement, for Glissant, is always performed at the level of the imaginary: "convoquez les paysages, mélangez-les, et si vous n'avez pas la possibilité des avions, des voitures, des trains, des bateaux, *ces pauvres moyens des riches et des pourvus, imaginez-les*" (1993a: 324, emphasis added). Likewise the notion of *tout-monde* is less a geo-physical world than an imaginary vision of that world: "le monde n'est pas le Tout-monde", as Mathieu Béluse puts it (49).

The revelatory images which suffuse *Tout-monde* presage, it would appear, what Glissant sees as a situation where hierarchies can be dismantled, where the hierarchical relationship of periphery to centre will become destabilised, succeeded instead by flows, dynamics, and mobile patterns of inter-relation. This utopian vision, as I shall be arguing, should not be misread as a description of a projected political system, however, but rather as a necessary process of the imaginary. Indeed for Glissant, utopia is an essential aim: "c'est utopique. Mais je pense que rien ne se fait sur terre de valable sans utopie. Je ne connais pas de grande œuvre des humanités qui se soit faite sans utopie" (1996b: 100). In no direct way a 'practical' solution to the problems of global poverty and oppression, then, Glissant sees bringing about a shift in attitudes as both responsible and viable:

*Nul imaginaire n'aide réellement à prévenir la misère, à s'opposer aux oppressions, à soutenir ceux qui «supportent» dans leurs corps ou dans leur esprit. Mais l'imaginaire modifie les mentalités, si lentement qu'il en aille. (1990: 197)*

In line with this latter objective, *Sartorius - le roman des Batoutos* is written as a piece of suggestive mythology, or, more specifically, "une fable moderne de la non-

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domination” (2000a). Later in the same interview Glissant goes on to explain the significance of the ‘Batoutos’:

Bien que j’aie pris soin de situer assez précisément ce peuple dans le temps (l’an 500 avant notre ère) et dans l’espace (dans une région de l’Afrique centrale), les Batoutos sont avant tout un peuple mythique. Mais c’est un mythe dont le monde a besoin car les Batoutos incarnent un peuple qui n’a pas la prétention de s’ériger en modèle et qui va dans le monde non pas pour le posséder mais pour vivre ensemble avec les autres [...] Nous avons besoin d’un peuple de ce genre qui ne veut pas être un peuple conquérant, ni un peuple impérialiste et qui, par conséquent, nous protège contre les tentations de nous rendre trop visibles en imposant à d’autres peuples nos valeurs, nos manières d’être. (Glissant, 2000a)

Whereas Tout-monde is populated largely by individuals whose identity, as we have seen, is relayed, or related, then, Sartorius narrates the trajectories - equally relational - of members of a mythical community, variously described as ‘people’ or ‘nation’. The Batoutos, as Glissant reminds us in this interview, are not a people in the traditional sense, however; they eschew the atavistic desire for filiation and territorial rooting, preferring to remain “invisible en tant que nation” as he puts it in Sartorius (1999: 15). At the same time, however, their ‘identity’ as Batoutos is not sublimated into some kind of amorphous mass of a universal ‘humanity’; instead, as Glissant states, “[ils] ne s’exaltent pas et suivent leur chemin” (29), “ils cherchent sans avoir à le proclamer” (31).

Sartorius is also, and to a greater extent than Tout-monde, an interstitial account of the development of colonisation, and, in particular, its supporting ideologies. Its temporal range takes in the beginnings of the African diaspora, which constitute, in a sense, the starting point of a truly ‘world’-history. Narrating “l’éclatement, la dispersion des humanités à travers les espaces” (22), then, Sartorius illustrates the possibility, expressed even at this embryonic stage, of affirmative migration, “l’errance comme errance, non pas comme refuge” (42). In so doing it simultaneously attempts to nuance Western history to show how the ideals of universality. Truth and authenticity have smothered competing notions of diversity. In Traité du tout-monde, for example, Glissant posed the question of how the Medieval tussle between order and turbulence, borne of a collision of competing “lieux de la pensée” (1997e: 94), was resolved into various forms of pensée de système. In Sartorius Glissant argues, in similar vein, that post-medieval (Western) History became an universalising imposition dissimulating “les histoires et les paroles de ces peuples qui
The narrative of the novel seeks to reinhabit the cracks within this universalising process, embodied philosophically and aesthetically by the characters of Wilhelm and Albert Dürer respectively. *Sartorius* thus constitutes a revalidation of a previously heretical position, both as a validation of *errance* and of the kinds of hidden histories we saw in my last chapter, histories of “les peuples qui ont fréquenté le gouffre” and who, crucially, “ne se valent pas d’être élu” (1990: 20).

The notion of *tout-monde*, figured in the tale of the Batoutos, is thus portrayed not as entirely novel, but as a suppressed historical impulse still under threat. The fact that, in this novel, the Batoutos, ‘invisible’ harbingers of non-domination, cannot be marked, still less ‘identified’, also reminds us that the ideology of visible *mondialité* is not sufficient, however. This is one of the reasons why, I believe, Glissant insists on the dialogue between *le lieu* and *le monde* in his conception of *tout-monde* as a chaotic system. For just as the global as such is not self-sufficient (as it can always be recuperated into the universal), so migrancy does not equate unequivocally to positive *errance*. Enforced uprooting, Glissant reminds us in the novel, can be as traumatising as conscious *errance* is affirmative: “l’exil collectif est aussi destructeur que l’errance individuelle, quand ils sont l’une et l’autre imposés, renforcés des troubles de la servitude” (1999: 256). Against accusations that Glissant’s late texts are little more than an uncritical paean to nomadic homelessness, then, it is also worth considering his assertion, in *Sartorius*, that while “les moustiques sont la seule race internationalement indubitable” (196), they are “frères de personne” (274).

Above all, as Glissant has insisted in recent texts, one must draw a clear distinction between a dynamic *tout-monde* and the fashionable eulogising of the process of globalisation which he sees as little more than a covert mechanism of capitalist hegemony (1997e: 206), “le voile derrière lequel se cachent de nouvelles oppressions et dominations” (2000a). Thus, for example, the much lauded capacity of the Internet to connect places and people does not amount to the rhizomatic ideal of a chaotic web of relations powered by the unpredictable dynamics of *créolisation*.

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233 Cf also Glissant’s comment in *Mahagoni* (1997b: 160): ‘ne comptez pas recenser ceux qui n’ont jamais été inscrits sur un registre de justice, nègres de champs [...] leur nombre est infini, infini’.

234 Cf Glissant (1990: 100): ‘seul les hérésies maintiennent avec puissance le cri des spécificités, l’entassement des diversités irréductibles’. In the allegory of the Batoutos, the process is reversed so that supporters of hidden order and system become the heretics, cf Glissant (1999: 51): ‘Ces quelques-uns, amateurs d’un ordre caché et négligents propagateurs d’un absolu de l’univers, c’étaient...’
(in the widest sense of the term). Instead it is revealed as a selective system of connections supporting often insidious forms of cultural and technological imperialism expanded onto a global scale. "L’Internet", suggests Glissant, “apparaît comme l’instrument de la prééminence des sociétés technologiques sur toutes les autres [...] Dans cette énorme créolisation des cultures qu’il permet et inaugure, les voix des peuples démunis sont absentes. Il faut refuser cette créolisation selective et accepter pourtant qu’elle avance” (1997e: 167).

In terms of textuality, however, and this leads us to the subject of my next section, the stakes are somewhat different. The Internet does remain a suggestive symbol for Glissant, both of global inter-relation and of a new form of inter-textuality, in which “si on peut cliquer pour en revenir à un sujet [...] nous ne saurions là mettre deux fois le pied dans la même eau” (1997e: 160). This image suggests a novel form of textuality - a kind of hypertext - which resonates with the chaotic structure (that is both ordered and disordered, repetitive and differing) of novels such as Tout-monde and Sartorius, in which fragments of language, narrative and character circulate but are never returned to in quite the same way.

 Chaotic textuality

‘La démesure du monde est explorable par la démesure du texte’

Edouard Glissant (1997e: 162)

As we would expect from a Glissant novel, especially in this period, descriptions of nomadic patterns of displacement-with-relation also become the defining features of narrative/textual structure. Chaos-theory and Glissant’s brand of fiction are, of course, inherently linked through the foregrounding of problems of representation. Mandelbrot, in his paper ‘How Long is the Coast of Britain’,255 argues that because measurement is always a kind of fixing, and because greater magnifications reveal

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more and more detail, coastlines are in fact, in a sense, infinitely long. Glissant himself refers to the problem presented by tidal fluctuations, pointing to this as a symptom of unpredictable or chaotic behaviour (1996b: 84-85). At the level of narration, as we shall see, the identity of authorial voices, not to mention of the very status of the text itself, that is its relation to generic norms and to Glissant’s œuvre as a whole, is systematically toyed with. Indeed Glissant, speaking about Tout-monde, openly admits to a penchant for mixing “des noms réels et imaginaires, des vivants et des morts, des lieux visités ou imaginés s’y rencontrent, car je cherche à amasser l’imprévisible du monde. J’aime aussi brouiller les pistes, brouiller les traces” (1993c: 124), he adds.

There is thus an increasing confusion between fiction and identity, so that the destabilisation of individual identity is paralleled in challenges to other forms of identity, textual, authorial, linguistic. And yet, as I have stated, in Glissant’s late works this ambiguity or fluidity becomes empowering rather than perceived as a lack; consequently that which, in Le discours antillais and Malemort, was seen as an obstacle to the formation of a Caribbean identity becomes the possibility of a global imaginary. It is not that the desire of a Martinican or Caribbean cultural identity is relinquished, rather that the availability of relational identity is recast as positive, in opposition to confidently rooted atavism.

The same process, as Britton has shown, pertains to language, which from 1990 onwards becomes “a radically plural phenomenon” (1999: 52). Thus the character Stepan Stepanovich, in Tout-monde, overturns the desire articulated in other Caribbean texts, including some of Glissant’s, for a more ‘authentic’ language, which can be possessed or ‘assumed’. Stepanovich, says Britton, illustrates how the “notion of one’s ‘own’ language has ceased to be even a desirable fantasy” (52). Instead Stepan’s relationship to language is that of an adaptable strategy:

Stépan écrire vrai bon français, quand il faut! Écrire pas difficile, quand il faut! Stepan décide pas une langue bonne pour parler! Pas une langue vaut la peine! Cacher langue! Stepan puissant pour cacher langue! Même à l’oral des examens! (Glissant, 1993a: 420)

What this take on language amounts to, as I have been arguing, is an optimistic, pluralised, rehabilitation of fragmentation as diversity, which, on a narrative level, means jettisoning the realist impulse in favour of taking pleasure in ‘stories’.

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Cf Britton (2000) for an exposition of this relationship in Tout-monde.
For Glissant, this transformation gives us, paradoxically, a better purchase on the 
tout-monde, however, in the sense that textual diversity and baroque textual profusion 
resonate with the chaos of what he calls “un baroque mondialisé” (1990: 91). In one 
of his least commented pieces of literary criticism Glissant divides periods of writing
in terms of a ‘chiasma’ built out of combinations of mesure (M) and démesure (D). 
While MM (mesure de la mesure) is “toujours un classicisme” (1996b: 92) “[qui] prétend 
faire adopter au monde ses valeurs particulières universelles” (93), DM (démesure de la 
mesure) is a kind of baroque antithetical to the classical “prétention de la profondeur” 
(94). The kind of writing which corresponds to MD (mesure de la démesure) meanwhile, 
and which, says Glissant, is typified by Claudel and Segalen, attempts to engage what
is recognised as a chaotic world but “sur un mode centré” (94). DD (démesure de la 
démesure), on the other hand, and it is in this vein that Glissant sees his own writing,
becomes “la vocation de la littérature d’aujourd’hui” (94), a literature of “le Tout-
monde” (94) in other words.

Now if, as Glissant affirms, “le monde entier s’archipelise et se créolise” (1997e: 
194), it comes as no surprise that a literature based on démesure de la démesure should 
exhibit similar qualities at a textual level. What I am suggesting, then, is that the 
chaotic textual practices of Glissant’s late fiction (which are simultaneously practices
of an increasingly ludic kind) define a kind of logical end-point: the alignment of a 
world marked by chaotic démesure and a text which is chaotically démésuré. In what 
follows I shall attempt to outline a number of ways in which this relationship is 
enacted, matching a chaotic tout-monde with a similarly chaotic textual weave.

At the level of the micro-textual, Glissant’s late fiction exhibits the kind of 
baroque proliferation which, as we have seen is typical of a conteur-influenced 
aesthetic. Hence the following exclamatory statement from Sartorius:

Ho Oho! Vous les conteurs créoles! Les veilleurs inuits. Les Rabelais bafoués. Tous les 
fondeurs de mots. Ils vous avaient mépris. Ho! Oho! Tofig! Ti-René! Mah’Madoul Lu-Tsi! 
Chanteurs de ce qui advient! (1999: 157)

This style, although not, especially in Tout-monde, a homogenous one, reflects the 
insight that, in Glissant’s writing, text is spatial just as space can be written/read as 
text: “un mot un herbage. Un herbage une parole”, Glissant writes in Mahagonj 
(1997b: 142). Text, in other words, becomes a sort of vegetation, with all the 
overtones of subversion that such an image implies; as Glissant puts it in Le discours 
antillais, “la parole de mon paysage est d’abord forêt, qui sans arrêt foisonne” (1981:

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255). Mycéa's discourse, and in particular her version of the mahogany-dream (1997b: 140), is an extreme case of the techniques of repetition and non-punctuated circularity which is suggested by Glissant's Caribbean baroque. But a woven relay of language is discernible everywhere, even when the style, as in the case of Mathieu, is more 'ordered'; witness, for example the multiplication of the word 'item' in the Hégésippe section of the novel (50-56).

This makes of both writing, and interpretation, a chaotic activity: "ton écriture est la brousse où tu suis obscurement la trace", as Glissant puts it in Sartorius (1999: 348). As Britton explains, this reflects an epistemological perspective in which:

Meaning winds in upon itself like a snake, it is slowly refined like a machete being sharpened, it has the meandering logic of a dream, or it advances sideways, like the mongoose zigzagging through the undergrowth. It emerges in cumulative, piecemeal, and oblique ways. (1999: 137)

This is a strategy which, as we have seen in other contexts, resists the pull of Western teleology and of 'logical' order. But it is not, by the same token, a simple rejection; it is not purely oppositional, that is, but suggests a recuperation or re-engagement with an American aesthetic and logic built on baroque étendue, conteur-csicité and opacité, and a kind of chaotic imbrication both of space and of being/identity.

In terms of narrative structure, then, Tout-monde and Sartorius, in particular, privilege the activity of story-telling over linear plot. In fact, one might say, structure itself is largely absent or non-teleological, making of the narration "une seule longue respiration sans césure" (1999: 13). Chronological progression is discarded allowing Glissant to move freely between times and places, to pick up one story just as he drops another, an exuberant piece of ludic textuality, in other words. What takes over is a 'breathless' logic of another kind, a logic which is self-generating and text-driven, like the fragments of a chaotic system. Consequently, instead of linear progression supported by textual non-repetition, connections are made across the text on the basis of (non-identical) similarités. Thus it is often fragments of text, quotes or images which provide the necessary connection between sections, either as linking-devices or refrains, repeated non-linearly within or across sections. These 'repeating islands' of language, these 'stubborn chunks', behave in classic iterative

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237 For an example of the former see how the play on 'soleil couché'/ 'soleil découché' (1993a: 282) leads into the next section (which starts on p287), also entitled 'Soleil couché'. Refrain-devices include, for example, the phrase 'Sur Gênes va s'ouvrir...' (itself a quote from Glissant's Les Indes, in 1994a: 111) which peppers the 'Banians' section (1993a: 31-70).
fashion, proliferating outside the constraints of narrative progression and contributing instead to Tout-monde's characteristic narrative profusion. To borrow Rushdie's description of Midnight's Children this is a novel which "teems" (1992: 16).

Many of the most interesting developments in these later novels concern the narrative viewpoint. Mahagonj, as we have seen, marks a turning point in the evolution of Glissantian narrative focalisation in which the notion of Relation is translated into relation-as-narration. For, as Britton points out, this novel contains a shift from an amorphous collective to a kind of 'relay'-system which I shall be calling chaotic:

_Malemort_ and _La case du commandeur_ both employ a collective "nous" as narrator in an attempt to overcome the singularity of the individual voice. But this remains undifferentiated; it is only with _Mahagonj_ that Glissant divides the narrative between a number of separate voices. (1999: 165).

With the exception of two sections - 'La descente' and 'Remontée' - _Mahagonj_ passes the narrative baton from one named player to the next, from Mathieu to Mycéa, Lanoué to Longoué and so on. Prefiguring his statement in _Poétique de la Relation_ that "La Relation relie (relaie), relate" (1990: 187), Glissant thus relays not only narrative subjectivity, but also the very identity of the character-narrators. Individual narrators can also be seen as 'stubborn chunks', therefore: while they retain elements of an identifiable 'character' they are inextricably connected to each other through the relay of language, subjectivity and thematics (repeated instances of _marronage_, for example). This chaotic technique of iteration performs the notion, expressed in Tout-monde, that "nos identités se relaient" (1993a: 185).

Nevertheless, the narrative is not a simple, transparent, or identical repetition; in each case elements are subtly modified, introducing an element of the uncertain, or mutable, into the relay. One example of this in _Mahagonj_ is the dream in which the mahogany is attacked by the three magical creatures: "un bœuf sans poil, un chien à corne, une bête-longue" (1997b: 164). This dream appears to Gani, Maho and Mani in different years (1831, 1936 and 1978), but crucially, is narrated by three different characters, each of whom, as Britton notes "in varying degrees make it their own" (1999: 169). While the substance of the dream is maintained through the relay, then,

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238 In her analysis of _Mahagonj_, given at the 'Caribbean Writing in French: Place and Displacement' conference (Dublin, 1999), Celia Britton underlined the recurrent images and vocabulary of the 'unidentified' sections 'La descente' and 'Remontée', which, as she also demonstrated, can be ascribed to Maho and Mycéa respectively.
its origin is displaced: "le rêve est-il de Gani ou, tout autant, de la procession de conteurs assurés qui se relayèrent pour le sauver d'oubli?", Mathieu wonders (1997b: 164).

The relayed weave of narrative non-authority thus disrupts the sources of information, in a not dissimilar way from *Texaco*, where the narrative is relayed, or filtered, through the memories of Esternome and Marie-Sophie (among others) and by the figure of Chamoiseau himself. Just as, in this novel, Oiseau-de-Cham, as *marqueur de paroles*, is a foregrounded and unreliable narrator, then, so in all of Glissant’s late fiction, the author - “celui qui commente” (1997b: 175) - is one of the characters. The traditional view of the novel, in which an absent, but omniscient narrator guarantees the identity of his characters is thus thrown into question. “L’auteur n’était donc pas le puissant démiurge?” asks Mathieu (122). Thus emerges a dialogue in which characters and the author-figure become increasingly interchangeable: “à la fin ni l’informateur ni l’auteur n’eussent pu se reconnaître l’un à part l’autre; et que le lecteur attentif ne saurait non plus, du moins sans vertige, les distinguer” (175). Additionally, however, identity becomes part of the fictional process of narration rather than something which ‘belongs’ to any given individual. Mathieu both is and is not himself, self-similar and different: “je ne savais pas”, he writes, “qu’un raconteur d’histoires - ce chroniqueur - m’aurait prendre bientôt [...] pour personnage de ses récits” (1997b: 17). Identity, in other words, fictionalised in the narrative relay, becomes unguaranteed, chaotic, non-absolute, relational.

In *Tout-monde* and *Sartorius* the erosion of narratorial (authorial) identity is more radical yet. As the number of authorial figures and characters multiplies it becomes less and less feasible to determine the source of narrative authority, of objectivity or truth. Changes of focalisation (e.g. 584) are rarely signposted, as they were to a large extent in *Mahagonny* and metatextual comments explicitly challenge attempts on the part of the reader to second guess the identity of any given section, character or event: “le déparleur, le poète, le chroniqueur, ne gagez pas que c’est l’auteur du livre, vous vous tromperiez à coup sûr” (1993a: 606). Just as characters, words, scenes and places multiply within any given text, however, they also proliferate intertextually to form part of a wider text, or *trame*, a chaotic universe which constitutes Glissant’s *œuvre* as a whole. Characters reappear, but not in the Balzacian sense of filling in...

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239 Hence, ‘in *Tout-monde* [...] the section entitled ‘Mycéa c’est moi’ is in fact not narrated by Mycée but by Anastasie, who has never met Mycée but has read about her in the books written by the ‘author’
pieces of the overall puzzle; they do not complete the Glissantian universe, that is, but instead serve to relativise or complexify it. Their identity must thus be seen as “incomplete, open-ended parts of an expanding matrix of relayed narratives” (Britton, 1999: 167). Indeed in subsequent texts, not only is the boundary between author and character thrown into doubt, but so is the validity of information contained in their narratives. Thus, as Britton informs us, “Tout-monde [...] contains an explicit challenge to Mathieu’s version of the stories of the three heroes of Mahagonyi” (167). Likewise the ‘Bezaudin’ section of the novel stages what Britton calls “a confrontation” (167) between Artémise, Marie-Anne and Mathieu, in which we learn that Mathieu, contrary to what we might have assumed, was brought from Bezaudin to Le Lamentin as a baby, a fact omitted in earlier novels. Each text reconfigures the cast of characters to form a kind of ‘supplement’ in the Derridean sense, modifying without necessarily erasing.

Chaotic thinking, we have seen, provides a new way of articulating identity, but it also suggests narrative techniques whose logic is opposed to the linear unfolding of plot which characterises traditional story-telling practices. In keeping with a chaotic approach, these novels can be seen to explore cyclical rhythms instead of development, provisional rather than conclusive statements, in a spiralling narrative which often repeats, mirrors and undercuts itself, though it does so with the good-humour of a conteur’s performance. But do these texts succeed, fictional qualities aside, in articulating the vexed questions of the postcolonial in any meaningful way? It is my conviction that, broadly speaking, they do and that, ultimately, Glissant’s late fiction must be seen as among the most important body of work to have emerged from the Caribbean. In my concluding section I shall attempt to justify this assertion by providing a brief response to suggestions that Glissant has somehow given up on the ‘big issues’, and shall do so precisely in terms of the notion of chaos-monde which has been the subject of this chapter and which is often the target of such accusations.

(Britton, 1999: 169).
Conclusion

_Tout-monde_, as I stated earlier, is of particular interest because of the varied critical responses it has generated. While Glissant himself describes _Tout-monde_ as "un effort dont [il] n’aurait [...] pas été capable à 30 ans" (1993d: 133), not all of his commentators have been so charitable. Burton and Hallward, in particular, as I have indicated, have expressed their dissatisfaction with the notion of _tout-monde_ and the pedagogy which it suggests. Given that the daunting scope of this novel, however, whose self-declared objective, "mettre en relation la Diversité du monde" (1993c: 124), is tied to an increasing desire to blur the boundaries between fiction and theory, the novel’s undecided critical status is perhaps strangely appropriate.

As I have argued for chaos as a useful concept, however, it is necessary to take issue with a critic such as Hallward on the grounds that, as I see it, he represents Glissant’s _tout-monde_ as biased towards the purely erratic, or what he calls a disinterested ‘going with the flow’. The point I want to re-emphasise here is that Glissant’s theory of Relation necessitates a dialogue between the erratic and the localised, a dialogue which is articulated by the notion of chaos as a dynamic system which refuses to negate the particular just as it valorises the unpredictable or erratic. The constant emphasis on such a dialogue within Glissant’s work, a dialogue which he states must remain open-ended, without at the same time renouncing the right to opacity - or difference - cannot therefore, as Hallward purports, “best [be] described as singular or non-relational through and through” (2000: 7). Despite the innovative reading of Glissant by which Hallward seeks to demonstrate that his critics have mistaken repetitious redundancy for creative recycling, Hallward himself is guilty of overemphasising the degree to which the late Glissant privileges errance over rooting _per se_ thus, for him, “_Tout-monde_ is one of the most stridently enthusiastic fictional incantations of a borderless world ever written” (168). And yet, to state that “despite appearances [...] Glissant’s work evolves emphatically toward its radical simplification” (121) is, I think, to underestimate the importance of partial rooting contained in the notion of the rhizome and the ‘stubborn chunks’ of relational identity upon which Glissant’s reading of chaos insists.

One reason for this is that Hallward’s critique is arguably more motivated by the need to establish a political reading than willing to recognise the increasingly
poeticised thrust of Glissant's work. At the risk of stating the obvious, it is worth stating here that Glissant's thinking, while concerned with both the 'real' and with politics, is largely an exploration of the imaginary, a point inexplicably overlooked by some of his critics. Thus the self-avowed aim of Tout-monde is to “désobstruer, de faire joindre Ici et Là-bas” to which Glissant adds the injunction “ouvre l'imaginaire” (1993a: 577). I do not believe, for example, that Glissant's tout-monde amounts to a revolutionary call for the end of the nation-state or of national identity, except inasmuch as these have the tendency to become totalitarian. Nor do I think that the birth of national consciousness which forms the narrative of La Lézarde should be taken as an affirmation of Martinican autonomy; on the contrary, self-awareness and the desire to assert a (Francophone) Caribbean culture are both seen as functions of the capacity to imagine the world. Rather, what is put forward is the idea that geopolitical and cultural boundaries cannot be neatly aligned: “on saisit les limites - les frontières - d'un Etat, mais non pas d'une culture” (1990: 179). Consequently the temptation to conflate national culture or language and nationalist politics must be resisted.

We should be wary, in other words, of making an overly glib transposition of questions relating to culture and poetics onto the realities of concrete practice: “on ne peut pas mourir pour la créolisation”, as Glissant puts it (1996b: 98). Nevertheless Glissant's continued involvement in local, as well as global, affairs (admittedly not always charted in his recent writings) would seem to contradict Hallward's assessment of Glissant as absolutely deracinated in outlook. But even on a purely theoretical level, the idea that Glissant has somehow given up on the specifics, not to mention exigencies, of Martinican politics and culture can be countered by a careful attention to the notions of chaos which provide the focus of this chapter.

Now it is true that the global perspective of these late texts necessarily implies a certain displacement, as Chamoiseau has indicated:

Nous avons à défendre notre lieu créole. C'est peut-être la différence avec Glissant qui, lui, a beaucoup voyagé, il s'est éloigné, il ne ressent pas l'urgence comme nous. L'urgence de ces déperditions culturelles, il ne ressent pas cela de la même manière parce qu'il est

\[240\] Cf Hallward (2000: 9).

\[241\] Cf, for example, Glissant's prominent involvement in the fight to have slavery recognised as a crime against humanity, above all in Fort-de-France where the statue of Joséphine has come to be seen as a symbol of slavery. Thus on 17th July 1998, Glissant participated in an event to debate this question, as reported in Anîlia, 798: 8-11.
In fact, as Hallward’s analysis suggests, there may even be a tendency for the theoretical categories of nomadism and errance to obscure, on occasion, the particular and the specificity of struggle, however it is important to remember that Glissant himself insists on the specificity of the lieu incontournable. In addition, in Tout-monde above all, there is a concentration on the neo-colonial alienation which drove Le discours antillais and Malemort. Hence the sections devoted to immigrant populations of suburban Paris HLMs (e.g. 323-324) and references to the bétonisation of Martinique’s landscape - in particular the Lamentin mangrove threatened by the encroaching airport motorway (256-270) - paint a common picture of how modernity has done a disservice to Caribbeans both ‘at home’ and worldwide.

Another criticism made by Hallward relates to what he sees as a shift from problematic dualism supporting the drive for national ‘unity’ towards a relational system eschewing borders of any kind:

In his first two novels, the imminent national unity develops through the dualities that it does not dissolve - through the conflicts of the Longoué marron and Béluse esclave [...] Although problematic, such dualisms map the space through which the heroes undergo their initiation into a national awareness. By contrast, in La case and after, dualism as such seems to suggest impasse pure and simple. (2000: 169)

Glissant’s early work, it is true, displays a strong desire for the construction of a national or regional consciousness - epitomised in the notion of antillanité - but even here, I would argue, Glissant is simultaneously concerned with the insertion of the local into the global, Martinique’s place in the world, that is. If Glissant begins to favour Relation as a way of negotiating the perceived dualisms whose dépassement is sought, it is not, I think, with the aim of achieving a utopian erasure of all boundaries or specificities. Conversely, the early novels, at least Le quatrième siècle, should not be seen as entirely dualistic, since they contain elements of a third space of negotiation, the mangrove-like structure which will dominate the later works increasingly. The

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242 Here Glissant deals with the problem of identitarian fragmentation, of being crushed \‘laminairement entre deux impossibles, d’un ici et d’un là-bas, et entre deux identités, aussi frileuses et circonspectes l’une que l’autre, du Français et de l’Antillais\’, as well as with the politics of integration, adding that ‘ils sont, ceux-là qui naviguent ainsi entre deux impossibles, véritablement le sel de la diversité du monde. Il n’est pas besoin d’intégration, pas plus que de ségrégation, pour vivre ensemble dans le monde et manger tous les mangers du monde dans un pays. Et pour continuer pourtant d’être en relation d’obscurité avec le pays d’où tu viens. L’écartement, l’impossible, c’est vous-même qui le faites, qui le crées’ (1993a: 324).
Targin residence, La Toufaille, for example, suggests something which is neither enclosed, in the manner of the plantation, nor infinite, in the manner of the woods.

To summarise, then, Glissant can be seen as seeking to integrate the particular into the general. At the same time, however, the reverse - i.e. the world’s recognition of or definition by small countries - is seen as of equal importance: “je devine peut-être qu’il n’y aura plus de culture sans toutes les cultures” as he puts it in Soleil de la conscience (1997c: 13). What Glissant precisely refuses, it seems to me, is the attempt to subsume one thing into another, an idea reflected in his continued critique of the politics of assimilation (1981) and integration (1993a: 324). What I want to argue here, then, is that Glissant’s trajectory is best seen as a movement from the irreducible ‘souffle du lieu’ to the wider tout-monde and back again, a negotiation or aller-retour, as I have stated, and not simply a disengagement, or abdication of the local in favour of the general in which Glissant decides to “go with the flow” (Hallward, 2000: 9). Despite its utopian overtones, the notion of a tout-monde, as Glissant himself insists, has to reflect the idea of a cross-fertilisation without harmonious synthesis, “avec toutes ses joies, mais aussi avec toutes ses dérélictions, ses massacres, ses génocides, ses contradictions” (2000a), a genuinely chaotic system in other words.

It has been suggested that postcolonial fiction which seeks to affirm plural identity runs the risk of removing from those with the greatest need to struggle the right to do so in the first place. Similarly, for Steven Connor, postmodern theory, “in diagnosing the decline of the metanarratives of authority in the West, also high-mindedly evaporates the legitimacy of national emancipatory struggles” (1989: 234). Although I have attempted to indicate ways in which, I believe, Glissant demonstrates an awareness of this right to struggle - contained in the notion of opacity, for example - as well as of the exigencies of political pragmatism, it is perhaps worth repeating that to question ‘authentic’ identity and atavistic belonging, as Tout-monde clearly does, is anything but a denial of struggle and of sense of Self. It is simply that both can coexist, not necessarily benignly, but certainly productively: “remettre les principes en question, c’est peut-être lutter et rêver”, says Glissant, and yet, he continues, “je ne crois pas que la lutte et le rêve soient contradictoires” (1996b: 95).
EPILOGUE

This thesis is a study of space seen from a dual perspective; on the one hand an exposition of thinking about space in the West and, on the other, an account of spatial concepts and spatial representation in Caribbean literature. In one sense my aim has been to help contextualise the literary production of the contemporary Caribbean (and of the French Antilles in particular) by reference to a resurgence of spatiality in post-war criticism. Rather than a reading of Caribbean literature in terms of postcolonial or postmodern theory, however, a mechanical application of its concerns and terms, I have sought to demonstrate, in equal measure, to what extent a reading of the Caribbean can inform our understanding of these areas of contemporary thought. Caribbean writing, as I have presented it, constitutes a development of theoretical issues - *Texaco* as a version of Lefebvre’s ideas about peripheral spaces, for instance - but also a modification, or questioning, of some of the claims of theory, such as the current vogue for globalisation, of which *Tout-monde* must be read as both illustration and critique. Bringing together these two fields thus serves as a contribution not only to Caribbean studies but also to postcolonial and other forms of contemporary thought.

If I have drawn heavily on the work of Glissant, not least in my final chapter, this is because he not only epitomises the spatial approach to writing and to the world which provides the focus of this thesis, but also because he has been strangely overlooked outside the specific context of Francophone studies. Few Anglophone studies of Caribbean literature and still fewer discussions of postcolonial theory have chosen to draw on or even recognise his rich body of work. In postcolonial studies above all, as Britton has remarked, “one of the most important theorists of the French colonial experience as well as one of the greatest writers of the Caribbean is virtually never mentioned” (1999: 5). It remains to be seen what impact the recent translations of *Poétique de la Relation* (1997g) and *Faulkner, Mississippi* (2000b) will have in English-speaking academic circles.

In part therefore this thesis proposes a rehabilitation of Glissantian thinking outside the strait-jacket of Francophone studies. After all, given the sheer breadth of his work, in addition to its diversity of forms (criticism and theory, novels and poems), it does not seem hyperbolic to describe Glissant, with the possible exception

of Walcott, as the most important of living Caribbean writers. It is hoped that the
present study demonstrates not only the intrinsic interest of Glissant (together with
Chamoiseau, Condé and others) as exponents of Caribbean writing, but also their
relevance to wider debates.

My intention, however, has been to structure the discussion more around themes
than authors. Of all the ideas introduced here it is the re-deployment of chaos, as a
both a characteristic textual strategy of Caribbean writing and as an analogue for
postcolonial identity, which, I believe, emerges most forcefully as a metaconcept and
which will be of greatest value to the study of Caribbean literatures and postcolonial
theory. In the context of this thesis more specifically its inclusion is validated by the
fact that chaos suggests a new form of spatial relations as well a theoretical model for
articulating them. Above all, relational chaos - in its capacity as a regulator of the
dialogue between local and global, specific and general, Self and Other - provides a
response to the 'double imperatives' which, as I have attempted to demonstrate,
characterise many of the dilemmas, epistemological as well as identitarian, of the
postcolonial situation as it expresses itself spatially.
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