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# *Mapping a Tradition*

## *Francophone Women's Writing from Guadeloupe*

SAM HAIGH

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*For My Parents*

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# INTRODUCTION

In his introduction to *A New History of French Literature*, Denis Hollier discusses the way in which the idea of a 'national literature' can no longer easily be linked — if, indeed, it ever could — to that of strictly defined national borders. For Hollier, literature transcends borders both between and within nations: 'works of literature are not', he states, 'as tightly bound to place as are architectural ones, or to time as are political acts ... , [they are] less tightly anchored to local history and geography.'[1] In the context of French literature, borders have been expanded, in recent years, by what has come to be known as 'Francophone' writing — writing which is simultaneously 'French' and 'not French'. This writing, when considered as 'French', proves the veracity of Hollier's assertion, expanding as it does the way in which France may define its national literature. Yet when considered as 'Francophone', this writing throws into crisis Hollier's very definitions both of literature and of borders. In the case of the Antilles — those islands of the Francophone Caribbean whose notion of 'national borders' has always, at best, been problematic, but which nonetheless possess a rich and diverse literature — the idea of a 'national literature' is fraught with difficulty.[2] While writing in French from the Antilles would no longer wish to define itself exclusively as 'French', it is equally unable to define itself as a national literature in the way described by Hollier. Rather, Antillean literature continues to be intimately and vitally 'anchored' to place, to time, to local history and to geography.

Colonized by the French in 1635, the Antilles have continued to be marked by a history of violence and colonial exploitation: from the replacement of French indentured labourers with the first slaves from Africa in 1680 to the introduction in 1685 of the 'Code Noir'; from slavery's first, and temporary, abolition in 1794 to its reinstatement in 1802; from slavery's definitive abolition

in 1848 to the introduction of indentured labourers from India in 1853 and, finally, from the departmentalisation of the islands in 1946 to the present-day situation of mass unemployment and economic and social decline.[3] It is against this historical background that a tradition of literary and theoretical writing has developed — a tradition which began, of course, with French, colonial writing on and about the islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe. Père du Tertre's *Histoire générale des Antilles habitées par les Français*, published between 1667 and 1671, and père Labat's *Nouveaux voyages aux îles d'Amérique*, published in 1722, provide the first examples of such writing, writing which consisted largely of descriptions, by temporary residents of the islands, of the local geography and the newly-established planter society.[4]

This too, for the most part, was the type of writing which was beginning to be produced by the Antillean-born white population — the Creoles, or *békés* — by the middle of the eighteenth century. These writers dominated the Antillean literary scene until the end of the nineteenth century, producing ever more racist texts as they increasingly felt their power to be under threat: from the free mulatto population's acquisition of the right to full French citizenship in 1833, from the abolition of slavery fifteen years later, and from the French colonial discourses of assimilation which were then beginning to gain real currency. As Richard Burton has pointed out, however, the most outstanding text of the late nineteenth century was a novel by a Guyanese, 'evidently non-white' writer Alfred Parépou, whose *Atipa, roman guyanais*, was published in Creole in 1885.[5] Other mulatto writers, meanwhile, particularly poets of the early twentieth century such as Victor Duquesnay and Oruno Lara, wrote in a noticeably 'assimilated' style derived from that of the white Creole writers, who themselves emulated the work of their metropolitan contemporaries. It was not until the appearance of René Maran's novel *Batouala* (1921), Oruno Lara's *Questions de couleur — noirs et blanches* (1923), Suzanne Lacascade's *Claire-Solange, âme africaine* (1924) and Léon-Gontran Damas' collection of poetry, *Pigments* (1937), that 'racially aware' writing began finally to develop among the mulatto and black populations of the colonies.

The work of Damas, and particularly his association with Aimé Césaire, paved the way for the emergence of the ***négritude*** movement in the 1930s and 1940s and this, in turn, prompted the emergence of the literary and theoretical tradition which forms the background to this study. From the poetry of negritude to the growth of the novel in the 1950s and 1960s; from the work of Frantz Fanon to the growing interest in theatre in the 1970s; from the fiction and theories of Edouard Glissant to those of Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, recent Antillean literature and theory has continued, since the beginning of this century, to attempt to imagine an identity and a history for a people which has never managed to emerge, even nominally, from the colonial era.

This, too, has been the aim of that part of the Antillean literary tradition which is the focus of the present study, and which has until quite recently occupied a somewhat marginal position in relation to the literary and theoretical writing outlined above. Women's writing, of course, has long existed in the Antilles: from the work of *békées* like Drasta Houel (*Vies légères*, 1916), to that of pathbreakers like Suzanne Lacascade or 'assimilated' writers like Mayotte Capécia. Nonetheless, the Antillean tradition has remained, on the whole, overwhelmingly androcentric — stretching, like a paternal line of descent, from Césaire, to Fanon, to Glissant and the writers of the 1989 manifesto *Eloge de la créolité*.[6] Over the last two decades, however, and especially in recent years, there has been what A. J. Arnold calls '[une] irruption' of women writers into this 'héritage viril'.[7] It is the novels of several of these writers which are examined here: from the work of the older generation, Jacqueline Manicom and Michèle Lacrosil; to that of the 1970s, of Maryse Condé and Simone Schwarz-Bart; to the later work of Condé and that of the linguist Dany Bébel-Gisler.

That it is Guadeloupean writers who are the focus of this study requires some additional comment, for this should by no means be taken as a simple repetition of the familiar assertion that Guadeloupe alone has produced the majority of Antillean women writers. Richard Burton, for example, makes just such a suggestion, and while he feels that the reasons for this apparent phenomenon

'remain obscure',[8] various explanations have nonetheless been offered. The more radical, or politically 'militant', reputation of Guadeloupe, for example; or the fact that Martinican women writers are obliged to write under the shadow of those high-profile, 'post-Césaire', male writers and theorists whose work forms much of the background to this study. It is certainly true that this 'héritage viril' is overwhelmingly Martinican, though it is by no means the case that Guadeloupe has not produced its own, less high-profile 'fils de Césaire' — like Guy Tirolien, Sonny Rupaire or Daniel Maximin. Equally, while the highest profile women writers would certainly seem to be Guadeloupean — notably Condé, but also Schwarz-Bart — it is certainly not the case that Martinican women have not written and do not write. 'Pioneers' such as Suzanne Lacascade and even Mayotte Capécia, as well as Françoise Ega, represent quite early examples of Martinican women's writing; Ina Césaire is an established and much-respected ethnologist, playwright, novelist and filmaker and, in recent years, younger writers such as Michèle Maillet and Suzanne Dracius-Pinalie have begun to join their number.

That these women have failed to receive the recognition of their Guadeloupean counterparts may indeed have much to do with the 'shadow' cast by their more famous male contemporaries. What is certainly true, however, is that throughout the Antilles' colonial history, it is in general Guadeloupe that has received less attention and acclaim from France and elsewhere. As Fanon has pointed out, Martinique, with its larger *béké* population, has always been considered to be the more 'civilized' of the two islands, and has thus always been favoured over Guadeloupe which, with its larger black and East Indian populations, '[a toujours été] considérée comme un pays de sauvages'.[9] This, coupled with the influence of Césaire and his relative acceptance by the political and literary 'mainstream' in France, perhaps makes it unsurprising that Martinican writers should first have had the confidence to write, and should then have continued to receive the critical attention from France that they do.[10] By extension, it should perhaps come as no surprise either that recognition in the more recent, and as ever 'secondary', field of women's writing should have

been reserved for Guadeloupe. In many ways, this study therefore seeks in part to begin redressing the balance by bringing the work of writers from Guadeloupe to the fore: it seeks to look both at the 'eruption' of women onto the Antillean literary scene and at the more confident position being adopted by Guadeloupean writing in relation to that of Martinique.

The 'eruption' of women writers onto the Antillean literary scene has also been accompanied by an ever-increasing amount of critical and theoretical interest — interest which, largely from North America, has itself contributed to the privileging of some writers over others, for it is once again Condé, and to a lesser extent Schwarz-Bart, who has received the majority of attention. Unfortunately, a large proportion of this critical material has remained somewhat introductory, concerned simply with providing plot outlines or thematic summaries, rather than with the rigorous analysis either of the texts themselves or of the context of their production. Notable exceptions to this generalization are to be found in the work of Françoise Lionnet, Mireille Rosello and Clarisse Zimra, and it is their work which has often, and to varying extents, informed my own readings of the texts under examination here.

Like much of the critical work which already exists, this study explores the way in which women writers and women generally have been excluded from Antillean narratives of resistance and liberation. More specifically, however, I am concerned here with examining the way in which this exclusion may be seen to represent the 'founding' exclusion of the Antillean tradition — that which has allowed and enabled its very functioning. Thus I trace the way in which contemporary Guadeloupean women writers position themselves — explicitly and implicitly — in relation to the Antillean tradition which they have inherited and, through a close examination of selected texts from this tradition, I explore the ways in which these women writers at once situate themselves within it, interrogate it and disrupt it, as they attempt to explore for themselves questions of Antillean identity and history.

It is with reference to various feminist theoretical frameworks that the forms which this interrogation and disruption may take are investigated here, as well

as the specific means by which these women writers bring questions of gender and sexuality to bear upon those of race in a way that their more famous male counterparts have not. Indeed, it is this use of feminist theories which prompts important questions about the approach of this study to the work of black women writers from the Caribbean. More generally, it prompts questions about the use of what may be termed 'Western' feminist theories in the reading of texts by 'non-Western' writers, questions which must be addressed here for reasons which will become obvious.

Many writers and theorists have pointed out that 'Western feminist' approaches to what is alternately termed 'black', 'third world' or 'postcolonial' women's writing are most often characterized by an unacceptable degree of 'imperialism' — an imperialism which simply replicates and repeats that of the West more generally in its dealings with the 'non-Western' world. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido, for example, describe the relationship between Western feminism and the black female text as 'a site of unresolved contradiction in that feminist theoretical formulations, though they have effectively challenged the colonized status of woman [under patriarchy]... have simultaneously marginalized the third world woman'.[11] Indeed, in recent years it has become almost a commonplace to point out that Western feminism, while setting itself up as a universal discourse, has in fact been preoccupied only with the concerns of white, Western, middle-class women. That is, that dominant feminist discourses generally have tended to use the term 'woman' as a universal, to assume that all women are subject to the same oppression — patriarchal — and that there thus exists automatic 'sisterhood' irrespective of racial or class differences.

It is in just such terms that Lemuel Johnson critiques the work of Luce Irigaray, a figure whose work has in fact proved useful and informative throughout this study. For Johnson, Irigaray is ultimately too Eurocentric to be of any real use in examining the work of Caribbean women writers, and his principal objection lies precisely in her failure to foreground the fact that her analyses of women and patriarchy are analyses of white and western structures

only.[12] This critique is certainly borne out in her essay 'Women's Exile', one of the few Irigarayan pieces actually to address the question of differences among women. Here, Irigaray admits that it is impossible to speak of 'The Women's Movement' as something which is unified and united, and that to do so is to 'run the risk of introducing hierarchies..., or of leading to claims of orthodoxy'.[13] However, she remains convinced that:

The most important aim is to make visible the exploitation common to all women and to discover the struggles which every woman should engage in wherever she is: i.e., depending on her country, her occupation, her class and her sexual estate — i.e. the most immediately unbearable of her mode of oppression.[14]

She goes on to claim that all women inevitably suffer 'the same oppression, the same exploitation of their body, the same denial of their desire'.[15]

According to Irigaray, the most fundamental, the most 'immediately unbearable' mode of oppression is oppression by gender. Thus she asserts, several years later:

Le genre humain tout entier est composé de femmes et d'hommes et il n'est composé de rien d'autre. Le problème des races est, en fait, un problème secondaire... qui nous cache la forêt, et il en va de même des autres diversalités culturelles, religieuses, économiques et politiques. La différence sexuelle représente probablement la question la plus universelle que nous puissions aborder.[16]

For Irigaray, it is important to find ways in which to unite women, for she fears that emphasising differences between women will serve simply to divide and to weaken feminist struggle. However, she does so by introducing into her own work the very hierarchies into which she had feared 'The Women's Movement' itself may risk falling. In a classically 'imperialist feminist' move, Irigaray can thus be seen to be imposing upon all women what is in fact the 'most immediately unbearable mode of oppression' experienced by the 'average' white, Western, middle class, heterosexual feminist, and imagining that, from this base, other 'secondary' modes of oppression may simply be 'added on'. This attitude is one which has been defined by Elizabeth Spelman as 'the

ampersand problem', a problem which she sees to be fundamental within 'Western feminism' generally.[17]

Spelman points out how, in more recent years, as Western feminists have begun to realize the imperialism of apparently 'universal' feminist discourses, and the exclusion that it has entailed, they have merely added on the problem of racism to that of sexism, so that black women are seen as experiencing both racism *and* sexism. As Spelman points out, such 'additive analysis' implies that 'black women experience one form of oppression, as blacks (the same thing black men experience) and that they experience another form of oppression, as women (the same thing white women experience)'.[18] What this type of analysis ignores is the specificity of black women's oppression: 'she is oppressed by racism in a sexist context and sexism in a racist context'.[19] The idea that sexism and racism are experienced as separate, rather than simultaneous, modes of oppression thus leads to the assumption that black women, like white women, experience sexism — 'only worse'. This, in turn, as Gayatri Spivak points out, leads to a 'benevolent impulse'[20] on the part of many white, Western feminists, a 'benevolence' epitomized by what she calls an 'information-retrieval approach' to the lives and writing of non-Western women — by a growing Western enthusiasm, for example, for third world oral history.[21]

This 'benevolence' is perfectly summarized by Maryse Condé herself who, in her essay on Antillean women's writing, objects: 'tout ce qui touche à la femme noire est objet de controverse. L'Occident s'est horrifié de sa sujétion à l'homme, s'est apitoyé sur ses 'mutilations sexuelles', et s'est voulu l'initiateur de sa libération'[22] As Spivak, like Spelman, explains, such benevolence, in its emphasis on oppression by gender only, has ignored the way in which women from colonized countries have, historically, been caught between indigenous, patriarchal oppression *and* Western, imperialist oppression. In concentrating only on these women's oppression by an apparently unified group, 'men', such analysis ignores how the fact of imperialism guarantees that different men — black and white — have different access to patriarchal domination, and that black women *need* to align themselves with black men against colonial

oppression. What it serves also to cover over is the existence of diverse traditions of struggle amongst these women themselves, traditions of struggle which much black and third world feminist work has been keen to emphasize in an attempt to dissociate itself from first world imperialist feminism.

Davies and Fido, for example, draw attention to the way in which many African and African-American women writers have adopted the term 'womanism' in order to signal a refusal to be associated with the white feminist movement. For Fido, the term 'feminist' describes the political agenda of women's struggle, while 'womanist' is more closely linked to that agenda's 'cultural manifestation — women's talk, customs, lore'. For Davies, womanism is important primarily as 'a redefinition of the term feminism for other experiences than those of Western and white women' — a redefinition which she feels is especially important because of the strong Caribbean roots of the term 'womanist'. For both Davies and Fido, it is precisely in women's 'talk, customs and lore' that a specifically Caribbean tradition of women's struggle is to be found, one that is linked as much to anti-colonialist struggle *with* men, as it is to anti-sexist struggle *against* men. What is more, it is these 'womanist elements' of Caribbean feminism which have necessarily been covered over — 'colonized' — in order for Western feminists to represent third world women as victims waiting for outside liberation.[23]

For Chandra Mohanty, this 'self-serving' aspect of first-world feminist 'benevolence' is a key problem, and she points to the implicit distinction which is typically made between 'Western feminist re-presentation of women in the third world, and Western feminist *self*-presentation'.[24] For Mohanty, as for Davies and Fido, representations of women in the third world — as tradition-bound, uneducated, family-oriented, victimized — serve merely to guarantee Western women's self-presentation as educated, liberated, in control of their bodies and sexualities. Once again, as for Spivak, the ethnocentrism of Western imperialism is repeated in another guise, as Western women become the real subjects of their attempts to 'rewrite' third world women's history.

What is striking about the work of Spivak in particular, however, is her unwillingness to reject Western feminist theories in her own readings of third world women's texts. For her, linked to the benevolence and objectification which characterize the 'information-retrieval' approach, is the equally benevolent gesture entailed in the 'self-conscious' employment of 'a deliberately "non-theoretical" methodology' by first world feminists studying third world literature.[25] As Robert Young points out, such anti-theoreticism is merely an attempt to 'mask an equation whereby "primitive" or "intuitive" methods of analysis are assumed to be most appropriate for the texts of "primitive" cultures'.[26] For Young and Spivak, it is clear that what is at stake is not simply an 'anti-imperialist' non-application of Western theory but, rather, a selective application of different theories for different literature, the setting up of yet another binary in which third world women — and this time their writing — are coded as 'backward' in relation to women of the first world.

Spivak is not, of course, suggesting that Western feminist theory be applied wholesale to third world women's texts in order to render them more 'sophisticated' or 'credible'. What can be undertaken, however, is a process of 'bricolage': of taking what is useful from Western theories and using it 'in a scrupulously visible political interest'.[27] For Spivak, it is inadequate simply to reject Western feminism for the very reason that there are enormous similarities, as well as differences, between both texts and theories by black and white women, and between their experiences of patriarchal oppression. Indeed, these similarities may be seen to be inevitable within the context of colonialism for, as many postcolonial theorists have pointed out — and not least Spivak herself — the colonial encounter guarantees that 'Western' and 'indigenous', 'colonizer' and 'colonized' cannot exist as entirely opposite and exclusive terms.[28] Rather, as subsequent chapters will show, they are inevitably marked and informed by each other, albeit within the context of a still-uneven power relationship.

For Spivak, it is thus vital that strenuous attempts be made to utilize those similarities which do exist between first and third world women in order to build 'solidarities' between disparate women and disparate feminisms. Hers is

not, like that of Irigaray, a desire simply to find one mode of oppression which is 'common' to all women and which will therefore unite them. Instead, it is a desire to find common *ground* between women — in the recognition, rather than the erasure, of differences amongst them. For Spivak, if such attempts are not made, the result will simply be separatism of the worst sort, an 'epistemological/ontological confusion' in which only black women are deemed able to theorize black female experience and only white women are deemed able to theorize white female experience.[29] As Hazel Carby similarly points out, this position — in which knowledge is possible only through experience — implies that questions of race are relevant only to black women, and is thus in danger of allowing white women to continue to ignore their own implication in racist ideologies. It seems evident to Carby that 'we need more feminist work that interrogates sexual ideologies for their racial specificity and acknowledges whiteness, not just blackness as a racial categorization'.[30]

Such work must, of course, be undertaken with what Spivak calls 'constant vigilance', to the point of attempting to 'unlearn' one's privilege.[31] This vigilance opens up the possibility of work on third world texts which begins to escape imperialist benevolence, whether from first world investigators or from the indigenous or diasporic elite like Spivak herself. The careful project of unlearning one's privilege which she advocates — and which Young finds too utopian a solution[32] — entails not benevolence, but 'a persistent critique of what one is up to, so that it doesn't get bogged down in... homogenization; constructing the Other as simply an object of knowledge'.[33] In the context of feminism, it is particularly important to Spivak that 'the first world feminist... learn[s] to stop feeling privileged *as a woman* ',[34] and learns instead to examine her own involvement in — even complicity with — the structures which she is critiquing. Of course, Spivak does not mean to suggest that the inbuilt colonialism of first world feminism towards the third will thus easily be escaped. Rather, she hopes that such analyses will help to break down the barriers which are inevitably erected when Western feminists represent

themselves as already liberated, and as therefore in a position to liberate other women.

It is just such a project which Spivak undertakes in her essay 'French Feminism in an International Frame', an essay in which she is concerned, as she explains in a later interview with Elizabeth Grosz, with the question of 'how the unexamined universalising discourse of a certain sort of feminism may become useful for us, since this is the hegemonic space of feminist discourse'.[35] She takes what has frequently been perceived as one of the most esoteric areas of concern within so-called 'French feminism', the description of female (sexual) pleasure, and uses it to work towards forging a link between first and third world women. She begins by pointing out how, among third world women, 'feminism' is often seen not only as white, Western and middle-class, but as fighting for liberties which are in fact luxuries, such as 'free sex'. It is of course this apparent emphasis on reproductive freedom which has, in part, led to that benevolence described by Condé, in which first world feminists wish to liberate third world women from 'mutilations sexuelles' — such as clitoridectomy.

What Spivak attempts to demonstrate, is that this benevolence can in many ways be reduced when, instead of objectifying the third world woman as victim of such 'barbaric', non-Western practices, the Western feminist uses French feminism's crucial recognition that, in the West, 'symbolic clitoridectomy has always been the "normal" accession to womanhood and the unacknowledged name of motherhood'.[36] Spivak is here arguing that, within Western patriarchal culture, women have existed within what she calls 'a uterine economy': they have been defined as either sex-objects or mothers, as objects of exchange between fathers and husbands for the purposes of reproduction. What French feminisms have pointed out, for Spivak, is that in order for women to have been defined in this way, the clitoris as signifier of the sexed subject, of female sexual pleasure, has been effaced: it has been symbolically *excised*. It is through attention to Western women's *own* 'symbolic clitoridectomies' that Spivak hopes to promote a sense of 'the common-yet-history-specific-lot'[37] of first and

third world women, and that the former will be able to begin to 'unlearn her privilege as a woman'.

In a reply to her own essay, written ten years later, Spivak reexamines similar issues, in an attempt to ascertain whether it is still possible to make academic, and specifically French feminisms useful for women working and writing in newly decolonized nations. This time, she looks at the work of a writer and political activist from Algeria, Marie-Aimée Hélie-Lucas. What she finds to be of interest, amongst other things, is the discourse employed by Hélie-Lucas in her critique of the position of women within the new nation-state of Algeria, and within nationalist discourses themselves. That is, her use of:

> The historical empirical definitive predication of women in exogamous societies — a woman's home is radical exile, fixed by her male owner. A woman's *norm* is a persistent passive critique of the idea of the *miraculating* agency or identity produced by a home, whose rational aggregative consolidation is the apparatus of the nation.[38]

This, as Spivak points out and as I examine in the chapters which follow, bears striking and useful resemblance to French feminist accounts of the position of women within patriarchal-phallogocentric social and discursive structures. In this specific case, Hélie-Lucas uses her observation in order to distance herself from 'the project of national identity when it interferes with the production of female individualities'.[39]

As in Spivak's previous essay, specific 'third world' women's problems, frequently decoded as problems from which first world feminists have already liberated themselves, prove to be yet another example of the 'common-yet-history-specific-lot' of both third and first world women. Once again, a certain sort of 'hegemonic' feminism proves itself not simply to be useful in the examination of 'non-hegemonic' feminist work, but demonstrates also the frequently unavoidable similarities which exist between apparently disparate feminist agendas. Indeed for Spivak, the similarities between French feminisms and the work of women like Hélie-Lucas are particularly unsurprising, since women from countries which were colonized by France must necessarily 'negotiate actively with the trace of the French'. [40] This, of course, is extremely

relevant also in the case of those women's texts examined here, for as Glissant points out, the Antilles — more even than former colonies such as Algeria, given both their continued status as *départements d'outre-mer* and their membership of the European Community — are indelibly marked by the 'trace' of France and of French.[41]

The scope of this study does not, however, explicitly extend to imagining ways in which black and white, Western and non-Western feminists may build solidarities, though such solidarities certainly emerge within the texts under consideration. In a manner which remains, nonetheless, in the spirit of Spivak's work, I am partly concerned here with how certain sorts of apparently 'esoteric' Western feminist theory may be made useful in the context of women's writing from Guadeloupe — writing which is at once French and not French, at once colonized and postcolonial and which, though Antillean, has been largely excluded from the Antillean 'tradition'. As Spivak recommends, my approach here is to attempt to remain informed throughout by a 'constant vigilance', by a desire not simply to add the problematics of sex and gender onto those of race, or vice versa, but to explore the ways in which these, and other, categories of oppression may intersect. In so doing, it is hoped that feminist discourses themselves are interrogated (if at times implicitly) for their lack of attention to racial and cultural difference, just as Antillean discourses are examined for their lack of attention to sexual difference and oppression by gender.

Thus, in chapter one, two texts from the 1960s and one from the early 1970s are examined as examples precisely of the way in which race, gender and sexuality intersect in the lives and writing of black Guadeloupean women. These texts, by Lacrosil and Manicom, represent quite early examples of the way in which Antillean women writers interrogate the presuppositions of seminal Antillean texts — in this case Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs*. It is in chapter two that the work of Irigaray herself becomes useful in a manner which recalls Spivak's own use of 'French feminisms' in relation to the work of Hélie-Lucas, for here I examine the way in which Condé, in her first two novels, interrogates *négritude* — the Antillean discourse *par excellence* of resistance

and liberation — from the perspective of gender. Chapter three, like chapter two, examines the Antillean desire for Africa and, once more, what is at stake for women in the forms that this desire may take. Together with chapter four, however, this chapter explores not only questions of Antillean identity and self-definition, but also those of the rewriting of colonial history. As becomes apparent, questions of history and identity, in the Antilles, are vitally and intricately linked. Both of these chapters take as their starting point the post-negritude work of Glissant, while in chapter five it is the work of the most recent of Antillean theorists — the writers of *Eloge de la créolité* — which provides many of the theoretical parameters. Indeed, it is in chapter five that parameters — or, perhaps, borders — begin to widen beyond the Antilles, and in which 'solidarities' both of race and of gender begin finally to emerge.

NOTES

1. Denis Hollier, *A New History of French Literature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. xii-xxv.
2. Throughout this volume, my use of the term 'Antilles' will refer primarily to the islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe, though both Haiti, independent from France since 1804, and French Guiana, a *département d'outre-mer* with a similar colonial history to the islands, are in many studies also referred to as 'Antillean'.
3. On Antillean history see, for example: Jean-Luc Mathieu, *Les DOM-TOM* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988); Lucien-René Abenon, *Petite histoire de la Guadeloupe* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992); Jacques Adélaïde-Merlande, *Histoire Générale des Antilles et des Guyanes: Des Précolombiens à nos jours* (Paris: Editions Caribéennes, 1994). On the contemporary political and economic situation, see: Auguste Armet, 'Guadeloupe et Martinique: des sociétés "krazé"?', *Présence Africaine*, 121-22 (1982), 11-19; Robert Lambotte, 'Les DOM: le sous-développement français', *Options*, 77 (1979), 38-42; Jacques Ziller, *Les DOM-TOM* (Paris: Librairie Générale de Droit, 1991); Richard Burton and Fred Reno, eds, *French and West Indian: Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guiana Today* (London: Macmillan, 1994).
4. For further details on these and other texts discussed here, as well as on the development of Antillean literature generally, see: Jack Corzani, *La Littérature des Antilles-Guyane françaises*, 6 vols (Fort-de-France: Désormeaux, 1978); Roger Toumson, *La Transgression des couleurs: Littérature et langage des Antilles, 18e, 19e, 20e siècles*, 2 vols (Paris: Editions Caribéennes, 1989); Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphael Confiant, *Lettres créoles: Tracées antillaises et continentales de la littérature 1635-1975* (Paris: Hatier, 1991); A. James Arnold, ed., *A History of Literature in the Caribbean: Hispanic and Francophone Regions* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1995).
5. See Richard Burton's entry on the West Indies in Peter France, ed., *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 851-54 (p. 852).

6. See Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, *Eloge de la créolité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), in which the authors position themselves quite explicitly as the last in a line of literary fathers and sons which extends from Césaire ('nous sommes à jamais fils de Césaire', p. 18) to Fanon, to Glissant.
7. A. J. Arnold, 'Poétique forcée et identité dans la littérature des Antilles francophones', in Maryse Condé, ed., *L'Héritage de Caliban* (Paris: Editions Jasor, 1992), pp. 19-28 (p. 21).
8. See, for example, Richard Burton's entry on the West Indies in Peter France, ed., *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*, p. 854.
9. Fanon, 'Antillais et Africains', in Frantz Fanon, *Pour la révolution africaine* (Paris: Maspéro, 1964), p. 25.
10. Chamoiseau and Confiant, in particular, have been awarded a host of literary prizes for their recent fiction, including the 1992 Prix Goncourt for Chamoiseau's *Texaco*.
11. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido, eds, *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1990), p. 2.
12. Lemuel Johnson, 'A-beng: (Re)Calling the Body In(to) Question', in Davies and Fido, eds, *Out of the Kumbla*, pp. 111-42 (p. 119). Johnson's critique is not confined to Irigaray: he includes also the work of Toril Moi, as well as that of other white, Western feminists.
13. Luce Irigaray, 'Women's Exile', trans. Couze Venn, in *Ideology and Consciousness*, 1 (1977), 62-76 (p. 67). This article was originally published in English and has never subsequently been published in French.
14. Ibid., p. 69.
15. Ibid., p. 67.
16. Irigaray, *J'aime à toi: Esquisse d'une félicité dans l'histoire* (Paris: Grasset, 1992), pp. 84-85.
17. Elizabeth Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of exclusion in feminist thought* (London: The Women's Press, 1990).
18. Ibid., p. 22.
19. Ibid., p. 24.
20. Gayatri Spivak, 'A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: A Woman's Text From the Third World', in Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 241-68 (p. 253).
21. See Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism', *Critical Inquiry*, 12 (1985), 262-80 (p. 262) and Spivak, 'Imperialism and Sexual Difference', *Oxford Literary Review*, 8 (1986), 225-40 (p. 229).
22. Maryse Condé, *La Parole des femmes: essai sur des romancières des Antilles de langue française* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1979), p. 3.
23. Davies and Fido, *Out of the Kumbla*, p. xii.
24. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *Boundary 2*, 12-13 (1984), 333-58 (p. 337).
25. Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts', p. 262. This deliberately 'non-theoretical' approach may, of course, be seen to be at work in much of the introductory critical work on women's writing from Guadeloupe which I mentioned earlier.
26. Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 162.
27. Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography', in Spivak, *In Other Worlds*, pp. 197-221 (p. 205).
28. This is perhaps expressed most clearly by Spivak in her essays on the work of the 'Subaltern Studies' group, a group concerned with writing Indian history and literary criticism which is independent from the theories of the Western and indigenous élite. See Spivak, 'The Rani of

Sirmur', in Francis Barker et al., eds, *Europe and its Others*, 2 vols (Colchester: University of Essex, 1985), I, 128-51).

29. Spivak, 'A Literary Representation of the Subaltern', p. 253. See also Spivak, 'Questions of Multiculturalism', in Sarah Harasym, ed., *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 9-68 (p. 62).
30. Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 18.
31. Spivak, 'Criticism, Feminism and the Institution', in Harasym, ed., *The Post-Colonial Critic*, pp. 1-16 (p. 9).
32. Young, *White Mythologies*, p. 170.
33. Spivak, 'Questions of Multiculturalism', p. 63.
34. Spivak, 'French Feminism In an International Frame', in Spivak, *In Other Worlds*, pp. 134-53 (p. 136).
35. Spivak, 'Criticism, Feminism and the Institution', p. 10.
36. Spivak, 'French Feminism in an International Frame', p. 151.
37. Ibid., p. 153.
38. Spivak, 'French Feminism Revisted: Ethics and Politics', in Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, eds, *Feminists Theorize the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 54-84 (p. 73).
39. Ibid., p. 73.
40. Spivak, 'French Feminism Revisited', p. 68.
41. See Edouard Glissant, *Le Discours antillais* (Paris: Seuil, 1981), p. 137.

# ONE

## BEYOND 'LE REGARD (DU) BLANC'

The earliest published Antillean women writer is usually taken to be the Martinican Mayotte Capécia. Capécia's novels, *Je suis Martiniquaise*[1] and *La Négresse blanche*,[2] were apparently popular at the time of publication,[3] and her work has gained most of its subsequent notoriety from Frantz Fanon's analysis of it in his seminal Antillean text, *Peau noire, masques blancs*,[4] which was published just four years after *Je suis Martiniquaise*. The similarity of the fictional work of Capécia and the theoretical work of Fanon is striking: both, in different ways, are examinations of the continued, and debilitating, effects of the French colonial policy of assimilation in post-departmentalisation Antillean society. Both are examinations of the rigidly hierarchical and racialized structure of that society, and of the impact of popular, colonialist constructions of 'blackness' and 'whiteness'. And both describe the terrifying power of the white gaze, together with the ensuing, crippling effects of the black Antillean's desire to become white. However, as we shall see, Fanon's own analysis of Capécia's work is one which fiercely *denies* any such similarities, and which has succeeded in making Capécia more infamous than famous, in positioning her as a rather disreputable, second-rate writer. Nevertheless, despite — or perhaps because of — this positioning, Capécia's work may be seen to have functioned as a pre-text for many of the Antillean women writers of subsequent generations.[5] Indeed, it is the work of two such writers which I wish to examine here: Michèle Lacrosil's *Sapotille et le serin d'argile*[6] and *Cajou*,[7] and Jacqueline Manicom's *Mon Examen de Blanc*.[8] As Clarisse Zimra points out, Lacrosil's editor specifically requested that she capitalize on Capécia's success by utilising a similar plot structure and by examining similar themes.[9] However, what I wish to examine in this chapter is the way in which Lacrosil and Manicom replay and go beyond not only the concerns of Capécia, but also those of Fanon's own study of the black-white relationship.

Lacrosil's first novel, *Sapotille*, concerns itself with the eponymous narrator's discovery of her difference: surrounded at her convent school by mainly white girls and white nuns, she is gradually forced to define herself as black — or, rather, as 'not-white'. We are shown how, through a series of formative encounters with the 'white gaze', Sapotille's blackness is (negatively) constructed, and how she then internalizes this construction and acts according to it — for the rest of her life. The first of such encounters comes when she looks up from her school book to discover that the nun teaching the lesson has drawn a caricature of her on the blackboard. She is devastated: 'Rien de flatteur. Je ne savais pas que Soeur Scholastique me voyait si laide. Ce fut une révélation affreuse' (*Sapotille*, p. 40). Suddenly, she realizes how others see her, how the gaze of white people around her constructs her blackness as ugliness, a realization which is later confirmed for her when as a punishment, she is forced to stand in front of the entire school in order that everyone may *look* at her. As she stands there, silenced by their looks, she feels ridiculous, perceiving herself as she imagines the others perceive her — as the nun's drawing, now imprinted on her mind, had represented her:

> Je me voyais avec ses yeux, c'était elle qui avait raison; j'étais comme ça, laide, si laide. Tout le monde me voyait comme ça, j'étais la seule à n'avoir pas su depuis longtemps; la preuve, c'était les rires des autres qui roulaient en tonnerre autour de moi. Dieu! Disparaître sous les dalles rouges de cette salle! Me cacher, me cacher. (Sapotille, p. 44)

From these early incidents, her life is marked by an awareness of the way in which those around her fix her with their gaze. It is an awareness which never leaves her free of the desire to hide, or to disguise herself, and it is this same desire which has led her to board the ship for France from which she is now recounting her story. France alone, she feels, will allow her to hide from, and perhaps escape, the gaze of Antilleans obsessed with colour. 'Les Français', she believes, 'ignorent le compartimentage de la société antillaise, les interdits d'une classe à l'autre' (*Sapotille*, p. 239).

This flight towards France, however, does not necessarily provide the Antillean with a means of escape from her/his obsession with colour. As Fanon repeatedly points out in *Peau noire, masques blancs,* it is when the Antillean travels to France that his/her blackness becomes even more, not less, of a cause for 'neurotic' behaviour: 'l'Antillais qui vient en France conçoit ce voyage comme la dernière étape de sa personnalité. Littéralement nous pouvons dire sans crainte que l'Antillais qui va en France afin de se persuader de sa blancheur y trouve son véritable visage'.[10] This, as Clarisse Zimra explains, is in large part due to the fact that the fine colour-gradations of the Antilles disappear in France: *chabines*, *câpresses* and mulattoes all become 'black'.[11] This Sapotille discovers even before her arrival in France, for both she, a *câpresse*, and the lighter *chabine*, Denise Nolas, are taken for and treated as 'black' by the crew of the *Nausicaa*. Similarly, in Lacrosil's second novel, *Cajou*, the experiences of the heroine in France bear out Fanon's observations: her obsession with her blackness, acute enough in Guadeloupe as a child, is compounded when she goes to France as a student. In fact, although not a direct sequel to *Sapotille*, *Cajou* in many ways appears to continue the story of a Guadeloupean mulatto woman haunted by the white gaze that has negatively constructed her blackness.

Like Sapotille, Cajou is obsessed by a sense of inferiority and by feelings of self-disgust and shame and, terrified that she will be rejected by the white mother she longs to resemble, she too is filled with a need to hide or disguise herself. But Cajou's neurosis in fact goes beyond that of Sapotille: Cajou *needs* the white gaze in order to have something against which, constantly and obsessively, to judge herself. This is an obsession which establishes itself when she is a child, when she begins to see herself through the eyes of her white playmate Stéphanie: 'je me regardais dans les yeux de Stéphanie Bajères et je détestais ma laideur' (*Cajou*, p. 63). She learns to see herself solely as Stéphanie and others see her, and their gaze allows her to objectify herself, to construct her own blackness against the whiteness of those around her: 'jusqu'à l'âge de seize ans, Stéphanie Bajères m'a servi de repère. Après l'avoir contemplée, je m'examinais avec un tel détachement qu'il me semblait être devenue un objet.

Stéphanie me permettait de m'observer "du dehors"' (*Cajou*, p. 65) As Clarisse Zimra puts it: 'the black object has become a subject which pretends to be an object. It is Cajou who now claims an identity exclusively defined by white stereotypes'.[12] She becomes, in consequence, obsessed also with mirrors and she uses them, too, as a means of self-objectification, as a means of seeing herself as she believes white others see her. Having learnt the myth of Narcissus at school, she declares herself:

Narcisse à rebours: Narcisse honteux de soi et déplorant son reflet. Les miroirs me fascinaient. C'était une porte ouverte à la perversité... [Aujourd'hui] c'est le soir que je me déteste le plus. Je me déshabille et j'entre dans le miroir. J'y retrouve les laideurs et les défaites de la journée. (*Cajou*, p. 64)

She has continued, from childhood, to undertake this form of self-punishment: she has developed an 'inner whiteness', a 'white consciousness' according to which, to a much greater extent than Sapotille, she not only judges herself constantly, but which she is never able to reconcile with the image that she sees of herself in her mirror. The experiences of Cajou do not, however, recall only those of Sapotille: when read with Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs,* they can be seen to be representative of a much wider, and more general, Antillean 'neurosis'. As Fanon writes:

Le sentiment d'infériorité est antillais. Ce n'est pas tel Antillais qui présente la structure du nerveux, mais tous les Antillais. La société antillaise est une société nerveuse, une société 'comparaison'. Donc nous sommes renvoyés de l'individu à la structure sociale.[13]

In his chapter entitled 'Le Nègre et la psychopathologie', Fanon takes Adler's theories of neurosis, Freud's notion of trauma, and Jung's of the collective unconscious, and attempts to apply them to an Antillean context. He extends Freud's idea that individual neurosis has its origin in a specific, childhood trauma towards the notion that the real 'primal trauma' for the Antillean is in fact that of a European 'collective unconscious' that is imposed on Antillean society as a whole. Fanon's notion of the 'collective unconscious', too, is an

extension of that of Jung, for while the latter, according to Fanon, locates it in 'la substance cérébrale héritée',[14] Fanon himself envisions it to be an inherited, socio-cultural — rather than biological — phenomenon. The collective unconscious, for Fanon, is thus 'l'ensemble de préjugés, de mythes, d'attitudes collectives d'un groupe déterminé'.[15] It is when the collective, European cultural myth of 'the Negro' is imposed on the black Antillean that the 'neurotic' behaviour exemplified by Cajou and by Sapotille inevitably ensues. As Fanon explains, 'peu à peu, on voit se former et cristalliser chez le jeune Antillais une attitude, une habitude de penser et de voir qui sont essentiellement blanches... Subjectivement, intellectuellement, l'Antillais se comporte comme un Blanc'.[16]

Thus, as Fanon explains, the black Antillean, like the white Frenchman, is negrophobic: 'Dans l'inconscient collectif, noir = laid, péché, ténèbres, immoral... Si dans ma vie je me comporte en homme moral, je ne suis point un nègre'.[17] If the black Antillean feels 'la pureté de [sa] conscience et la blancheur de [son] âme', then he can convince himself that he is not a Negro, that external colour is nothing.[18] The most obvious consequence of such a conviction is an obsession with one's own image. Fanon, like Cajou, declares: 'je suis Narcisse et je veux lire dans les yeux de l'autre une image de moi qui me satisfasse'.[19] However, as Fanon also points out, it is inevitable that, at some point, the Antillean will discover the ineradicable discrepancy between self-image and image, between 'inner whiteness' and external blackness. As for Sapotille and for Cajou, this realization comes, for Fanon, with the shock of an encounter, in France, with 'le regard blanc'.

It is in his famous, personalized account which Fanon describes in detail the shock of such an encounter, as he recalls the moment when a small white child had pointed him out in the street, remarking: 'Tiens, un nègre!... Maman regarde le nègre, j'ai peur!'[20] Fanon goes on to explain how this is precisely the type of encounter through which the black Antillean discovers his [sic] blackness, discovers himself to be an object amidst other objects. Forced to meet the white gaze, he discovers that 'le Noir n'a plus à être Noir, mais à l'être en face du Blanc... Le Noir n'a pas de résistance ontologique aux yeux du Blanc'.[21] He

describes how, suddenly, the black Antillean in this situation is forced to become aware of the way in which, historically, he has been constructed as black:

Je promenai sur moi un regard objectif, découvris ma noirceur, mes caractères ethniques — et me défoncèrent le tympan l'anthropophagie, l'arriération mentale, le fétichisme, les tares raciales, les négriers, et surtout, et surtout: 'Y a bon banania'... Mon corps me revenait étalé, disjoint, rétamé, tout endeuillé dans ce jour blanc d'hiver.[22]

As for Cajou and for Sapotille, such an encounter with the white gaze therefore leads inevitably to self-objectification and to shame:

Je suis sur-déterminé de l'extérieur... les regards blancs, les seuls vrais, me dissèquent. Je suis fixé... Je suis trahi... je me glisse dans les coins, je demeure silencieux, j'aspire à l'anonymat, à l'oubli! Tenez, j'accepte tout, mais que l'on ne m'aperçoive plus!... La honte. La honte et le mépris de moi-même. La nausée.[23]

The black Antillean thus experiences what Fanon describes as 'un écroulement du Moi', and his response typically takes the form of one of two possible scenarios. First, he may accept his 'inferiority', and reconcile himself to living out his assigned role as 'black', to behaving as he is expected to behave — as 'un nègre'. Second, and much more commonly given the difficulty of accepting entirely one's own subordinate status, he may remain a 'reactional' figure. That is, as Fanon explains, having undergone his first encounter with the white gaze, 'le Noir cesse de se comporter en individu *actionnel*. Le but de son action sera Autrui (sous la forme du Blanc), car Autrui seul peut le valoriser'.[24] However, not only does the black Antillean continue to judge himself in relation to, and against, the white other, but he begins actually to attempt to attain whiteness via that white other. It is, specifically, his desire for whiteness which becomes 'reactional', for he desires to be desired by the white other: this, alone, will affirm his true 'whiteness', will begin to match the way in which he is perceived by others with the way in which he perceives himself. As Fanon explains: 'je ne veux pas être reconnu comme *Noir*, mais comme *Blanc*... qui peut le faire, sinon

la Blanche? En m'aimant, elle me prouve que je suis digne d'un amour blanc. On m'aime comme un Blanc. Je suis un Blanc'.[25]

It is this 'reactional' form of desire which may lead on to another, more extreme and more literal, attempt to bring external appearance into line with 'inner whiteness': that of miscegenation, or what has come to be known as the 'lactification complex'. This, for Fanon, is another peculiarly Antillean preoccupation: a desire to escape one's blackness by marrying someone lighter than oneself and, ideally, by producing light-skinned children. Not only is the black Antillean thus recognized by the white other as worthy of white love, but he is able also to produce 'proof' of his entrance into the white world. As Zimra points out, for the black woman in particular — like Sapotille, like Cajou, or like Madévie in Manicom's text — pregnancy can be seen to represent the ultimate manner in which to reconcile image and self-image: by growing whiter, quite literally, from within.[26] For Fanon, however, as we shall see, the question, specifically, of the black woman's experience of the 'lactification complex' is one which proves far more difficult to theorize than does that of the black man like himself.

### *Fanon and Sexual (In)difference*

For Fanon, an examination of the black-white relationship is indissociable from the notion of the 'mixed marriage': indeed, the interracial male-female relationship in fact epitomizes the very character of the white/black, colonizer/colonized relationship itself.[27] *Peau noire, masques blancs* thus contains two chapters devoted to interracial marriage and its significance as far as the Antillean colour neurosis is concerned. It is in the first of these chapters, 'La femme de couleur et le Blanc', that Fanon embarks upon his examination of Capécia's *Je suis Martiniquaise*. The story of an Antillean woman named Mayotte whose relationship with a white, French soldier results in the birth of a light-skinned son, Capécia's novel, it would seem, represents a classic example of Fanon's theory of Antillean neurosis, and of its apparently inexorable result:

the drive to achieve whiteness via miscegenation. However, somewhat surprisingly, Fanon himself fails to interpret it in such terms. Despite his occasional attempts to place Capécia's text within the wider context of his theory of Antillean 'lactification complex' — 'c'est parce que la négresse se sent inférieure qu'elle aspire à se faire admettre dans le monde blanc'[28] — Fanon repeatedly treats Capécia as little more than a special, and rather treacherous, case of Antillean negrophobia. He finds in Mayotte's rejection of black men — and he rather problematically conflates Mayotte with Capécia, a point to which I shall return later — a betrayal both of black men in particular, and of the black race in general. Although he acknowledges that Capécia's second novel, *La Négresse blanche*, displays 'une tentative de revalorisation du nègre', he goes on to deplore the fact that her heroines always feel compelled to leave Martinique for France, a point he elsewhere articulates as a general Antillean phenomenon. In sum, he finds *Je suis Martiniquaise* to be little more than a series of 'propositions les plus absurdes': 'un ouvrage au rabais, prônant un comportement malsain'.[29]

It is not only within the context of his general study of the lactification complex that Fanon's study of *Je suis Martiniquaise* appears contradictory, for his examination of René Maran's *Un Homme pareil aux autres* displays none of the mocking and derisory treatment meted out to Capécia. On the contrary, Fanon treats Maran's character Veneuse as a tragic figure, and he portrays his feelings of inferiority and his desire to marry a white woman with sympathy and understanding. Fanon's apparently inconsistant portrayal of the black-white relationship does not stop with his examination of Capécia and Maran, and nor is Capécia/Mayotte the only woman for whom he shows contempt. He displays the same attitude towards Abdoulaye Sadji's Nini, 'une petite dactylographe toute bête'[30] who similarly 'betrays' her race when she rejects the advances of Mactar, a man blacker than herself. Everywhere, as Zimra points out, Fanon displays a contempt for black women that he does not display towards black men trapped by the same obsession with skin-colour. Indeed, Fanon seems to have nothing but respect for the men he chooses to examine — men who,

crucially, have succeeded in educating themselves, in 'civilising' themselves, into a state of intellectual 'whiteness' that the women he chooses to examine have not.

For Fanon, it would seem that the external whiteness conferred by miscegenation is never, alone, enough, for it can be seen to confirm too readily the colonialist, binary association of 'white' with 'mind' (rationality, reason, humanity itself), and 'black' with 'body' (animal physicality, uncontrollable sexuality). It is therefore necessary that literal miscegenation be nothing more than a means of *supplementing* an already achieved degree of 'inner', or intellectual, 'whiteness'. Men like Veneuse and Mactar have thus proved themselves to be *intellectually* worthy of attaining physical whiteness — the external signifier of 'humanity' — via miscegenation, while the women chosen by Fanon to study have not. Thus Mayotte and Nini are guilty of aspiring to whiteness *only* through physical means, through the 'growing whiter from within' which miscegenation can be seen literally to represent for women.

It therefore becomes obvious that in his discussion of the way in which the black Antillean necessarily absorbs and adopts the European 'collective unconscious', Fanon examines the case, primarily, of educated Antilleans. It is equally obvious, however, that he remains unaware of the inequality of access to education, to the means of achieving 'intellectual whiteness' which, despite the limited access to education available to black Antilleans generally, would nonetheless have existed between black men like Veneuse and black women like Mayotte. At the same time, Fanon remains equally unaware, it would seem, of that other Western association: of *man* with 'mind' and of *woman* with 'body'. Though Fanon succeeds in reversing the colonial, racialized binary of 'mind/body' (by showing black men to be equally capable of intellectual 'civilization' as are their white counterparts), he succeeds merely in repeating the attending sexualized binary — perhaps because of the more 'bodily' role of women in the process of miscegenation itself. What is more, this aspect of Fanon's analysis does not stop at his treatment of the characters in the texts

examined: as I mentioned earlier, he conflates Mayotte, the narrator of *Je suis Martiniquaise*, with Capécia, its author.

This is an assumption of autobiography which he never makes with Maran's text, despite his acknowledged suspicion that it, too, is highly autobiographical.[31] Fanon seems prepared to imagine that Maran is capable, like himself, of reasoned analysis, of the 'objective' *representation* of the phenomenon of Antillean neurosis. He is apparently quite unable, however, to imagine that a woman such as Capécia is capable of anything more than naïvely recording a neurosis which she herself has experienced. Capécia, for Fanon, seems to em*body* the lactification complex in a way that Maran does not.[32] At every level, Fanon's analysis of the two texts, and of the black-white, postcolonial[33] relationship in general, is marked, it would seem, by an androcentric 'blindness' to sexual difference. As Homi Bhabha points out, rather than wilful misogyny or 'sexism' on Fanon's part — and Bhabha is referring specifically to Fanon's use of the 'generic' terms 'he' and 'man' — *Peau noire, masques blancs* seems to exhibit an unconscious inability to consider the difference that sex makes within already complex racialized relationships of power. Fanon *ignores* the question of sexual difference, a move that Bhabha feels displays 'Fanon's desire to site the question of sexual difference within the problematic of cultural difference — to give them a shared origin — which is suggestive, but often simplifies the question of sexuality'.[34]

Curiously, however, Fanon does not ignore women altogether in *Peau noire, masques blancs*: indeed, it is his occasional references to sexual difference that make his failure to address such questions rigorously even more frustrating. He points tentatively towards the suggestion, for example, that the power-relationship which exists between a black man and a white woman is vastly different from that which exists between a black woman and a white man. He cites a passage from Mannoni (whose *Psychologie de la colonisation* he heavily critiques in chapter four of his study), in which Mannoni suggests that the existence of interracial sex, during the colonial period, can be seen as proof that

there is no innate, or 'natural', racial conflict between the colonized and the colonizers. Fanon is quick to point out the folly of Mannoni's thesis:

N'exagérons rien. Quand un soldat des troupes conquérantes couchait avec une jeune Malgache, il n'y avait sans doute de sa part aucun respect de l'altérité. Les conflits raciaux ne sont pas venus après, *ils ont coexisté*.[35]

As he goes on to point out in a footnote to this same paragraph: 'le Blanc étant le maître, et plus simplement le mâle, peut se payer le luxe de coucher avec beaucoup de femmes. Cela est vrai dans tous les pays et davantage aux colonies'.[36]

The same apparent insight is also manifested in Fanon's chapter on the psychosexuality of white women, 'Le Nègre et la psychopathologie'. Though this chapter, as Bhabha points out, deals largely in stereotypical images of white femininity — images, for example, of white women as victims of popular, colonial representations of the black man as an excessively potent sexual being — Fanon nonetheless points towards more significant issues. For example, he suggests, albeit obliquely, that the power-relationship between black men and white women is one in which, precisely because of the representation of the black man as excessively sexual, the black man's potential position of dominance by sex is offset by the white woman's position of dominance by race. This complexity, as Fanon hints at but never quite makes explicit, was at the heart of practices such as lynching, practices which utilized various constructions of black and white masculinity and femininity in order to make of sexuality a form of social control.[37]

However, despite these fleeting insights into the way in which sexual difference may change the dynamics of the black-white relationship, Fanon never goes on to examine in depth the possibility that the history of sexual violence between white men and black women may have continued to influence the black Antillean woman's experience of that relationship. Indeed, in another moment of self-awareness, he professes himself entirely unable to propose an analysis of the 'psychosexuality' of black Antillean women. As he himself declares: 'admettant nos conclusions sur la psychosexualité de la femme

blanche, on pourrait nous demander celles que nous proposerions pour la femme de couleur. Nous n'en savons rien'.[38] Fanon, like Jean Veneuse, feels distanced from black Antillean women in a way that he apparently does not from white women.[39]

It is precisely this gap in Fanon's work — this avowed inability on Fanon's part to imagine the black female experience of the lactification complex — which is addressed in the subsequent work of Antillean women writers like Manicom and Lacrosil. Like *Peau noire, masques blancs*, *Cajou* and *Mon Examen de Blanc* are not simply examinations of the general character of the Antillean's experience of her/his blackness. Yet nor do they deal too generally with the dynamics of the black Antillean's desire for whiteness and for the white other as sexual partner. Rather, they examine the difference which sex may make within the colonial relationship, and they attempt to imagine black female desire for whiteness in a way that Fanon himself, quite obviously, could not.

## (RE)IMAGINING DESIRE

Like Cajou — or Sapotille — Manicom's Madévie Ramimoutou, an anaesthetist at a clinic in Guadeloupe, defines herself in relation to how she feels she is perceived by the white people around her. Like Cajou and Sapotille, she feels fixed by the white gazes around her, by 'le regard glacé' (*Examen*, p. 13), or 'le regard bleu' (*Examen*, p. 21) of her white colleagues. Through her relationship and conversations with her white, French colleague Cyril, we learn that her perception of whiteness, and her desire to be white, has been conditioned by a disastrous relationship with another white Frenchman, Xavier, while they were both medical students in Paris. Indeed, it is this relationship which most closely resembles that of the lactification plot outlined not only by Fanon but also by Capécia. Like Mayotte, and also like Sapotille, Madévie describes how she had believed that going to France would enable her to escape the obsessive colour-consciousness of Guadeloupe and to assume, instead, her 'rightful' identity as French citizen. Brought up to believe that her ancestors were Gauls, and that 'les nègres' lived only in Africa, the young Madévie's expectations of her

relationship with the bourgeois Xavier are much more naïve than those of Mayotte:

Elle lui avait offert ce capital qu'était sa virginité. En retour il ne lui restait plus qu'à l'épouser. Elle qui était vierge avant lui et connaissait si bien la musique de Bach! Pourquoi ne l'épouserait-il pas? Elle était prête à devenir blanche pour lui plaire, à lui donner plus tard des petits enfants blancs. (*Examen*, p. 41)

While it is her 'exoticism' which excites Xavier — she is his chance to sample 'sa part de magie, de vaudou, avant le mariage bourgeois' (*Examen*, p. 38) — it is his whiteness which ensures that Madévie accepts almost any treatment from him, including violence and the threat of violence:

Il la prenait violemment, propulsait en son ventre un désir fou, promenait sur elle, devant elle, en elle, son phallus arrogant, mauve d'excitation, retenant la semence fluide et blanche qu'elle lui réclamait pour s'évanouir... il l'embrassait rageusement, si fort qu'elle avait l'impression d'avoir les gencives qui éclatent. Impérieux, il l'avait couchée par terre, l'écrasait, la perçait pour enfin la noyer, heureuse, haletante, dans le flot de ce liquide blanc, qu'il sécrétait pour ses muqueuses couleur de prune. (*Examen*, p. 61; p. 63)

When she discovers that she is pregnant and suggests that they marry, she is met with the full force of his own and his family's racism, and she eventually decides to leave and to take charge of the situation on her own. Thus, as she explains to Cyril: 'je me suis avortée. Moi-même' (*Examen*. p. 134). And it is this abortion which marks both Manicom's point of departure with Capécia, and her interrogation of Fanon. Madévie's abortion clearly signifies a refusal to submit to the 'lactification complex' that Capécia has come to embody; a refusal to heed the advice that she had heard repeatedly in Guadeloupe — 'il faut que la "race des Antillais se blanchisse"' (*Examen*, p. 95). What is more, her action represents a refusal to submit to domination not only by race, but also by sex. Though her violent relationship with Xavier clearly sets a precedent for her subsequent relationships with men (especially with white men) her early — rather self-destructive — attempt at refusal and resistance sets a precedent also, as we shall see, for later, more positive moves towards self-liberation.

This pattern of initial acceptance followed by attempted resistance of the logic of lactification, is one which echoes a relationship central to Larosil's *Cajou*: that of Cajou and Germain, the blond-haired and blue-eyed student who becomes her lover in Paris. Germain serves for Cajou the same function as did Stéphanie: his gaze reflects back at her her 'ugliness', it produces the same sense of shame and humiliation as did that of the nuns as they looked at Sapotille. However, the relationship between Germain and Cajou is slightly more complex, from the start, than the usual relationship of lactification, for far from Cajou wishing to marry Germain in order to produce light-skinned children, it is Germain who decides that he will 'cure' her. First, he decides that he must rid her of the 'burden' of her virginity, telling her: 'ces idées que tu fais, c'est parce que tu ne mènes pas une vie saine... la nature a ses droits... Quand je t'aurai contentée, tu ne te feras plus d'idées noires' (*Cajou*, p. 181). Her 'black ideas', he assures her — or perhaps her 'idea of herself as black' — will disappear once she feels herself to be desired, and desired by a white man.

This, too, is the logic behind his desire to make sure that Cajou becomes pregnant, for he is convinced, as he tells her, that 'les joies de la maternité te guériront' (*Cajou*, p. 217). When she announces her pregnancy to him, he informs her that the ultimate cure will now come when she marries him and produces his son, 'Germain Deux'. Cajou herself, however, refuses from the outset to believe that marriage to Germain and the production of a child more light-skinned than herself will in any way help her to become 'whiter'. Convinced that her own mother suffered because of her daughter's blackness, she is not prepared either for Germain to suffer in the same way, or for her child to be 'marked' by the features which, she feels, would only lead it to the same, dysfunctional situation as that in which she has found herself. For the first time she refuses to submit:

> Je pourrais enfin me cacher: j'en ai besoin! Ton nom serait un subterfuge. On ne verrait plus que je m'habille mal et que rien ne me va. On m'accepterait sans inventaire: 'la femme de Germain!' Je deviendrais un aspect de ta personnalité, quelque chose comme ton double, ou ton reflet. La transformation. Le miracle. Celui que je demandais aux Noëls de mes enfances. (*Cajou*, p. 21)

In a manner more radical than Capécia's Mayotte, Cajou realizes the impossibility of gaining access to the white world through marriage and miscegenation. Like Madévie, she chooses instead to refuse the logic of lactification, by ridding herself of 'l'enfant de Germain' (*Cajou*, p. 232). Rather than abort her child, however, Cajou commits suicide: she jumps from a bridge into the river Seine. Her suicide is the action to which the entire narrative has been leading, and it is an action which is seen by Cajou in very positive terms: as the only occasion on which she has not failed in what she set out to do. Indeed it, too, can be read as a refusal of lactification as dominance by race and also by sex. First, it may be seen to signify a refusal of marriage as insitutionalized oppression: as Cajou makes clear, if she were to marry Germain, her identity as both black and as female would be absorbed into that of 'la femme de Germain', she would 'disappear'. Second, it may be seen to signify a refusal of compulsory motherhood as institutionalized oppression: pregnancy represents not only a mode of 'growing lighter from within' but, enforced as it was, it represents also a manipulation of Cajou's fertility, of her black and female body, by the white master.[40] Of course, it may be argued that suicide itself signifies anything but a positive attempt at resistance. Not only does Cajou's suicide bring with it no *social* consequences, but the fact that, unlike Madévie, she must die in her efforts at refusal can be read, quite simply, as punishment for nonconformity (and the specific character of her nonconformity, as opposed to that of Madévie, will be examined in a moment).

Cajou's suicide must, however, be examined within the larger context both of her specific situation and of her wider, inherited situation as a black Antillean woman. On one level, it takes place because she fears Germain's reprisals for aborting their child. On another, perhaps more significant level, however, it recalls the legacy of slavery which is inevitably hers. It must be remembered that during slavery, not only was suicide by drowning (by throwing oneself from the slave-ship) one of the most common modes of refusing enslavement but, for female slaves, abortion similarly represented a radical mode of resistance. Like suicide, it deprived the master of his investment — the female slave was

purchased as a future producer of labour power — and at the same time it prevented the child, like that of Cajou, from undergoing the same experience as its mother. What is more, it represented also resistance to lactification, for the father was often the slave's white master, and the child a testament to rape and violence. Within the strictly limiting situation of slavery, both suicide and abortion can be seen as the *only* positive modes of resistance. Within the limited situation in which Cajou finds herself this may also be seen to be true, not least because her suicide serves to draw attention, in a way that Fanon could not, to the contemporary effects of the violence which has characterized the relationship between black women and white men. However self-destructive, it is an action which suggests that the black Antillean woman may not desire the white man's whiteness in quite such an unproblematic manner as Fanon imagines.

This, too, is suggested by *Cajou* in other ways. As we have seen, the relationship between Cajou and Germain is one which is initiated, and sustained, by Germain: Cajou is never portrayed as a desiring subject within the context of this particular relationship. Rather, black female desire in Lacrosil's text is radically portrayed as *outside* of the heterosexual domain: Cajou's suicide can be read as a refusal not only of marriage and compulsory motherhood, but also of compulsory heterosexuality. It resists Fanon's lactification plot in terms of race, of sex, and of sexuality, for just as Fanon's study of black-white relations is marked by a failure to address sexual difference, so it is marked by a failure to consider the possibility of same-sex interracial relationships. If Fanon does allude to the question of homosexuality, his representation is nothing if not problematic. As Jonathan Dollimore has noted, Fanon actually slides readily from misrepresentations of women to misrepresentations of (male) homosexuality, and he cites Fanon thus: 'the Negrophobic woman is in fact nothing but a putative sexual partner — just as the Negrophobic man is a repressed homosexual'.[41] As Dollimore points out, on the few occasions that homosexuality is mentioned in Fanon's text, it is in order to 'demonize' it as 'both a cause and effect of the... psychosexual organization

of racism which Fanon otherwise describes and analyses so compellingly'.[42] What is more, this is made all the more ironic when, to cite Dollimore once more, the similarity between the structure of negrophobia and homophobia is recognized:

Fanon's analysis of racism and 'negrophobia', and his articulation of the predicament of the person of colour living in, or in relation to, white culture, is also instructive for understanding sexual discrimination, especially homophobia, and the predicament of the gay person living in, or in relation to, heterosexual culture.[43]

It is thus unsurprising when Fanon confesses himself to be entirely unable to imagine what homosexuality 'means': 'je n'ai jamais pu entendre sans nausée un *homme* dire d'un autre homme: "Comme il est sensuel". Je ne sais pas ce que c'est que la sensualité d'un homme. Imaginez une femme disant d'une autre: "Elle est effroyablement désirable, cette poupée..."'.[44] It is this entirely 'unimaginable' desire which is fundamental to the narrative of *Cajou*: from the start, Cajou identifies with, and desires, women. Her 'first love' is Stéphanie, the white girl from next-door who, as we have seen, provides Cajou with an opportunity to discover that her own blackness represents 'ugliness' when it is defined against the whiteness of others. Stéphanie becomes at once Cajou's metaphorical mirror, the epitome of all that she herself would like to be, and the object of Cajou's obsessive desire:

Cramponnée à son cou et l'embrassant sans vergogne, je lui ai voué cet après-midi-là un amour qui n'était certes pas un amour de petite fille, ni même d'adolescente, mais bien la passion et la démence d'un noyé qui saisit une épaule devenue bouée, radeau, et refuge. (*Cajou*, p. 38)

Cajou is obsessed with every part of Stéphanie's body, especially with her eyes and with her tongue, which she envisions 'comme un mollusque au fond d'un coquillage. J'en imaginais le goût de sel et de fraîcheur. J'en avais la gorge sèche' (*Cajou*, p. 68). Stéphanie's reaction, however, is not one of reciprocal love. Indeed, Cajou's desire, confusion and fear of detection are all augmented by Stéphanie's awareness of the power that she exerts over her friend, a power

which she enjoys manipulating. Cajou, too, becomes aware of the way in which Stéphanie plays with her feelings, and she describes her distress in terms which are never echoed in her descriptions of her relationship with Germain:

> Elle se couchait contre moi et me coulait ses boucles dans le cou. J'étais excitée comme un jeune chien qui bave sa joie et se retient de mordre; je n'avais d'autre ressource, après cela, que de m'allonger à plat ventre, le visage dans l'herbe, cherchant à même le sol l'innocence et le fraîcheur. Je me meurtrissais à des cailloux et à des souvenirs. Quand mon excitation retombait, je somnolais. (*Cajou*, p. 76)

Indeed, rather than onto Germain, it is onto Marjolaine, Cajou's first friend in Paris and initially Germain's lover, that Cajou transfers her former feelings for Stéphanie. Her descriptions of her fascination for Marjolaine recall those of her fascination with Stéphanie. After their first meeting in Cajou's room, Cajou hurries to sleep in the bed on which Marjolaine had sat, enjoying the warmth and 'l'odeur charnelle' that her body has left there (*Cajou*, p. 120).

Cajou's relationships with both Stéphanie and Marjolaine are, however, never consummated, and nor do they become central — as does Cajou's relationship with Germain — within the text of *Cajou* itself. In this way, the lesbian text of *Cajou* comes to function not as an alternative text, but rather as a 'disruptive subtext'[45] within the dominant, heterosexual lactification plot of both *Cajou* itself and, more importantly, of Fanon.[46] In representing Cajou's desire in these terms, it is clear that Lacrosil succeeds both in imagining the specificity of black female desire for lactification, and in reimagining, on several counts, Fanon's androcentric and heterosexist, as well as homophobic, lactification plot. Not only does Lacrosil succeed in representing the lesbian desire unimaginable for Fanon but, in depicting Cajou's refusal of compulsory heterosexuality and of compulsory motherhood, she succeeds also in suggesting that black female desire for whiteness cannot be reduced, as Fanon seems to imply, to a simple desire for literal miscegenation.

As Fanon makes clear in his comparison of Maran's Jean Veneuse with Capécia's Mayotte, the desire for literal miscegenation is in many ways simply the logical, and somewhat distasteful outcome of the black Antillean's desire for

that which whiteness signifies — for 'culture', for 'civilization' and so on. The lactification complex, for Fanon, is crucially about gaining 'symbolic' (that is, cultural rather than biological) whiteness via *recognition* from the white other: 'En m'aimant, elle me prouve que je suis digne d'un amour blanc. On m'aime comme un Blanc. Je suis un Blanc'.[47] Fanon, as we have seen, is apparently unable to associate women with anything but literal, that is 'bodily' miscegenation — indeed, it is apparently for this reason that he finds literal miscegenation to be significantly less worthy than 'intellectual' or 'cultural' miscegenation. Lacrosil, however, refuses to associate women simply with the most basic desire to 'grow whiter from within': Cajou desires whiteness via recognition, not pregnancy.

However, despite *Cajou*'s interrogation of the (hetero)sexist logic of Fanon's lactification plot, it nonetheless becomes clear that Cajou's desire remains structured by, and trapped within, the logic of lactification. And, homosexual or heterosexual, the desire for lactification is essentially passive or, as Fanon himself terms it, 'reactional' in character. It is the desire simply to be desired, to render oneself desirable for the (white) other — it is not a manifestation of independent or autonomous libidinal activity. This is the character of Cajou's desire just as it is that of Mayotte or of Veneuse. Although Lacrosil begins, at least, to imagine the possibility of black female desire, she never succeeds in imagining fully the possibility that this desire may be *active*. Instead, it is in Manicom's *Mon Examen de blanc* that alternative forms of black female desire begin to be imagined, forms which are less dependent upon the 'reaction' that is the desire for lactification.

## Desire and the Black Female Gaze: Beyond Lactification?

It is desire, too — desire for whiteness and for all that it represents — which characterizes Madévie's relationship with Cyril as it had characterized her relationship with Xavier. Through the long evenings spent at the clinic in conversation with him, Madévie waits 'des heures, des jours, des nuits durant, que ses épaules [l']accueillent, que sa poitrine tremble, que s'affirme son sexe'

(*Examen*, p. 37). However, her desire for Cyril is characterized also, and in a way that her desire for Xavier was not, by extreme ambivalence. Like Cajou's for Germain, but in a much more explicit manner, Madévie's desire for Cyril is permeated by the recollection of the violence which, historically, has marked the relationship between black women and white men. It is this which distinguishes Madévie's attempts to move from her own situation of paralysis and neurosis — from her own obsession with lactification — from those of Cajou. If Cajou's only recourse is suicide, no matter how positive an action she herself feels it to be, Madévie acts in a far more overtly positive, and certainly less self-destructive manner.

Madévie is constantly conscious of the double relationship of power — racial and sexual — which exists between her and Cyril. Though her professional equal, he is also her superior for, as a French doctor sent temporarily to Guadeloupe, he is better-paid and he is placed immediately in charge of the clinic where she works. With all of his staff, Cyril emphasizes his difference and the power conferred upon him by it, offering them gifts, primarily of 'culture', books and records with which he (mistakenly) assumes they are unfamiliar. Throughout, he is depicted as 'culture' itself ('la littérature incarnée', p. 34), and his very whiteness is described as 'le symbole de la raison' (*Examen*, p. 16). Indeed, it is as representative of white, French culture that Cyril feels able not only to assume the 'education' of his staff but, more perniciously, to visit and appropriate other cultures, to bring back artefacts from his trips to surrounding 'third world' countries. For example, as Madévie explains, 'accrochées à la grille blanche de sa salle de séjour, Cyril a de vraies têtes humaines réduites qu'il a ramenées du Mexique' (*Examen*, p. 31). Madévie is haunted and horrified by these heads, as she is also by the painting of Christ bought cheaply from an unknown local painter in Peru and brought back to Guadeloupe: all are representative of his position, and his power, as archetypal colonialist-explorer. His specific power as a white man, however, is made more evident to Madévie on a daily basis, as she witnesses his misogynistic treatment of his patients at the women's clinic where they work. His misogyny is striking from the beginning

of the narrative, and Madévie describes with horror his attitude towards the bodies of his female patients:

Cyril tire avec ravissement et de toutes ses forces sur les forceps, extrayant rapidement la petite tête. Il a déchiré (avec presque du plaisir) la vulve noire et va maintenant la recoudre très mal. Cyril se moque des vulves, qu'elles soient délabrées ou toniques... je le hais quand il meurtrit ainsi les ventres féminins'. (*Examen*, pp. 47-8)

All this leads Madévie to suspect that Cyril feels 'qu['il] a à se venger de je ne sais trop quoi sur la femme' (*Examen*, p. 55), and she becomes personally afraid of him:

Peut-être même tenterait-il de m'extirper du corps ce qui fait que je suis une femme... Si j'ai peur de quelque chose, c'est que l'idée 'cyrilesque' ne lui vienne de vouloir expulser de mon corps quelque masse ovarienne ou un placenta. (*Examen*, p. 71; p. 49)

She is afraid of him as a woman, but given her specific situation as a black woman, her fear is always articulated as a fear of his 'ghostly' whiteness. The two, conjoined forms of power which he exerts over her come to be represented by specific, and metonymic, parts of his body. First, he is identified always by his shoulders, which are large, powerful, and very white. She repeatedly fears '[qu'il] lui prenait l'envie de m'étouffer avec ses larges épaules' (*Examen*, p. 35). Second, and more significantly, he is identified also — and predominantly — by his gaze. She describes how, though they never touch, she is perpetually aware of 'le contact de son regard... il pénètre en moi, m'immobilise, me presse longuement' (*Examen*, p. 76). It is in his gaze, and the effect which it has upon her, that the power represented by the conjunction of his whiteness and his masculinity is most evident. It is in his gaze, too, that the contradictory character of that power, a power both to attract and to terrify, can most obviously be discerned.

As we have seen, for Fanon, too, the white gaze is the exemplary locus both of the power which structures the colonial relationship, and of the contradictory character of that power. The encounter with the white gaze is one which simultaneously inspires fear and desire in the black Antillean: the fear of seeing

oneself negatively reflected in the eyes of the white other; the desire — passive or 'reactional' — for *recognition*, to see the desire in the eyes of the white other which will bring with it the vicarious whiteness so craved. Thus, unable to desire actively, the black Antillean must wait not only to be desired but, more specifically, s/he must wait to become, and to remain, the passive object of the gaze — never the subject who gazes. S/he must be content to remain in a state of what Laura Mulvey, in her work on the dynamics of the male and female gaze, has termed 'to-be-looked-at-ness' — never positioned as 'bearer of the look'.[48]

This is precisely the state in which Madévie finds herself: through her long evenings spent with Cyril she fears, yet awaits, his gaze upon her, the gaze which will confirm her desirability in his, the white man's, eyes. Of course, as we have seen, Madévie's position as black object of the white gaze is, more specifically, that of black female object of the white male gaze. Just as Fanon fails to examine the difference that sex may make within the colonial relationship in general, so he fails also to imagine the difference that it may make when 'le regard blanc' is 'le regard *du* blanc': the white *man's* gaze — upon the black woman. Thus the complex intersections of racial and sexual power once more become evident, for the gaze is a locus of multiple forms of power, as countless feminist theorists like Mulvey have argued. Luce Irigaray, whose work will be examined in much more detail in subsequent chapters, points out in perhaps her best-known text how 'la logique qui domine l'Occident depuis les Grecs' is one which is based precisely upon 'la prévalence du regard'.[49] For Irigaray — whose work is marked by as little regard for questions of race as is Fanon's for questions of sex — this gaze is the male gaze, a gaze which is directed at, controls and limits women. It is the expression of the active desire of the male subject, and it renders woman the passive object of that desire.

According to Irigaray, Western thought and culture is founded upon 'une économie scopique dominante [qui] signifie... une assignation pour elle [la femme] à la passivité: elle sera le bel objet à regarder'.[50] In a way which lends

itself to comparison with Fanon's description of the black Antillean's necessarily 'reactional' desire, Irigaray describes how woman is obliged to exist in a state of 'la mascarade', experiencing desire not in her own right, but as male desire situates her, able to desire only in so far as she desires to be desired.[51] Like the black Antillean in Fanon's analysis, woman is not only desireless but, consequently, she is gazeless.

This is the thesis, too, of Joan DeJean, who engages directly with Irigaray's theorization of women's position within the 'scopic economy' of the West. DeJean seeks out literary instances which demonstrate her thesis that while 'the gaze has been forbidden to women..., that does not mean that they have not used it'.[52] She examines Sappho's poem 'A l'aimée' and Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves*, suggesting that, together, they constitute 'the founding texts of an erotic literature in which women authors portray a female desiring subject in the process of expressing her desire... speaking her desire through her eyes'.[53] These are texts which, for DeJean, reverse the dynamics of traditional narrative structure, which begin to imagine the possibility both of active, female desire which may structure, and indeed generate narrative in alternative ways. What is more — and here the relevance of a detour through feminist theories of the gaze begins to become more evident — DeJean points out that these are not only texts in which women are represented as active, desiring subjects, but they are texts which, in their reception, were manifestly perceived to be *threatening*.

Both texts and critical readings (as well, in the case of Sappho, as translations) of the female voyeuristic scenes have been characterized by attempts to elide or to cover over the existence of the active, desiring female gaze. There is thus something fundamentally transgressive about the assertion of female desire through the gaze: the look of the woman threatens to destabilize both traditional narrative structures and, more vitally, the very logic of Western thought and culture itself. This is a logic which is unable — or unwilling — to imagine women as active or desiring subjects, which does not envisage women returning the dominant gaze. To return to the issue of how sexual power may intersect with racial power, such observations recall not specifically those of

Fanon, but rather those of African-American feminist theorist bell hooks. Evoking how, during the period of slavery in the North American South, black slaves were forbidden to look at their master, hooks has pointed out how whites similarly *do not expect* their gaze to be returned, how they do not wish to believe that the black gaze exists. For hooks, as for Fanon, and as for the feminist theorists discussed above, the gaze is a locus of power: it is directed from a powerful subject to a less powerful object, and the assertion of the black gaze is necessarily an act of resistance.[54] In Manicom's *Mon Examen de blanc* we see, finally, how much more transgressive the assertion of the black female gaze may be in the face of objectification by the white male subject.

Throughout her text, Manicom refuses to allow her heroine simply to be objectified by Cyril: instead, she complicates the dynamics of power as they circulate in the text. If Madévie repeatedly both fears and desires Cyril's gaze upon her, she does so, each time, only momentarily: she consistantly refuses to be thoroughly transfixed either by her fear or by her desire. For example, while visiting Cyril's house on one occasion, Madévie experiences just such a moment of fear: she becomes afraid not of his Mexican heads or of the Christ on the wall, but of the mirrors in his bathroom. Fleetingly, as she stands in front of them, these mirrors become representative, for her, of Cyril's gaze: she fears that he will force her to stand naked before them, whilst he stares at the reflection of her body. She fears even more the effect that they will have upon that body, the reflection that they will cast: 'quelles formes auront mes seins et mon ventre devant ces miroirs d'argent? Quelle longueur extravagante emprunteront mes jambes?' (*Examen*, p. 63). She becomes afraid, it would seem (as were Sapotille and Cajou before her), of the way in which the white gaze, embodied in '[les] glaces déformantes' (*Examen*, p. 123), may violently construct and misrepresent both her blackness and her 'femaleness'.

This is a scenario, however, which she rejects almost as soon as she has imagined it. It becomes clear to her, and also to us, that the mirrors are representative of Cyril's gaze precisely because he himself is, and is represented throughout by Manicom as, fundamentally gaze*less*. Everywhere, references are

made to his inability to see her properly, and to Madévie's inability — or, perhaps more radically, her refusal — to discern his gaze: his eyes are hidden behind thick glasses which allow only 'un regard glauque' (*Examen*, p. 35), or 'un regard sans yeux' (*Examen*, p. 126). Apart from the moments of panic which strike her when she observes Cyril's treatment of their female patients, Madévie generally views his whiteness as innocuous rather than terrifying, describing him as 'un tas informe de cellules sans couleur', or 'une monstrueuse nébulosité' (*Examen*, pp. 49-50).

Cyril is everywhere depicted not only as gazeless, but also as sexually impotent, as apparently incapable of wielding the violent, sexual power of the white master over her. Indeed, she suspects that he is actually afraid of her, as he lowers his eyes in order to speak to her, his gaze becoming 'un gouffre qui s'addresse à [elle]' (*Examen*, p. 73). After he has given her a gift of a record by Bach, she leans forward in order to kiss him, '[mais] il sent venir mon geste. Ses yeux s'agitent, ce sont maintenant deux mares glauques. A-t-il peur de moi? Va-t-il se pétrifier et se transformer en statue aux monstrueuses épaules?' (*Examen*, p. 57). It is Cyril who risks being fixed in inaction by Madévie — by her blackness and by her femininity — and she moves away in order to allow him to compose himself. It is she who is portrayed as sexually powerful, and he as sexually impotent, she as a desiring subject and he as the reluctant object of her desire. Madévie's desire for Cyril, it is evident, is not simply marked by the (historical and inherited) violence of her relationship with Xavier — indeed, it is desire of a different order entirely. While her 'power' over Cyril could be interpreted simply as the white man's colonial fear of (and attraction to) the black woman as 'excessively sexual' — a fear of 'going native' — it is made clear that it in fact has everything to do with the level of self-awareness which Madévie herself has achieved since, and because of, her relationship with Xavier.

The key moment of Madévie's self-realization comes in a scene parallel to that which takes place in Cyril's bathroom, as she stands before the mirror in her own home. After years spent avoiding her reflection in mirrors, Madévie

suddenly experiences a desire to look at herself, to examine her reflection for the first time since her experiences in Paris. As she looks, she is gripped by an equally sudden realization not only that: 'ce visage, dans la glace, c'est le mien' but, more crucially, that: 'ce n'est plus tout à fait Madévie, c'est moi' (*Examen*, p. 74). If we recall that she refers to herself in the third person, as 'Madévie', throughout the time that she recounts her relationship with Xavier to Cyril, her own perception of her self-transformation becomes clear. As she stands before the mirror, she describes, in detail, the contours of her face: her skin, her hair, her lips. These are the signifiers of blackness which once filled 'Madévie', like Cajou, with the desire to fit her reflection with her inner conviction of whiteness. Now, years later, she feels able to accept that these signifiers, assembled together, constitute 'moi, cette femme dans la glace' (*Examen*, p. 74). She is finally able to recognize herself, as Cajou never was, as a black, Antillean woman, and it is this fact which determines the particular character of her desire for Cyril. Having confronted the fact of her blackness, she no longer allows herself to be driven by the desire for lactification, by the desire simply to be desired. Having understood the self-effacing and self-destructive logic of that desire, she moves from passivity to activity: in Fanon's terms, she becomes an 'actional' rather than a 'reactional' figure.

Such a transformation, for Fanon, is vital: it is only when the black Antillean's desire becomes active that s/he can begin to cease existing solely in a relation of 'comparaison', of 'dépendance' vis-à-vis the white other. For Fanon, active desire is the desire no longer to be recognized simply as the *same* as the white other (as 'white'), but to be recognized, instead, as *different* — as black. The transgressive black gaze — that moment 'quand il arrive au nègre de regarder le Blanc'[55]- thus represents, for Fanon, a demand for the recognition of difference. If difference is not so recognized, the black Antillean is forced to remain in a state of passive dependence and this, as Fanon points out, has historically been the case in the Antilles. Citing the abolition of slavery as a key example of a form of 'liberation' based upon a refusal to recognize difference ('mon frère, il n'y pas de différence entre nous'), Fanon demonstrates how the

black Antillean has been constrained to enjoy 'liberty' only on white terms — a liberty which, at any time, may be withdrawn. For Fanon, it is only if liberty is won — if it arises out of the violent, revolutionary struggle for collective freedom which he describes in his later work, *Les Damnés de la terre* — that it is real and lasting. And it is only if this struggle arises out of recognition of difference that white and black can begin to relate as true equals.

Madévie's own desire to discern Cyril's gaze may thus perhaps be read, similarly, as a demand for recognition of difference. Her account of her relationship with Xavier serves not only to persuade Madévie herself that assimilation is not the key to self-liberation. Since it is addressed to Cyril, it serves also to demonstrate to him that she is no longer willing to accept a subordinate position in her dealings with the white world. She begins to refuse his gifts of 'culture' — gifts which, as his own efforts to 'civilize' and to educate her, have worked to maintain the colonial power-relationship between them. Instead, having accepted the fact of her own blackness, Madévie attempts to address him as a friend and as an equal and demands, it would seem, that he do the same. For Cyril, however, such a realignment of their relationship proves impossible to contemplate. Indeed, his gazelessness itself may be read as the signifier of his inability, or his unwillingness, to recognize Madévie's difference as she demands. For him, the dynamics of their specific relationship are bound up too closely with his feelings about the relationship between France and Guadeloupe.

Like his relationship with Madévie, and as she herself is quite aware, Cyril's relationship to Guadeloupe has remained colonial in character. While he clearly loves the island, its climate and its landscape, he views its state of dependence on France to be both unavoidable and desirable. He repeatedly justifies this attitude by evoking predictable colonial stereotypes about the inability of both Guadeloupe and Guadeloupeans to survive outside of their relationship with France. As he observes to Madévie: 'l'Antillais est indolent et grand enfant... et la présence de la France n'est pas autoritaire. Les Antillais réclament de se faire en quelque sorte "materner" par la France' (*Examen*, p. 161). It is evident,

however, that these stereotypes serve more specifically to bolster his own sense of self: to envisage a different relationship between France and Guadeloupe, as to envisage a different relationship between himself and Madévie, would be to undermine his identity as white and as French. He not only refuses to return Madévie's gaze — as we have seen, he fears it.

It is with Cyril's refusal to recognize her as his equal, that Madévie begins to turn away from him and from their relationship. She begins to turn instead towards Guadeloupean friends, old and new, towards people from whom she has become alienated through her education and her preoccupation with assimilation. More specifically, she begins to move towards organized movements for Guadeloupean independence, to become involved in the politics of her island in a way that she has never, before, imagined to be possible. She becomes involved with people who, like herself, have experienced moments of self-realization, and who are now engaged in the struggle for recognition and, ultimately, for freedom. As Fanon makes clear, the struggle for liberation, like Antillean neurosis itself, is collective as well as individual in character. For Madévie, collective and individual liberation unavoidably coexist: her self-assertion as a black, female, desiring subject is correlative with the self-assertion of large numbers of the Guadeloupean population. Indeed, as the independance movements begin to take action, to stage strikes and protests, the 'képis rouges' deployed in massive numbers from France are described by Madévie as being unsettled precisely by the assertion of the collective, Guadeloupean gaze. Just as Cyril is unsettled by that of Madévie, 'eux n'aiment pas nos regards' (*Examen*, p. 184).[56]

We thus begin to see Madévie outside of the context of the clinic and her relationship with Cyril — with her Antillean friends and, most of all, with Gilbert, the black pro-independence activist with whom she falls in love and through whom she becomes interested in Guadeloupean politics. It is when she meets Gilbert that she finally begins to break away from Cyril — indeed, that she begins actually to find him repellent. She spends a day with Gilbert and some friends at the beach and returns to her room at the clinic feeling, for the

first time, 'libre, libérée, belle presque' (*Examen*, p. 119). Having lunch with Cyril, later, she is suddenly seized by a feeling of revulsion for his body: this time, he is signified not by his shoulders or by his gaze, but by 'ses oreilles sales' (*Examen*, p. 123). When it is remembered that, in Creole, the term for a white French person living temporarily in Guadeloupe is 'zoreil', it becomes clear that it is precisely Cyril's whiteness, and his 'Frenchness', which repels Madévie — those very attributes which might formerly have attracted her.[57]

Madévie begins to see more and more of Gilbert, and to reject Cyril's Bach for Gilbert's Creole songs; evenings with Cyril at the clinic for evenings at pro-independence meetings with Gilbert. She begins to feel more and more 'bien dans sa peau' (*Examen*, p. 143), more and more happy with the black, Antillean body which she had initially forced herself to recognize in the mirror as her own. Gilbert, unlike Cyril, recognizes her blackness in a positive manner: 'de ses doigts d'amour, [Gilbert] dessine la forme de mes hanches, allonge mes jambes et découvre mille étoiles sur ma peau... tu es brune, belle at douce, m'a chanté Gilbert' (*Examen*, pp. 169-70). As she explains, it is, quite literally, his black gaze upon her which she experiences as liberating:

> Gilbert me considère avec chaleur... Décidément, il a un bien joli regard! Longs yeux étroits aux conjonctives bleues et aux iris d'un noir intense. C'est sûrement son regard qui me donne cette impression de bien-être. (*Examen*, p. 143)

However, Gilbert's recognition of her as black, and the feeling of well-being which she gains from it, does not represent as thoroughly positive a move forward as it may appear. Though she had taken tentative steps, on her own, towards self-liberation from Cyril, with Gilbert, she slips back into a form of passivity which recalls her attitude towards, and expectations of, Xavier. She may no longer imagine self-liberation in terms of gaining access to 'whiteness', but neither does she imagine it to be something of which she, as a black woman, is capable of achieving through her own actions. With Gilbert, as we have seen, she feels 'libre et libér*ée*': she is content to take an entirely passive role in the struggle for independence, never imagining herself as the author of her own liberation, and much less of that of Guadeloupe itself. As she listens to his

political discourses on departmentalisation, or on economic dependence, it is he whom she feels will liberate both her and her entire island: 'Gilbert sait que plus tard nous serons heureux... Oui, Gilbert est tout-puissant. Il refera une nouvelle Guadeloupe heureuse et libre' (*Examen*, p. 169).

This, too, is the attitude of Gilbert himself: indeed, it is the attitude of the pro-independence group to which he belongs, as Madévie herself discovers, momentarily resents, and then accepts when she joins. At one of the meetings, for example, Madévie expresses a desire to use her professional training in order to set up and to run contraception education programmes.[58] However, the men of the party are of the opinion that the problem of overpopulation, and thus of birth-control, 'ne devra être abordé que dans une Guadeloupe libérée et socialiste, qu'il faut des petits nègres encore pour faire la révolution' (*Examen*, pp. 147-8). Although Madévie is convinced of the necessity of tackling such problems at the same time as undertaking the 'wider' struggle for independence, she nonetheless decides to subordinate her own views to those of the men who, like Gilbert, run the organization and its meetings. Not only is she deemed incapable of undertaking an active role in the struggle for liberation, but she is prevented from undertaking any action which is directly linked, more specifically, with the liberation of women. As Zimra has pointed out in relation to Fanon himself, these activists subsume liberation by gender under that by race: the revolution must be won, with the help of women, before questions of women's liberation may themselves be addressed.[59]

More disempowering, however, than the role of help and support, is the other role into which Madévie is manoeuvred by Gilbert: she comes to represent, for him, the means through which he is able at once to imagine and to symbolize both his own passage towards self-liberation, and his own role as liberator of the nation. First, she comes to signify his rejection of France, his own escape from the debilitating effects of lactification into militancy. As he explains to her, he and his wife Dany 'ont cessé d'être un couple' because of his changed political consciousness:

Quand je l'ai rencontrée, il n'y avait pas encore chez moi la moindre conscience politique. Je la trouvais belle... C'était pour moi une promotion d'épouser une telle fille, une chabine à la peau très blanche. Je pratiquais la politique du 'blanchiment' de la race. J'étais complexé par la couleur sombre de ma peau. Je me sentais en même temps plus français que tous les Français de la métropole... Depuis, j'ai réfléchi, mais Dany n'a suivi ni admis mon évolution dans ce domaine... Heureusement, nous n'avons pas d'enfant! (*Examen*, pp. 156-7)

Gilbert's thinly-disguised parrotting of Fanon here, including his apparent relief that there is no light-skinned child to testify to his earlier, now rather embarrassing politics, serves to draw attention, in a way that Fanon surely would not, to the position of both Dany and Madévie in Gilbert's political awakening. Having rejected the light-skinned Dany - who, we are told, has no interest in the struggle for liberation - he chooses instead Madévie, 'une vraie fille de la Guadeloupe' (*Examen*, p. 184), to embody his politics more adequately.

It is as 'une vraie fille de la Guadeloupe' that Madévie signifies for Gilbert on a second level also, as she comes to represent, for him, the island of Guadeloupe itself. When he admires her dark skin, he tells her: 'ta peau est lumineuse comme la terre d'ici' (*Examen*, p. 170). He describes her, always, using images of the island which he is intent on liberating. Indeed, she too soon begins to imagine herself in the same way, as 'l'une de ces longues tiges de canne bien mûres et pleines de sucre. Une longue tige que Gilbert, mon Amour, caresse et boit chaque jour' (*Examen*, p. 171). Her liberation is not only coexistent with that of Guadeloupe, but Gilbert's part in it comes to represent his part in the liberation of Guadeloupe itself. The island is apparently imagined as a ruined and abused female body to be 'saved' by an heroic black liberator like Gilbert. As we shall see in the following chapter, this function of 'woman' as trope for the nation in need of liberation is inextricably linked to the inability of women like Madévie to imagine themselves as active and 'heroic' liberators, rather than simply as help and support.

During the revolutionary action which takes place towards the end of Manicom's text, Gilbert is killed, shot by the 'képis rouges' sent from France.

Gilbert's death has been read allegorically, by Betty Wilson, as representative of the inevitable failure of independence in Guadeloupe. In the light of Manicom's sexual politics, however, it may be read also as representative of the inevitable failure of a politics of racial liberation which refuses to take account of the difference that sex makes. What Manicom apparently suggests, is that in order to disrupt the power relationship of lactification, it is not enough simply to replace it with a same-race relationship which may enact strategies of power that are equally disenabling. It is not enough to move, as does Madévie, from being fixed and objectified by the white male gaze to a position in which one is fixed and objectified by that of the black man. While Gilbert recognizes Madévie's blackness and the difference that it makes, he, too, like Fanon, fails to recognize the difference that her sex makes, except in order to exploit it in turn.

Although *Peau noire, masques blancs* does not set out to include a study of the relationship between the black man and the black woman, there seems, throughout, to be an implicit idealization of that relationship. In taking Capécia to task, primarily, for betraying black men for white, Fanon inevitably ignores that any power relationship between black men and black women may exist. In Manicom's text, it becomes clear that same-race relationships are by no means devoid of the play of power. Less centrally, though far more overtly, this is made clear also in Lacrosil's *Sapotille*, for Sapotille is married to a violent and abusive black man, Benoît. Indeed, it is after a particularly severe beating by Benoît that she leaves for France, having miscarried their child - a child blacker, not whiter, than herself. It is made clear that her relief at being able thus to escape from their relationship is not simply relief at having avoided 'regression' - the twin concern of lactification, as Fanon points out.[60] Rather, hers is a relief, like that of Cajou and of Madévie, which is informed by the sexual difference which further complicates an already complex, racialized situation: hers is a desire to escape a sexual relationship which is not only destructive, but which is physically dangerous.

Like Manicom, Lacrosil is thus at pains to demonstrate that black men are by no means unimplicated in the oppression of black women: as Zimra has put it:

'relations between colored women and men of any color remain those between masters and slaves'.[61] Of course, it is crucial to recognize, as does Zimra herself, that black women contimue to need to align themselves with black men against colonialism and racism. And equally important, as Lacrosil shows in her portrayal of Benoît, is the recognition that for black and white men, access to patriarchal power is entirely unequal. Thus Benoît's power as oppressor is conditioned by his own experience of colonial oppression, as an ex-soldier physically and mentally scarred by his treatment, particularly brutal because he is black, during a war spent in prison camps. Although it by no means excuses his treatment of Sapotille, Benoît has been literally and figuratively marked by his contact with whiteness: by the white scar on his forehead which grows paler as he grows angry and, as Sapotille herself realizes, by his need to beat his wife in order to re-assert his masculinity.

However, to point out the relations of power which exist between black men and black women does not necessarily represent simply an attempt to perpetuate the separation between the struggles of black men and of black women. Rather, as in the case of Manicom's text in particular, it may represent an attempt to *complicate* the notion of power relations, to show how oppressions by race and by gender necessarily intersect. More than this, and as we shall see throughout subsequent chapters, it may represent an attempt also to demonstrate the necessity of examining, and of radically rethinking, the very foundation of these hitherto elided relations of power. As we shall see also, it is not until such a move is undertaken that black Antillean women may find it possible to imagine and to symbolize their own self-liberation. And it is only then, in turn, that an adequate and truly emancipatory politics of self-liberation may be envisaged in the context of the Antilles.

NOTES

1. Mayotte Capécia, *Je suis Martiniquaise* (Paris: Corréa, 1948).
2. Mayotte Capécia, *La Négresse blanche* (Paris: Corréa, 1950).
3. See Clarisse Zimra, 'Patterns of Liberation in Contemporary Women Writers', *L'Esprit créateur*, XVII (1977), 103-14 and Beatrice Stith Clark, 'The Works of Mayotte Capécia', *CLA Journal*, XVI (1973), 415-25. See also Clarisse Zimra, 'A Woman's Place: Cross-Sexual Perceptions in Race Relations; The Case of Mayotte Capécia and Abdoulaye Sadji', *Folio* (1978), 174-92.

4. Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952). Fanon's study of Capécia's work has, it would seem, been largely responsible for her status as the 'first' Antillean woman writer. As I have pointed out in the introduction to the present study, several other women were published before her, though their work was not singled out for attention by Fanon.
5. In recent years there has also been a renewed interest, on the part of critics, in the work of Mayotte Capécia as forgotten literary 'foremother'. In addition to Clarisse Zimra's articles cited above, see Susan Andrade, 'The Nigger of the Narcissist: History, Sexuality and Intertextuality in Maryse Condé's *Hérémakhonon*', *Callaloo*, 16:1 (1993), 213-26; Gwen Bergner, 'Who is that Masked Woman? or, The Role of Gender in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*', *PMLA*, 110:1 (1995), 75-88; T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, 'Sexist, Misogynist or Anti-Racist Humanist? Frantz Fanon and Mayotte Capécia', *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, 1:1 (1997), 19-32; Joan Dayan, 'Women, History and the Gods: Reflections on Mayotte Capécia and Marie Chauvet' and Clarisse Zimra, 'Daughters of Mayotte, Sons of Frantz: The Unrequited Self in Caribbean Literature', both in Sam Haigh, ed., *An Introduction to Caribbean Francophone Writing: Guadeloupe and Martinique* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), pp. 69-82 and pp. 177-94.
6. Michèle Lacrosil, *Sapotille et le serin d'argile* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960). Here, and throughout subsequent chapters, page references to those novels which are the focus of a given chapter will be included in the text.
7. Michèle Lacrosil, *Cajou* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961).
8. Jacqueline Manicom, *Mon Examen de Blanc* (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1972).
9. Clarisse Zimra, 'Righting the Calabash: Writing History in the Female Francophone Narrative', in Boyce Davies and Savory Fido, eds, *Out of the Kumbla*, pp. 143-60 (p. 150).
10. Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, p. 24.
11. Clarisse Zimra, 'Patterns of Liberation', p. 109. Within the complicated colour gradations of Antillean society, the term *câpre* or *câpresse* is used to describe someone with one black, and one mulatto parent. *Chabin(e)*, on the other hand, describes someone of mixed parentage and ancestry who has both light skin and light hair.
12. Ibid., p. 111.
13. Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, p. 172.
14. Ibid., p. 152.
15. Ibid., p. 152.
16. Ibid., p. 120.
17. Ibid., p. 155
18. Ibid., p. 156. The apparent split, here, between 'white mind' and 'black body' is one to which we shall return in this and the final chapter.
19. Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, pp. 171-72.
20. Ibid., p. 90.
21. Ibid., pp. 88-89.
22. Ibid., pp. 90-91.
23. Ibid., pp. 93-94.
24. Ibid., p. 125.
25. Ibid., p. 51.
26. Zimra, 'Patterns of Liberation', p. 108.
27. This, too, is the contention of Albert Memmi in the preface to the 1965 edition of his seminal study *Portrait du Colonisé précédé du Portrait du Colonisateur* (Paris: Corrêa, 1957), p. 11.
28. Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, p. 48.
29. Ibid., p. 34.
30. Ibid., p. 45.

31. Ibid., p. 52.
32. The question of why an autobiographical, 'confessional' approach should automatically invalidate Capécia's work is itself very much bound up with the question of sexual difference, for women's writing in general has been repeatedly decoded as 'naïvely autobiographical' and denigrated as such. Domna Stanton notes not only the 'age-old, pervasive decoding of all women's writing as autobiographical', but also the double standard at work in the use of the term autobiography: 'autobiographical, spontaneous, natural when ascribed to a woman, but fictive, crafted and aesthetic when attributed to a man' (Domna Stanton, 'Autogynography: Is the Subject Different?', in Domna Stanton, ed., *The Female Autograph*, New York: Literary Forum, 1985, p. 4). This is a charge which is linked also to questions of women's access to education, and to what is deemed acceptable material for public representation by women. 'Women's experience', it would seem, especially that of an uneducated, non-public figure, is not as worthy of public representation as is that of more public, and by implication male, life. Of course, such problems are equally inflected by race, a point not addressed by Stanton but important, for example, in the case of slave narratives and their reception — a question to which I shall return in chapter five.
33. I use the term 'postcolonial', here and throughout, to designate the historical period after departmentalisation in the Antilles, when the islands ceased to have colonial status. The term is thus not intended to suggest that colonial attitudes have ceased to prevail in the Antilles nor, indeed, elsewhere.
34. Homi Bhabha, 'Foreword: Remembering Fanon. Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition', in Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans., Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986), pp. vii-xxvi (p. xxvi). Bhabha's sudden switch from 'gender difference' to 'sexuality' here may, at first, appear to be a curious one, but it is in fact extremely salient in the context of Fanon's definition of 'the couple' in solely heterosexual terms. This is problem which I shall address later in this chapter.
35. Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, p. 37. Emphasis mine.
36. Ibid., p. 37.
37. Ibid., p. 133. For a useful and detailed analysis of the power-relationships at work in the practice of lynching, see Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History* (London: Verso, 1992).
38. Ibid., p. 145.
39. Like Jean Veneuse, Fanon was an educated, middle-class black, and was married also to a white woman. Without wishing to repeat Fanon's too-ready identification of all writing as autobiography, I would suggest not only that Fanon may be projecting his own, personal situation onto his readings of others' texts, but also that such a projection may itself, in part, account for his persistent conflation of authors with narrators in these very readings. This is, of course, linked to the wider question of whether Fanon himself is not inevitably caught up in the 'collective neurosis' he describes so eloquently.
40. Capécia, as Condé points out in *Parole des femmes*, is one of the few Antillean woman writers *not* to refuse maternity. For Condé, the refusal of maternity is the only overtly 'feminist' element in most Antillean women's writing. She sees its recurrence as an indication that Antillean women are beginning to reject the traditional images and roles of motherhood which are strong in the Antilles, as well as rejecting exploitation by men of all colours, (Condé, *La parole des femmes*, p. 44).
41. Fanon, quoted in Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 345.
42. Ibid., p. 364. It is perhaps tempting to read in Fanon's homophobia the continued influence of his pre-text, Sartre, for whom, as Judith Butler has pointed out, 'all desire, problematically presumed

as heterosexual and masculine, was defined as *trouble*', Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. vii.

43. Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence*, p. 344.
44. Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, p. 163.
45. For a detailed analysis of the disruptive potential of the 'lesbian subtext', see Marilyn Farwell, 'Heterosexual Plots and Lesbian Subtexts: Toward a Theory of Lesbian Narrative Space', in Karla Jay and Joanne Glasgow, eds, *Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revisions* (London: Onlywomen Press, 1992), pp. 91-103. See also Gillian Spraggs, 'Hell and the Mirror: A Reading of *Desert of the Heart*, in Sally Munt, ed., *New Lesbian Criticism: Literary and Cultural Readings* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 115-32 (p. 124).
46. It is significant that, of the few critics who have written on Lacrosil's text, hardly any have discussed, or even mentioned, its lesbian plot. Patricia Barber-Williams, for example, in her essay 'Jean Rhys and Her French West Indian Counterpart' (*Journal of West Indian Literature*, 3 (1989), 9-19), describes Cajou's 'almost sexual attraction... for the hair of her Caucasian friends' (p. 11). Merle Hodge, meanwhile, in her essay 'Novels on the French Caribbean Intellectual in France', (*Revista Interamericana*, 4 (1976), 211-31), describes Cajou's 'bizarre relationships with female friends' (p. 219). Ajoke Mimiko, who does admit that there is a lesbian plot within *Cajou*, sees it as an end-result of Cajou's 'psychosis': 'la psychose de Cajou est si démesurée qu'elle devient lesbienne', (Ajoke Mimiko, 'Névrose et psychose de devenir l'autre chez la femme antillaise a travers l'oeuvre de Michèle Lacrosil', *Peuples noirs, peuples africains*, 32 (1983), 136-46).
47. Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, p. 51.
48. Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16 (1975), 6-18.
49. Luce Irigaray, *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1977), p. 25. Much feminist work on the male gaze, like Mulvey's essay cited above, has emerged from within film studies: see, for example, Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (London: Macmillan, 1984) and Mulvey's own response to her 1975 essay, 'Afterthoughts on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" inspired by *Dual in the Sun* (King Vidor, 1946)', in Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, London: Macmillan, 1989 (originally published in 1981 in *Framework*). A useful literary study of the prevalence of the male gaze in Western thought and culture can be found in Dorothy Kelly's *Telling Glances: Voyeurism in the French Novel* (Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991).
50. Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, p. 25.
51. See the glossary provided by Catherine Porter in Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans., Catherine Porter (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 220.
52. Joan DeJean, 'Looking Like a Woman: The Female Gaze in Sappho and Lafayette', *L'Esprit créateur*, XXVIII (1988), 34-45 (p. 34).
53. Ibid., p. 35.
54. bell hooks, lecture given at the University of Nottingham, February 1991.
55. Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, p. 179.
56. It is the parallel between the attempted movement of Madévie and of Guadeloupe itself from exploitation to self-liberation which has lead critics such as Betty Wilson to read *Mon examen de blanc* in allegorical terms: 'Madévie's story is Guadeloupe's story... and the process of Madévie's liberation becomes the sketch of a possible blueprint for the political evolution of the French West Indies' (Betty Wilson, 'Sexual, Racial and National Politics: Jacqueline Manicom's *Mon Examen de Blanc*', *Journal of West Indian Literature*, 1 (1987), 5-57 (p. 50)). Wilson goes on to argue that, 'on the symbolic level', Madévie becomes Guadeloupe, whose changing relationship to France is emblematized by her relationship to three men: Xavier (colonial exploitation and

dependence); Cyril (semi-autonomy); and Gilbert (full independence). However, as Gayatri Spivak has pointed out, the problem with allegorical readings is that 'what must be excluded from the story is precisely the attempt to represent the subaltern as such' (Gayatri Spivak, 'A Literary Representation of the Subaltern', p. 244). In other words, if Madévie is taken *only* as a metaphor for Guadeloupe, the representation of her own complex negotiations of gender and racial oppression are obliterated, or at least subordinated to the 'wider' allegorical reading.

57. There have been several attempts — none conclusive — to explain the origins of the use of the term 'zoreil'. Loïc Depecker offers the following suggestion: 'nomme-t-on, dans les îles de l'océan Indien ou aux Antilles, les Métropolitains *zoreils* parce que, comme l'on a prétendu, les Blancs coupait jadis les oreilles des esclaves? Le mot n'étant pas péjoratif, on peut bien plutôt imaginer que les Métropolitains, ne comprenant pas les parlers locaux, ont tendance à tendre l'oreille quand on leur parle' (Loïc Depecker, *Les Mots de la francophonie*, Paris: Belin, 1988, p. 282). Edouard Glissant, on the other hand, suggests that the name comes from the fact 'qu'ils [les Blancs] ont les oreilles rouges sous l'effet du soleil' (*Le Discours antillais*, Paris: Seuil, p. 500).
58. In both *Mon Examen de Blanc* and in a later work, *La graine: Journal d'une Sage-Femme* (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1974), Manicom deals at length with the problems of women's health, contraception and overpopulation in Guadeloupe. In 1964, together with her husband Yves Letourneur, Manicom herself set up a Family Planning Association in Guadeloupe, and she was one of the founding members of the pro-choice group 'Choisir', set up in Paris during the 1970s.
59. See in particular Zimra's 'Negritude in the Feminine Mode: the case of Martinique and Guadeloupe', *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 12 (1984), 53-77.
60. As Fanon explains, the mulatto heroine typically has *two* concerns: to lighten the race and to avoid 'regression': 'qu'y a t-il de plus illogique, en effet, qu'une mulâtresse qui épouse un Noir?' (*Peau noire, masques blancs*, p. 44).
61. Zimra, 'Patterns of Liberation', p. 105.

# TWO

## THE RETURN OF AFRICA'S DAUGHTERS: *NÉGRITUDE* AND THE GENDERING OF EXILE

It is in the early work of perhaps the best-known, and most prolific, Guadeloupean woman writer, Maryse Condé, that a movement beyond the concerns of Lacrosil and Manicom may be discerned. In Condé's first two novels we are presented, once more, with educated Antillean women who have journeyed from their native Guadeloupe to France. However, the journeys of these two women do not stop with their arrival in France. Instead, both Véronica, of Condé's first novel *Heremakhonon*[1], and Marie-Hélène of her later *Une Saison à Rihata*,[2] go further: to Africa, in search not of their ancestors the Gauls but in search, this time, of their African past. Like Madévie, they become preoccupied not with their whiteness, but with their blackness, with liberating themselves from the debilitating obsession with lactification experienced by Sapotille, by Cajou, and by Madévie herself. Indeed Condé, writing some years later than Lacrosil and Manicom, is preoccupied not solely with the dynamics of the lactification complex but, instead, with that perhaps more famous Antillean pre-text of *négritude.* As we shall see in the course of this chapter, Condé is explicitly engaging with, working off, and interrogating what has come to be regarded as the founding literature of the Antillean tradition — a phenomenon every bit as specific to the colonies of France as was the policy of assimilation which provoked it.

The genesis and development of the negritude 'movement' have by now been well documented and analysed, and there is little to be gained from replaying this in detail here. Though a philosophical ideal, literary trope and would-be political practice which was developed by black students from across the French empire, it is with the work of the Martinican Aimé Césaire that this chapter will principally be concerned.[3] It was he, together with Léon Gontran Damas from Guyane and Léopold Sédar Senghor from Sénégal who, in 1935, set up the

student magazine *L'Etudiant noir*, a magazine which has come to be regarded — erroneously for some — as the 'origin' of negritude.[4] The avowed aim of *L'Etudiant noir* was to denounce the 'lie' of assimilation, to revalue blackness and black culture and to assert black 'solidarity' in the face of French racism. It was in this magazine that Césaire first used the term 'négrerie', in his essay 'Négrerie: Jeunesse noire et assimilation', and it was here that it began to become clear that what was of primary importance to this fledgling movement was more than simply an assertion of *black* solidarity: more specifically, it was the solidarity of the 'African diaspora', of all those peoples who could claim Africa as their origin, which was primary.[5]

It was four years later, in the seminal text of Antillean literature, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*,[6] that Césaire first used the term 'négritude' itself, and it was here that the now-familiar negritude quest for 'authentic', Antillean identity began to be articulated. This is a quest which took the negritude writer on a literary (and often literal) journey to Africa, on a return to the 'native land' in search of his (or more rarely her) black self — of all that which had suffered systematic censorship and erasure during centuries of French colonialism.[7] And it is Césaire's articulation of this quest, in the *Cahier*, which has inspired generations of subsequent Antilleans to embark upon their own quests for identity in Africa — quests such as those of Véronica and Marie-Hélène, and even like that of the young Condé herself.[8]

Like the identity quest of the *Cahier*, the journeys charted in both of Condé's texts are inversions of the middle passage, voyages from the Caribbean, to France, to Africa, of educated, assimilated, Antilleans in search of origins. Much clearer, and much more outspoken than Marie Hélène about her reasons for going to Africa, Véronica describes herself throughout her narrative as 'une voyageuse paumée à la recherche de son identité' (*Heremakhonon,* p. 131). The necessity for this search, it becomes clear, has everything to do with a need on Véronica's part to flee her bourgeois and assimilated black Antillean family. As she explains, her parents, though ostensibly proud of 'la race', are proud only of black achievements which, like their own, constitute an imitation of white

values. Indeed, throughout her stay in Africa, Véronica is haunted constantly by her father's voice, praying: 'Seigneur, nous te remercions de nous avoir permis de devenir différents des autres nègres. Et d'égaler les Blancs, nos anciens maîtres. Amen' (*Heremakhonon,* p. 75).

Such are the contradictory attitudes which Véronica is hoping to resolve in her trip to Africa: she is in search of her blackness itself, engaged in an attempt to rediscover and to rehabilitate that against which her parents had so constantly struggled, which they had 'caché aux fond d'eux-mêmes... comme une bête puante' (*Heremakhonon,* p. 66). More specifically, as she later tells one of her students, Birame III, she is in Africa to find out 'ce qu'il y avait avant': what came before her ancestors were sold into slavery and transported to Guadeloupe (*Heremakhonon,* p. 31). Declaring as she does: 'j'ai lu Césaire comme tout le monde. Je veux dire tous ceux de notre monde, le tiers monde' (*Heremakhonon,* p. 123), Véronica's search, much more explicitly than that of Marie-Hélène, is one which evokes that archetypal identity quest of negritude.

However, both *Heremakhonon* and *Une Saison à Rihata* are much more than simple reiterations or emulations of the classic negritude quest for identity. They are also critiques and refigurations of that quest — continuations, it would seem, of the often virulent and vociferous problematizations of negritude to be found in Condé's critical work. In two essays, in particular, Condé questions the usefulness and validity of negritude as a discourse of black liberation, pointing to the ways in which it is flawed on several counts. First, like countless other critics of negritude, Condé takes exception to the use of (racist) European thinkers such as Gobineau and Frobenius, [9] and expresses doubts as to whether negritude has ever constituted a radical refusal of the European values which gave rise to the ideology of assimilation. As she therefore asks and explains:

Mais de quel refus s'agit-il... ? Puisque c'est l'Europe qui a fabriqué de toutes pièces le mythe nègre, revendiquer ce mythe, s'en glorifier comme de l'expression de sa personnalité véritable ne revient-il pas à accepter l'Europe et sa culture dans leurs pires errements. Refus?... Je ne vois qu'acceptation extrême.[10]

Condé's second, and not unrelated, criticism of negritude lies in the disparity between the Africa evoked by negritude poetry and the reality of contemporary Africa itself. Indeed, it is here that her fictional explorations of negritude begin most obviously to echo those of her critical essays for, quite evidently, both Marie-Hélène and Véronica are 'untutored when confronted with specific African realities rather than the negritude myth'.[11] Véronica, for example, once again demonstrating an awareness of her negritude pretexts and predecessors, remembers how 'les savants affirment que l'Afrique est le berceau de l'humanité' (*Heremakhonon,* p. 68), and as she surveys the African country in which she has found herself, she asks:

> Ceux qui écrivent 'Couleurs-d'Afrique-Pour-nos-yeux-atteints-du-gris-de-nos-villes-elles-brouillent-nos-sens-éclatent-en-cris-en-parfums'. Comment font-ils? Que voient-ils que, moi, je ne vois pas? (*Heremakhonon,* p. 124).

All that is visible to her is 'un pays jeune' which has been ruined not only by colonialism, but by the neocolonial régime of its corrupt leader, Mwalimwana. Taking a line straight from Césaire's *Cahier*, Véronica exclaims mockingly: 'Eïa pour le Kailcédrat royal!' (*Heremakhonon,* p. 31) as she looks around her at '[un de] ces états africains [qui] sont des états policiers où règnent l'arbitraire — les emprisonnements sans cause, les tortures — les vengeances assouvies sous le travesti de la loi' (*Heremakhonon,* p. 50).[12]

It is here that it becomes obvious that the negritude poets are not Condé's only pre-text in either of these novels: rather, as in her critical essays, Fanon, and more especially his *Les Damnés de la terre*, is an important pre-text also.[13] Fanon, too, points to the disjunction between negritude myth and African reality, as he describes how post-independence African leaders, like Senghor himself, 'qui [avant l'indépendance] ont chanté la race, qui ont assumé tout le passé, l'abâtardissement et l'anthropophagie' — were incapable, after independence, of creating a politics of action out of hitherto abstract ideals.[14] A meticulous study of the problems of the new nations of post-independence Africa, *Les Damnés de la terre* describes perfectly the countries in which both Véronica and Marie-Hélène find themselves.

As in Césaire's similarly named 1966 play, *Une Saison au Congo*, the country depicted in *Une Saison à Rihata* is in shown to be in the aftermath of decolonization, fighting against both internal and European corruption. As in *Heremakhonon*, Marie-Hélène's adopted nation is in the hands of a brutal dictator, Toumany, under whom, as under Mwalimwana, the economy is failing, the media are the site of repression and censorship, and the nation itself exists in a state of permanent war with neighbouring countries. Indeed Marie-Hélène, in a rare moment of political comment, echoes Fanon as she notes: 'ce socialisme à l'africaine n'était qu'un leurre permettant à une poignée d'hommes d'usurper le pouvoir' (*Rihata,* p. 32).[15] Even Madou, the brother of her husband, Zek, and a minister in Toumany's government, realizes the hypocrisy of the régime he serves as he, too, echoes the words of Fanon to observe to himself: 'comme l'Afrique avait vite sécrété sa bourgeoisie, aussi avide quoique moins sophistiquée que celle d'Europe!' (*Rihata,* p. 142).

In both of Condé's novels, however, we are presented also with stories of resistance to the régime in place — resistance which itself resembles, on a smaller scale, the type of national revolution which is described by Fanon as vital to the survival and development of new, African nations. For Fanon, as indeed for Condé, the future of such nations depends not upon abstract ideals of 'African culture' or of precolonial traditions, but rather upon organized, mass action, which will *revolutionize* social, economic and political structures, rather than simply allow power to be transferred from one bourgeois élite to another. And for Fanon, such national struggle must necessarily be violent: 'le colonialisme... est de la violence à l'état de nature et ne peut s'incliner que devant une plus grande violence'.[16]

This is also the opinion, in *Une saison à Rihata*, of the revolutionary Victor, who later assassinates Madou. When the *griot*, Sory, is imprisoned for singing an anti-government song at his son's baptism, Victor echoes Fanon as he comments: 'un chant n'est jamais qu'un chant. Ce n'est pas avec les chants qu'on fait les révolutions, c'est avec des actes nets, irrévocables comme la pesanteur d'une balle ou la lame d'un couteau' (*Rihata,* p. 137).[17] In

*Heremakhonon*, similarly, we are presented with attempts at resistance and revolution, primarily with the figures of Saliou, part of an organized movement of resistance and who is eventually imprisoned and then dies in mysterious circumstances, and Birame III, who is transported to a labour camp. In neither novel, however, is there any sense that the social, economic and political systems will be changed by the actions of these counter-government revolutionaries.

However, despite the attention given in both novels to such stories of revolutionary action, and though both Véronica and Marie-Hélène manifest varying degrees of political awareness, neither woman appears willing to become actively involved in the revolutionary struggle around her. To a large extent, it would seem that the reason for this unwillingness — or inability — lies, in each case, in the uncovering of yet another element of negritude myth. From the moment of their arrival, both Véronica and Marie-Hélène are made aware that not only is there no such thing as 'African unity', but that there is no such thing, either, as 'black unity' across the diaspora. Neither woman feels welcomed by the African people around her — rather, both are treated openly as 'foreigners' of the worst kind. Marie-Hélène remembers how, from the beginning, she was met with mistrust and misunderstanding, how women, washing their clothes in the river, would laugh at her as she walked there with her children. She is separated from them both by class and by nationality — by a 'foreignness' which makes her black skin irrelevant. From Zek's family, too, she has always met with hostility: for his father, she is 'cette étrangère' (*Rihata,* p. 17), even 'une Blanche' (*Rihata,* p. 23), while for his mother, Sokambi, she is '"Semela", mot ngurka qui signifie "celle-qui-vient-d'ailleurs"' (*Rihata,* p. 12). Sokambi cannot understand that she shares the same African ancestors as her own family:

> [Elle] n'avait jamais pu comprendre d'où venait Marie-Hélène même si Zek avait tenté de lui expliquer. D'anciens esclaves arrachés à l'Afrique, devenus pareils aux Blancs et se croyant supérieurs aux Africains dont ils étaient issus. Quel micmac! (*Rihata,* p. 128)

This, indeed, is the same incomprehension with which Véronica is greeted, for the Africans whom she meets have no idea either where Guadeloupe is, or that descendants of African slaves inhabit it: 'quelle étrangeté ce pays qui ne produit ni Mandingue, ni Peul, ni Toucouleur... ni Yoruba, ni Mina, ni Ibo. Et ce sont tout de même des Noirs qui vivent là!' (*Heremakhonon,* pp. 47-8). What both women find, is a people entirely ignorant of, or unconcerned to acknowledge, its Antillean diaspora. However, as Fanon has pointed out, such an attitude should hardly be surprising in the light of the deliberate French colonial strategy of fostering and encouraging the idea of difference between Africans and Antilleans. As Fanon explains, with Africans defined as unassimilated 'nègres', Antilleans were able to imagine themselves even more surely as 'white', or at least as European. And, despised for so long by Antilleans precisely because of their blackness, many Africans were understandably unwilling simply to accept those Antilleans who, during the 1940s, started journeying to Africa in search of acceptance and recognition.[18]

It is Véronica, however, who as usual displays the most awareness of her situation, and she finds herself growing irritated with those Africans who, like Saliou, actually attempt to welcome her as an exiled sister returning home. When Saliou first greets her, at the airport, with: 'Bienvenue en terre africaine... Vous êtes ici chez vous...' (*Heremakhonon,* p. 21), her reaction is quite simply: 'Bon, il éfface d'un coup trois siècles et demi' (*Heremakhonon,*, p. 21). Similarly, she goes on to make angry reference, on several occasions, to African kings who sold their people into slavery in the eighteenth century.[19] While Marie-Hélène hardly ever openly articulates her disappointment, as she had never openly articulated her expectations, for Véronica the failure of her journey to Africa is clear: 'mes aïeux, je ne les ai pas trouvés. Trois siècles et demi m'en ont séparée. Ils ne me reconnaissent pas plus que je ne les reconnais' (*Heremakhonon,* p. 193). Faced not only with an Africa which does not live up to her expectations, but also with open rejection, an interest in political struggle proves unsustainable for Véronica in a country which, so manifestly, is not hers.

Negritude was of course born out of a desire to foster a new solidarity: one which would *refuse* the French colonial move of emphasising differences between Africans and Antilleans, and which would enable the presentation of a united front against the 'blanket' French racism which then ignored the very differences that colonial discourses had so carefully constructed. Nevertheless, the hero of Césaire's *Cahier*, too, is made abundantly aware of everything that *separates* him from his African 'brothers':

> Non, nous n'avons jamais été Amazones du roi du Dahomey, ni princes du Ghana avec huit cent chameaux... Nous ne nous sentons pas sous l'aisselle la démangeaison de ceux qui tinrent jadis la lance.[20]

Of course, it is for this reason that the Antillean's return to Africa, as distinct from that of the African, represents little more, if it is conceived of as a definitive return, than a 'false synthesis'.[21] This is precisely what Véronica realizes, again more successfully than Marie-Hélène, as she remembers that she has not returned to Guadeloupe for nine years:

> Si je voulais faire la paix avec moi-même c'est-à-dire avec eux [ses parents], c'est-à-dire avec nous, c'est chez nous que je devrais retourner. Dans ma poussière d'îles... Pas ici, où je suis étrangère. (*Heremakhonon,* p. 110)

And this is made equally clear in Césaire's *Cahier*, the 'return' of whose title is of course double: from the Antilles to Africa, and then from Africa back to the Antilles once more. Indeed, what is also clear in the *Cahier* is that it is only this second return which ensures that the journey to Africa is not rendered entirely futile and, by the same token, it is only the initial journey to Africa which can make possible the second return to the Antilles. If Africa is by no means felt to be a permanent home by Césaire's hero, his return there, however temporary, is experienced as entirely nurturing and enabling: it is here that he gains the sense of identity and of 'authenticity' of which his people has been deprived through centuries of assimilationist rhetoric and ideology. For Véronica and Marie-Hélène, however, as we have seen, Africa is experienced primarily as alienating and as disenabling. And this, I should now like to suggest, has less to do with

their disappointing discovery of the reality of Africa which lies behind negritude myth, and more to do with the way in which negritude as a discourse of return and self-reconciliation is reliant upon a highly problematic figuration of the hero's relationship with, and return to, Africa.

## NEGRITUDE AND THE DISLOCATION OF WOMAN

The particular poetic configurations which, as we shall see, are characteristic of the negritude movement have much to do with the period in which that movement proliferated. Having reached its apogee during the 1930s and 1940s, negritude poetry was not simply positioned quite generally within Western, or European, discourses of the time: more specifically, it was very much a part of the modernist, and especially surrealist, movements of the day. Within the context of the black, assimilated intellectual's personal search for identity, surrealism could be seen to represent, as Césaire himself explains in an interview with René Depestre, no less than a 'call to Africa'.[22] Even before the appearance of *Tropiques*, and Césaire's legendary encounter with André Breton,[23] surrealism's preoccupation with the power of the unconscious encouraged Césaire and other negritude poets to believe that if the surrealist approach were utilized in the context of a negritude quest for origins, it would be possible imaginatively to summon up the unconscious forces of Africa which had been repressed within every assimilated and alienated colonized subject.[24]

One very clear point of conjunction between surrealist and negritude poetry, perhaps especially that of Césaire, can be seen in a common interest in the work of Freud. And in the context of the present study, a particularly relevant example of such a conjunction may be found, I would suggest, in the way in which the feeling of *exile* is imagined within negritude poetry, within surrealism in general, and in the work of Freud himself. In his 1919 essay '*Das Unheimliche*' ('The Uncanny'),[25] Freud examines the various meanings of the term 'unheimlich' — literally 'unhomely' — and he equates 'homesickness', man's dreaming of a familiar place or country, with his nostalgia for the

maternal origin, for 'intra-uterine existence'.[26] The 'unheimlich' feeling, which he claims several of his patients have described to him, is one which 'proceeds from something familiar which has been repressed'.[27] For Freud, the familiar yet unfamiliar place *par excellence* is the mother's body, 'the former Heim (home) of all human beings'.[28]

Within the poetry of negritude, the feeling of exile is one which is similarly equated with, and imagined as, exile from and nostalgia for the maternal origin. The hero typically achieves his 'rebirth into authenticity' through a return not simply to Africa, but more specifically to the African *mother*land, to 'la mère Afrique'. What is more, the way in which the hero typically relates to this 'mother Africa', and the way in which he figures his return to the motherland, is one which continues to resemble Freud's own figuration of that relationship and return. In 'The Uncanny' once more, Freud recalls a 'joking saying', that 'love is home-sickness'.[29] Man's relationship to woman, his desire for her constitutes, it would seem, primarily a desire to recreate and to heal a lost relation to maternal origin, to the mother as native land. This, indeed, is the thesis of Luce Irigaray, herself commenting upon the work of Freud, when she describes male desire for women as nothing more than 'un désir de retourner vers et dans la matrice originaire'.[30] In fact, throughout her work — to which we shall return in a moment — Irigaray explains how the son is perpetually seeking the original womb, how he desires to return to his mother, and how he therefore seeks to recreate his relationship with his mother in relationships with other women. According to Irigaray, men need women as: 'une femme légitime qui soit la caution du maternel-corporel', 'une femme-mère', 'un corps-objet qui est là, qui ne bouge pas, qu'il peut retrouver à toute heure'.[31]

In negritude poetry too, and unsurprisingly, the return to Africa as motherland is one which is effected through an imagined relationship with a variously exoticized and eroticized black woman-mother-lover. Thus, in Césaire's *Cahier*, Africa is figured both as the mother who will allow him access to his identity ('il me suffirait d'une gorgée de ton lait jiculi pour qu'en toi je découvre... la terre où tout est libre et fraternel — ma terre'[32]), and as object of 'la mâle soif et

l'entêté désir'.[33] It is this woman-mother-lover who, celebrated and idealized, comes to represent all of the values and attributes associated with traditional Africa and its culture, to which the negritude hero wishes to return. As for the European surrealist, 'Eros function[s] primarily as an ontological gateway with woman as mediatrix between alienated self and fullness of being'.[34]

The negritude quest for identity is one which thus turns out to be exclusively masculine, the quest of 'the exiled *sons* of Africa'[35] for the lost Mother.[36] What is more, as a reaction to assimilationist values, it is a discourse which imagines access to 'authentic identity' in terms equally as sexualized as those of its reverse — the lactification complex itself. Just as a relationship with a white partner had formerly proved one's assimilation to whiteness so, this time, a relationship with a black partner becomes the negritude hero's means of access to his identity as 'authentic' black of African origin. It is, in Fanon's terms, 'une activité axiologique inversée'.[37] In her fictional work, and in *Heremakhonon* in particular, Condé, too, draws attention to the way in which negritude is an overwhelmingly sexualized discourse of black liberation. When Véronica first arrives in Africa, for example, she is taken by Saliou to have dinner at his home with his wife, Oumou Hawa. She is immediately struck by the significance of Oumou Hawa's blackness as far as Saliou's 'revolutionary' politics are concerned. As she observes, far from being 'la femme blonde... le rêve du noir' (and Véronica herself adds the gloss, 'c'est Fanon qui l'a dit', *Heremakhonon*, p. 22), Oumou Hawa is (and here the reference is to Senghor's 'Femme noire'), 'la gazelle noire célébrée par le poète' (*Heremakhonon,* p. 22). Endlessly engaged in domestic chores, surrounded by children and, when Véronica first meets her, pregnant, Oumou Hawa is precisely the woman-mother necessary if Saliou is adequately to represent his own desire to return to traditional, African culture.

It is thus perhaps not surprising that Véronica's own quest for identity in Africa should also take the form, quite deliberately, of a reversal of the lactification plot as a specifically sexualized discourse. Her journey to Africa is bound up not only with the contradictory attitudes of her parents towards

blackness, but with what she is afraid to admit may also be her own. More specifically, it is bound up with her feeling of guilt at the way in which this contradictory attitude has hitherto manifested itself: via relationships with men of varying colours. She recounts how, as a way of rebelling against her parents' attempts to introduce her to suitable black men in her late teens, she began to have sex with Jean-Marie, a mulatto boy. Having been sent to Paris in disgrace after this incident, ostensibly to study, she then embarked upon a relationship with Jean-Michel, a white Parisian with whom she has lived in Paris ever since. Although she admits that both relationships were, in part, a form of vengeance on her parents, she is anxious to acquit herself of any 'lactification' complex and, rather unfortunately repeating Fanon's own conflation of Mayotte and Capécia, declares:

> Répétons-le, j'ai aimé ces deux hommes parce que je les aimais. Et que tous les jeunes mâles noirs que me présentait ma famille me faisaient horreur. Pourquoi ils me faisaient horreur? *Pas parce qu'ils étaient noirs*. Absurde! Je ne suis pas une Mayotte Capécia. Ah non! Pas mon souci, éclaircir la Race! Je le jure... (*Heremakhonon,* p. 55).

Despite such constant attempts to convince herself that Jean-Michel's white skin is of no importance in their relationship, she admits, nevertheless: 'j'ai mauvaise conscience' (*Heremakhonon,* p. 40). And it is this 'mauvaise conscience' which, as she is well aware, conditions the particular form that her quest for identity in Africa soon takes. If the negritude hero's quest for identity typically takes place through a return to and eroticization of Africa as mother-lover, that of Véronica takes place through a return to a country which she associates overwhelmingly with her father, and through what she herself calls '*a good fuck*' (*Heremakhonon,* p. 177): her relationship with Ibrahima Sory, the Minister of Defence. Alluding throughout to her father's African ancestry, and constantly referring to him as 'ce "marabout mandingue"', Véronica sets about restoring her African origins in the only manner which seems either appropriate or possible, via a relationship with a man 'blacker' than herself. As she openly admits: 'je suis venue pour me guérir d'un mal: Ibrahima Sory sera, je le sais, le

gri-gri du marabout... Par lui, j'accèderai à la fierté d'être moi-même' (*Heremakhonon,* p. 71).

Her relationship with Sory, she is convinced, will be: 'une solution. La solution. Le vrai retour' (*Heremakhonon*, p. 45), and she is equally lucid about why it is specifically Sory whom she must choose, despite his politics, as her first black lover. First, unlike the black men to whom her parents had introduced her in Guadeloupe, 'il n'a pas reçu d'étampes' (*Heremakhonon,* p. 65): he represents 'black culture' before colonialism and slavery. Second, once in Africa, it must be Sory and not Saliou, the revolutionary descended from the peasantry, for Sory has 'ancestors': he belongs to a family of the ancient African aristocracy, the Africa of negritude myth. He is 'un authentique aristocrate', 'un nègre avec aïeux', and thus her only means of access to her African past (*Heremakhonon,* p. 47).

Véronica attempts to make Sory the mediator of her quest for identity in Africa, just as the heroes of negritude poetry had made the black woman the mediatrix of theirs. Unfortunately, however, it becomes obvious that Sory is indifferent to her desire to 'find herself'. His constant silence and their all too brief meetings confound her attempts to explain her fragmented sense of self to him, and when he does listen to her, it is to mock her attempts at self-discovery, to compare her scathingly to the African-Americans he has encountered on similar quests (*Heremakhonon,* p. 86). Despairingly, she wonders: 's'il ne me permet pas de l'aimer..., Comment renaîtrais-je sans honte?' (*Heremakhonon,* p. 103). Though, like the heroes of negritude poetry, she experiences the necessity for personal 'rebirth', unlike their chosen mediatrices, Sory refuses to allow himself to be used as mediator: he refuses to represent her means of access to her African past.

Albeit obliquely, Véronica would appear to realize exactly why her own, sexualized negritude quest is doomed to fail. As she comments to Sory himself: 'peut-être chez les vôtres... la femme est un champ, l'homme est son laboureur' (*Heremakhonon,* p. 103). What seems to be suggested here, is the possibility that the roles of the negritude quest are so fixed and, like those of the

lactification plot, so 'gendered' that the discourse of negritude is unable to function when those roles are reversed. It is this fact which, especially when coupled with the disappointing reality of Africa in general, may be seen to ensure that for women like Véronica, it is impossible that the journey to Africa is experienced as a revitalising 'stage' on the way to that second movement of return — to the Antilles — undertaken by the hero of the *Cahier*. As we shall see, however, perhaps even more prohibitive for these women is the way in which this second, and very vital, return is itself figured in works such as the *Cahier*.

If, as Arnold points out, it is the Antillean negritude poetry of Césaire which can be seen to belong most evidently to the surrealist movement, it is perhaps unsurprising that the *Cahier*'s second, and 'Antillean' movement of return displays most consistently the familar surrealist trope of 'woman as mediatrix'. Like the return to Africa, that to the Antilles turns out be the return of exiled *sons* to the motherland, to the island-as-mother — and via a relationship with that land which is figured in a manner potentially much more alienatingly masculine and androcentric for women. Like the return to Africa, as Edson Rosa da Silva points out, the Antillean's return to the Antilles — and here he is referring specifically to Césaire's *Cahier* — 'évoque, dans le domaine de l'imaginaire, le retour à ses origines, à la terre-mère, à l'utérus'.[38]

It is therefore perhaps not unexpected that images of copulation, conception, pregnancy and rebirth abound throughout the *Cahier*, and on a variety of levels: from those of 'les ovaires de l'eau où le futur agite ses petites têtes';[39] to images of plant-like 'germination';[40] to those, which predominate, of the violent penetration and rape of the land. What emerges is an overall image of a new nation, peopled by blacks proud of their blackness, being born from the womb of the woman-mother as earth, as the island. In fact, it is possible to discern three movements in Césaire's poem. First, that of penetration itself: we are presented with images of 'un grand galop de dagues pour défoncer la poitrine de la terre',[41] and of the hero's own negritude which, we are told, 'plonge dans la chair rouge du sol/elle plonge dans la chair ardente du ciel/elle troue

l'accablement opaque de sa droite présence'.[42] Second, we see the growth of 'le nouveau-nègre' in the earth-womb: 'et toi veuille astre de ton lumineux fondament tirer lémurien du sperme insondable de l'homme la/forme non osée/que le ventre tremblant de la femme porte tel un minerai!'[43]. Third, the narrator himself undergoes rebirth: 'Je force la membrane vitelline qui me/sépare de moi-même,/Je force les grandes eaux qui me ceinturent de sang'[44].

By the end of the poem, once the hero has reclaimed both his motherland and his own identity, images of virility and masculinity proliferate, the hero repeatedly exhorting that 'sa prière virile' be heard, that he be made 'un homme d'ensemencement'.[45] Indeed, recalling Véronica's own characterization of the black man as 'laboureur', Da Silva, in his reading of the *Cahier*, describes the negritude hero's role precisely as 'l'agriculteur, le mâle de la terre'.[46] For Da Silva, the actions of the negritude hero, his successful attempts at making fertile his native land, succeed in restoring the equilibrium of 'la terre malade du début [du poème]'.[47] The island of the opening section of the poem is, as Da Silva mentions, 'sick' and 'degraded': images are of putrefying blood, thick mud and stagnant water not, as Da Silva recognizes, the nurturing and maternal native land 'ordinarily' dreamt of. Rather, it would seem, it is a ruined and abused feminine/maternal body, the site of years of colonial exploitation. What Da Silva fails to interrogate, however, is whether the mother-earth of negritude, the 'terre fertile' of the end of the *Cahier*, is in fact significantly different from the colonized and exploited mother-earth of the beginning of the poem. As the hero remarks towards the end of the *Cahier*: 'l'oeuvre de l'homme vient seulement de commencer/et il reste à l'homme à *conquérir...*'.[48]

The hero of the *Cahier*, it becomes evident, desires not simply to return to his motherland, but to possess it. As Hélène Cixous has pointed out, referring explicitly to Freud, man's desire for 'le retour au pays natal' is a form of nostalgia 'qui fait de l'homme un être qui a tendance à revenir au point de départ, *afin de se l'approprier*'.[49] As Sartre has shown in his famous essay 'Orphée noir', this is all the more true for the colonized man who is the hero of negritude poetry. For Sartre, his quest for identity in the motherland is an

'orphic' quest: 'parce que cette inlassable descente du nègre en soi-meme me fait songer à Orphée allant réclamer Eurydice à Pluton'.[50] For Sartre, this descent into the earth (the underworld) is undertaken in order to reclaim — that is, to reappropriate — this earth, figured not only as feminine, but, more specifically, as the woman Eurydice. This Eurydice must be reclaimed by Black Orpheus, the negritude hero, from the colonizer, figured as Pluto. Eurydice, as a trope for the black mother Earth, thus exists only as an object of exchange: once more, woman serves merely as symbolic mediatrix of black, male identity — this time gained by asserting himself against the white man.

And negritude is by no means the only anti-colonial discourse to figure national liberation in such terms. As Elleke Boemher has pointed out, other, more overtly nationalist, discourses of colonized and newly decolonized countries can similarly be seen to represent the male figure as author and subject of the nation, while the role of 'woman' is to be 'the strength or virtue of the nation incarnate, its fecund first matriarch'.[51] In all such figurings of woman as nation, the 'woman-mother', or that which is figured as female — the native land — serves as the *foundation* of the nation, the ground upon which the nation — and representations of it like negritude poetry — are built. If the woman-mother is the foundation of the nation and of male selfhood, however, women as such have no place *in* the nation, and no identity, themselves, as women.

Indeed this is relevant also on a practical level. As Susheila Nasta points out, if women of a nation undergoing decolonization attempt to seek emancipation or identity *as women*, it is too often seen as a betrayal, both of those traditions which are inevitably asserted when 'indigenous culture' is being revalidated, and of the so-called 'wider' struggle for national liberation.[52] For example, as alienated and exiled as Césaire and his fellow Antillean intellectuals were, and felt themselves to be, their means of representing their movement from alienation to rebirth necessarily entailed a further exiling of 'their' women. These were women who — like Suzanne Césaire, co-founder of *Tropiques* and herself a poet; the Nardal sisters, founders of *La Revue du Monde noir* or, in a fictional context, Manicom's Madévie in her relationship to Gilbert and the pro-

independence movement — had already subsumed their felt alienation within patriarchal structures, indigenous and/or colonial, into an apparently more fundamental alienation within colonialist structures. Like Sartre's Eurydice, women such as these are silent and silenced by and within the androcentric discursive structures surrounding them.[53]

This, in fact, and in a manner which recalls both Sartre's and Da Silva's analyses of negritude, bears striking resemblance to Irigaray's analysis of 'patriarchy'. Hers, too, is a description of a 'world of between men', of a 'hom(m)osexual economy'[54] in which men are the only subjects who exist, and in which women are 'commodities', objects to be exchanged between men, and mediators of all-male relationships. What is more, as Lemuel A. Johnson points out in his study of figurations of the female body in Caribbean women's writing: 'Irigaray's contention [is] that woman constitutes the silent ground on which the patriarchal thinker erects his discursive constructs'.[55] Indeed, despite its Eurocentrism, Irigaray's overall critique of 'patriarchy' is enormously helpful for an examination of the simultaneous idealization and fetishization of the black woman-mother in the 'patriarchal discursive construct' that is negritude.[56]

As Margaret Whitford explains, for example, one of the main concerns of Irigaray is to look for:

> The conditions of male subjectivity: 'the "matter" from which the [necessarily male] speaking subject draws nourishment in order to produce itself, to reproduce itself' and which constitutes... the *red blood* which stands for the sustaining maternal-feminine.[57]

In other words, she wishes to examine the 'ground' upon which patriarchal culture is built, and she concludes that 'ce sous-sol, c'est la femme-reproductrice de l'ordre social': the mother.[58] She is 'première terre nourricière, premières eaux'[59]: her 'matter' — her body, her blood and her life — is that upon which patriarchy is built. Indeed, for Irigaray, patriarchal culture 'repose sur le meurtre de la mère'.[60] As we have seen, it is precisely upon the body and blood of the 'Mother Earth' that the negritude hero's identity, as well as that of the new race of black Antilleans, is itself built. That is, upon 'le sang noir de la

putréfaction',[61] 'l'image du sang menstruel, l'eau néfaste qu'il faut éviter'[62] — a blood which only becomes positive and life-giving once it has been appropriated and exploited by the hero of negritude, the returning son.

In a similar manner to Boemher, Irigaray explains that if the woman-mother constitutes the 'foundation' of patriarchy, she herself cannot exist as a subject *within* patriarchy:

Ainsi la femme n'aura pas encore eu (de) lieu... Eprouvée comme toute-puissante là où 'elle' est le plus radicalement impuissante dans son indifférenciation. Jamais ici maintenant d'être ce partout ailleurs où le 'sujet' continue de puiser ses réserves, ses re-sources, sans pouvoir les/la reconnaître.[63]

Though the native land is always figured as feminine, there is no place for 'real' women in that land. That is, women must renounce their identity *as women* in order to be the mother for men. Just as the symbolic function of 'woman' in the discourses of negritude and of nationalism leads to the exclusion of women as such from the nation, so, for Irigaray, does patriarchy's 'unacknowledged debt' to the mother lead to women's exile *as women* within patriarchal culture.

## THE DAUGHTER'S QUEST FOR MOTHERLAND: NEGRITUDE 'AU FÉMININ'?

Perhaps surprisingly, both Véronica and Marie-Hélène, when faced with the realization that their 'real' home lies in the Antilles, associate their native island — as did their male predecessors and counterparts — always with, or as, their mother('s)land. Indeed, neither woman is able to remember Guadeloupe without also remembering her mother. For Marie-Hélène:

Retourner à la Guadeloupe ne signifiait guère... que retourner vers sa mère. L'île et la mère étaient la même chose, utérus clos dans lequel blottir sa souffrance, yeux fermés, apaisée par la pulsation du sang. (*Rihata,* p. 77)

For Véronica, too, it becomes apparent that her desire for rebirth is specifically a desire to return 'dans la nuit utérine. Au creux du ventre maternel' (*Heremakhonon*, p. 127). As she suddenly realizes, she wishes that she were

'loin... Dans le ventre de ma mère que je n'aurais jamais dû quitter' (*Heremakhonon*, p. 127).[64] Unfortunately, however, this ability to imagine a link between mother and native land does not lead unproblematically or necessarily to the ability to imagine returning there. While Véronica leaves Africa on a flight (both literal and figurative) back to exile in Paris, Marie-Hélène remains permanently in exile in Rihata. It is no more possible, when the envisaged return is to the Antilles rather than to Africa, for either woman to position herself as a subject within patriarchal culture itself, or within the androcentric discourse that is negritude.

Traditionally represented *as* the origin, positioned solely and constantly as mother-for-men, women such as Véronica and Marie-Hélène have no means through which they can represent their own relation to maternal origin.[65] That is, as Irigaray explains, because the place of the mother is the only role open to women, they can only relate to each other via men, in a mode of rivalry for the desire of men. Crucially, this rivalry begins between mother and daughter:

> Pour se faire désirer, aimer de l'homme, il faut évincer la mère, se substituer à elle... Ce qui détruit la possibilité d'un amour entre mère et fille. Elles sont à la fois complices et rivales pour advenir à *l'unique position possible dans le désir de l'homme.*[66]

In the hom(m)osexual economy that is patriarchy, mothers and daughters are thus unable to relate to each other as subjects — they are radically separated, exiled, from one another in order to become objects of exchange for men. While man's relation to origin is one of continual attempts to (re)discover and (re)appropriate, woman's relation to origin is necessarily one of dispossession, of '*déréliction*',[67] of exile — of what Jane Marcus calls 'radical homelessness'[68]. That is, not only is woman exiled from her own identity, and from her mother but, necessarily, she is exiled also from her mother('s)land.[69] Such is the situation, as we shall see, of both Véronica and Marie-Hélène — as Elaine Savory Fido comments in a different context: 'there is no passionate attachment to the country of birth, because there is alienation from that first country, mother herself'.[70]

In *Une Saison à Rihata* in particular, we are presented with a catalogue of Marie-Hélène's destructive and rivalrous relationships with women: Zek's mother Sokambi blames Marie-Hélène for her son's failure to succeed in the same way as his brother Madou; the local women reject and mock her, and even her relationship with her sister, Delphine, was, during a period which precedes the narrative of *Une Saison à Rihata*, based on a deadly rivalry which led eventually to Delphine's suicide. The most damaging relationship, however, is that with her mother, and it is precisely because this relationship has remained unresolved that Marie-Hélène is now unable to imagine returning to Guadeloupe. Not only is this because her mother is dead, leaving her with nothing to which it is worth returning, but because she feels that she had never properly reconciled herself with her mother before her death, that they had never really been capable of understanding one another. As she therefore comments, 'la douleur de l'avoir perdue à jamais, de n'avoir même pas assisté à ses derniers moments, se changeait en haine de l'île, à présent stérile, matrice désertée qui n'envelopperait plus de foetus' (*Rihata,* p. 77). What is more, and in a way which reminds us of Irigaray's explanation of the mother-daughter relationship within patriarchy, Marie-Hélène feels that this untimely and irreversible separation is one which has been effected by her father. Marie-Hélène, we are told, 'avait idolâtré sa mère à laquelle on disait qu'elle ressemblait' (*Rihata,* p. 27). When she dies, from an illness that the doctors were unable to diagnose, Marie-Hélène, 'perdant la tête, avait accusé son père de l'avoir tuée' (*Rihata*, p. 27). She is convinced that her mother had died 'de ne pas être aimée, d'être méprisée dans son coeur et dans sa chair' (*Rihata,* p. 76) — and for this she has never forgiven her father.

Véronica, too, feels that she has in some way been separated from her mother by her father. Her memories of her mother are much less defined than are those of Marie-Hélène, and this is precisely because, according to Véronica, her mother's identity — her opinions, tastes and views — has always been absorbed entirely into that of her husband. As Véronica is forced to admit: 'ma mère ne m'a jamais beaucoup impressionnée. Elle n'était rien que le reflet de l'astre

paternel' (*Heremakhonon*, p. 48). While Marie-Hélène recalls scenes of love between herself, her mother and her sister — even if they were often unspoken, and certainly short-lived — Véronica remembers only: 'elle ne m'a jamais beaucoup aimé... Ils avaient souhaité un garçon' (*Heremakhonon,* p. 38). What is perhaps most striking about their relationship, however, is that it is her mother's own exile both from traditional, Antillean culture — like Marie-Hélène's mother she is of the black Antillean bourgeoisie — *and* her exile from her identity as a woman — she functions solely as wife and as mother — which have apparently contributed to Véronica's own sense of exile in a fundamentally damaging way. As Irigaray points out, mothers and daughters are not only radically exiled from one another but, more than this, the mother's exile from her own identity as a woman is typically transmitted to her daughter. For all of these reasons, each woman experiences her exile from the native land as an 'exmatriation'[71] of a more disenabling sort than that of the heroes of negritude: as the exile *at once* of a colonized subject from the homeland *and* as the inevitable exile of a daughter within patriarchy.

If Véronica's own experience of 'inherited exile' is made more explicit than is that of Marie-Hélène, it is with Marie-Hélène herself that its harmful effects are made most evident, for she is a mother — and of six daughters. Indeed, pregnant throughout most of the novel, Marie-Hélène is, like Oumou Hawa in *Heremakhonon*, defined everywhere via her status as mother, and via her relationship to motherhood. For Zek's brother Madou, whose visit to Rihata as a government Minister is central to the text, she fulfils precisely the role that Oumou Hawa fulfils for Saliou: that of archetypal and idealized black mother-lover. When he arrives, hoping to rekindle their affair of several years ago, he is disappointed to find her eight and a half months pregnant, but while she fears that he will no longer find her attractive, he has been educated, we are told, 'dès le plus jeune âge à considérer la maternité comme la plus belle des parures féminines, [et] il ne se doutait pas qu'elle pût se croire à son désavantage' (*Rihata*, p. 121).

Marie-Hélène's experience of maternity and of motherhood, however, is not quite so positive. While the men around her find it impossible to admit that 'this most honourable woman destiny... is both restrictive and debilitating', she finds herself in what Janice Lee Liddell terms 'the throes of... *self-sacrificing* motherdom'.[72] Against Madou's idealization of maternity, we see the way in which it has restricted Marie-Hélène's entire life and repeatedly confounded her plans for the future. Committed, as a student in Paris, to 'le devenir du continent africain, le progrès de l'homme noir, sa place dans le monde' (*Rihata,* p. 21), now, as a Senghorian '*femme* noire', Marie-Hélène finds her own future to have been severely limited. Despite her repeated plans to leave both Africa and Zek, she finds herself, each year, either pregnant or nursing a new baby, encumbered and entrapped by 'the narrow enclosure of motherhood'.[73] If Véronica expresses her unwillingness to participate in local struggles, Marie-Hélène is *physically* unable to do so. Indeed, within the time which elapses during the novel, she becomes ever more confined, as her pregnancy advances, within the house in which they live in Rihata. This house, potentially all the more alienating because it is left over from colonial times, comes outwardly to represent Marie-Hélène's increasing sense of 'internal exile' — as an Antillean in Africa, and as a woman-mother in patriarchy. That is, it becomes paradigmatic of her alienating experience of what Véronica had imagined to be 'le vrai retour': marriage and integration into African familial structures.

It is this overwhelmingly negative experience of motherhood which, perhaps inevitably, damages Marie-Hélène's own relationship with her daughters, and especially with Sia, the eldest. As she traces the history of her relationship with Sia, we realize that her felt separation from her daughter has everything to do with her own (non)status as object within the patriarchal structures which surround them both. Sia was conceived shortly after Marie-Hélène's relationship with Madou had ended, and she serves as a constant reminder not only of that failed relationship, but also of the way in which she was treated by the brothers' family when the affair was discovered. As Marie-Hélène recalls, she herself was never consulted about what course of action should follow this

discovery: instead, it was decided by her father-in-law that, at all costs, the brothers must remain united, that the family would take care of Zek's children, and that Marie-Hélène would be abandoned, banished from the family. It was only Zek's decision not to abandon her — again, a decision about which she was not consulted — which meant that she remained in Africa, isolated in the small town of Rihata (*Rihata,* pp. 71-2).

As far as her relationship with her daughter is concerned, these incidents have had serious ramifications, as Marie-Hélène herself admits:

Mon enfant, je t'ai portée dans la colère. Je t'en voulais de ne pas être née de celui que j'aimais... je t'en voulais d'être la fille de Zek. Jamais je n'ai pensé à toi avec douceur et quand, enfin, nous nous sommes séparées j'ai accuelli ma délivrance avec joie. C'est presque dans la haine que je t'ai expulsée. (*Rihata*, p. 167)

This admission is only imaginary, for she has never spoken to her daughter about the circumstances of her birth, or about their difficult relationship, for she finds it impossible to communicate with her, or with any of her daughters:

Entre elles, pas de ces mièvreries. Peu d'échanges d'ailleurs... Elle savait ce que pensait Sia, elle percevait chacun de ses appels à l'aide. Mais comment aider quand vous voguez vous-même à la dérive sans cadran ni boussole? (*Rihata,* p. 167)

Her own feeling of alienation, of powerlessness, leaves her incapable of relating to her own daughter, even though she knows that she is in need of her help. Consequently Sia herself, the only one of her daughters to be given voice within the narrative, perceives her mother in almost exactly the same way that Marie-Hélène had perceived hers: as 'une femme silencieuse, solitaire' (*Rihata,* p. 26).

Unlike Marie-Hélène, Véronica has no children and, what is more, she refuses to consider the possibility that she ever will: 'je n'ai jamais enfanté. De toute façon, je n'enfanterai jamais' (*Heremakhonon*, p. 42). Unlike Marie-Hélène, she manages to escape what Johnson terms 'the trauma associated with Afro-New World motherhood'.[74] She apparently refuses — wittingly or unwittingly — either to replicate, with daughters, her own damaging relationship with her mother or to occupy, for sons, the position of 'home', of

symbolic 'mother of the nation'. Indeed, Véronica's refusal of the position of mother can be seen to operate also on a wider symbolic level. That is, it is possible to imagine Veronica's 'failed' journey, her continuing state of exile rather than return, as a *positive* state: as a state of 'disruptive excess', as a way in which to occupy a position as 'uncanny' figure. As Marcus explains, if the woman's body, for Freud, represents 'home', then in removing herself from 'home', the woman in exile like Véronica refuses to represent 'home' for men: she is, necessarily, 'uncanny'.[75] If, for Irigaray, woman is always that 'partout ailleurs' because of her exile in patriarchy, this 'elsewhereness' can in fact be interpreted as a *radical* 'elsewhereness' for as Marcus once more observes, 'elsewhere is not nowhere'.[76] Rather, it is somewhere from which the dis/placed are able to see themselves in relation to the placed, and which threatens to destabilize notions of 'place' and 'placement' altogether, and which threatens also to destabilize patriarchal structures and their representations.[77]

What is perhaps most disruptive about Véronica's position as 'uncanny' figure, however, is not her own refusal to be positioned as symbolic mother but, rather, her refusal to represent her native land as feminine matter to be exploited, as a mother's body to be used only as a site of mediation between alienation and 'rebirth'. Had she succeeded in representing her return to the motherland as did Césaire's hero, she would have run the risk of simply replicating the masculine, appropriative relation to origin described by Irigaray and by Cixous. However, positive as this may be, Véronica does not experience her failed journey in personally enabling terms. For her, it is overwhelmingly disappointing that she must return to France, that she has succeeded in reconciling herself neither with her African past, with her Antillean motherland, nor with her own identity as Antillean woman. She may have succeeded in *disrupting* the negritude story as masculine figuration of the relationship to maternal origin, but she has not, ultimately, succeeded in inventing a new, and more enabling, figuration of that relationship — what Zimra terms 'negritude in the feminine mode'.

For Cixous, as for Irigaray, it is precisely the case that '[le] trajet de la fille [est] plus loin, à l'inconnu, à *inventer*'[78] — that her relationship to origin cannot take the form simply of a repetition, in reverse, of that of the exiled son. Perhaps unexpectedly, it is with the figure of Marie-Hélène that we may begin to discern the possibility of this 'invention'. Despite her much less overtly disruptive position vis-à-vis the discourse of negritude, it is Marie-Hélène who both starts to imagine a way of relating to her own motherland, and who enables her daughter to begin to relate to her differently. Like Véronica, Marie-Hélène undertakes a 'flight' of sorts — not to France, but rather deeper within the house in Rihata. Though this house certainly represents a space of confinement (in both senses of the term), it represents also a space of self-definition for Marie-Hélène, a place of refuge, a means of escaping her position of 'internal exile'.[79] More than this, it represents a means through which she is able to recreate her native Guadeloupe:

> Elle se réfugiait dans cette maison qu'elle transformait tour à tour en château de contes de fées, habitation à l'antillaise complète avec vieilles *das* berçant les poupons dans des *moïses*. (*Rihata*, p. 15)

For Marie-Hélène, the house therefore constitutes what Evelyn O'Callaghan terms a 'kumbla', at once a confining *and* a sheltering place. Borrowing this term from Erna Brodber's *Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home*, O'Callaghan explains its significance in reading Caribbean women's writing thus:

> The 'Kumbla' is a kind of protective enclosure, calabash or cocoon, made up of layers of assumed roles and evasions, behind which the fragile self hides its vulnerability. But, as the novel makes clear, 'the trouble with the Kumbla is the getting out of the Kumbla. It is a protective device. If you dwell too long in it, it makes you delicate'... Eventually, the self must emerge into the threatening world or risk psychic fragmentation.[80]

Marie-Hélène, however, does not emerge into the 'threatening world' beyond the house, or even beyond her room. Instead, she continues to seclude herself more and more surely within it and, as she does so, she begins to be drawn precisely towards 'psychic fragmentation', towards 'madness'. As she herself

realizes when she looks in the mirror: 'la tentation de la folie émaciait ses traits, agrandissait les cernes autour de ses yeux, un peu hagards, fiévreux. On l'aurait cru prête à quelque action insensée, meurtrière' (*Rihata,* p. 24). Indeed, later in the narrative, she describes her entire life as 'une femme folle qui déchire ses vêtements' (*Rihata*, p. 167).

If Marie-Hélène's sense of alienation, her position of 'internal exile' in the house in Rihata therefore leads apparently inexorably to at least a 'temptation' towards madness, for Irigaray, 'madness' is precisely another word for — or manifestation of — the alienated position of women in patriarchal culture. Silenced and separated, unable to relate to each other, all women can be seen to be driven to 'madness' of some sort. More specifically, and more usefully here, madness — or 'l'hystérie' — represents for Irigaray the problematic relationship between mother and daughter: it is 'un lieu privilégié de... ce qui ne se parle pas du rapport de la femme à sa mère, à elle-même, aux autres femmes'.[81] This is, in fact, extremely relevant in the case of Marie-Hélène, for it must be remembered that her own mother actually died from having, herself, remained secluded and isolated for too long. That is, from an unnameable illness, 'un mal' which, like those of the hysterics treated by Freud, 'les médecins n'avaient pu diagnostiquer' (*Rihata*, p. 27). Indeed, when it is remembered also that it was when her mother died, we are told, that Marie-Hélène '[a perdu] la tête' (*Rihata*, p. 27), subsequent manifestations of 'madness', however slight, may be seen to link her all the more surely to her mother.

However, for Marie-Hélène, 'la tentation de la folie' does not only constitute an unspoken link between her and her mother. More than this, it becomes a means of imagining her escape from Africa, of undertaking, through dream, '[un] voyage... féerique' — to strange and unidentifiable places which are 'loin de Rihata. Loin de son existence bornée' (*Rihata,* p. 23). As she explains: 'ainsi elle avait respiré des fleurs qui ne poussent qu'aux branches des jacarandas, apprivoisé des animaux que l'on croit imaginaires... écouté les mélodies de subtils instruments' (*Rihata*, p. 23). These are journeys which, if they are never explicitly to Guadeloupe, leave Marie-Hélène with the impression, upon

waking, that she has visited places familiar from her childhood — that, for example, 'parce que c'était Noël sans doute..., elle avait poussé la porte d'une église décorée de grands bouquets' (*Rihata*, pp. 23-4).[82] If, for Freud, the 'unheimlich' feeling — that of nostalgia for the maternal origin — is associated precisely with 'psychic fragmentation' (though not, of course, women's), for Marie-Hélène 'madness' becomes the very position from which she may begin to invent a relation to motherland — the motherland to which she is incapable, physically, of returning.

It is this movement of invention, however faltering or undeliberate, which may be seen to make of Marie-Hélène's flight into seclusion a more troubling 'excès dérangeant'[83] for the negritude story than Véronica's overtly disruptive position as 'uncanny' figure. Indeed, this is perhaps especially so because Marie-Hélène's increasingly withdrawn state enables her not only to reimagine her relationship to the maternal origin, but it enables her relationship with her daughters to begin to undergo a subtle change also. In the seclusion of her room Marie-Hélène, for her part, realizes not only the precise reasons for her problematic relationship with Sia, but also that, beneath the apparent distance and silence between them, lies a different form of commmunication nonetheless — one based upon 'des regards, des expressions du visage, des gestes des mains' (*Rihata*, p. 167). Perhaps more significant, however, is Sia's own realization that, despite her conviction that it is her mother's fault that their family life is so strained, 'elle l'aimait sans la connaître' (*Rihata,* p. 170).

As the narrative progresses, Sia becomes aware that it is, in fact, her mother's deep unhappiness, rather than Marie-Hélène herself, which is to blame for the atmosphere of despair that pervades the entire house. She begins to understand more specifically, as do her sisters, that this unhappiness has everything to do with 'l'incongruité de la présence de leur mère dans ce pays qu'elle n'a jamais fait sien' (*Rihata*, p. 170). What is more, by the end of the narrative, Sia has been moved to attempt to communicate this understanding to Marie-Hélène. When she learns of the death of her uncle, Madou, 'Sia ne pensait qu'à sa mère. Cette liaison qu'elle avait devinée... devenait comme un secret qu'elles étaient

deux à partager et qui les rapprochait, les soudait dans une intimité neuve' (*Rihata*, p. 208). She goes immediately to her mother's room, despite her father's attempt to prevent her, where she finds Marie-Hélène lying on the bed, '[pleurant] sans vergogne' (*Rihata*, p. 208).

In a scene of unprecedented compassion between the two women, Sia attempts to console her mother, for whom until now she has felt only hatred and revulsion:

Elle détaillait ces fils d'argent dans ses cheveux, ces premières rides sur son front, la chair un peu lâche de ses épaules et de son cou et ce léger affaissement de ses seins... et elle comprenait que Marie-Hélène disait irrévocablement adieu à son jeunesse... Les larmes vinrent aux yeux de Sia. (*Rihata*, pp. 208-9)

This is the last scene in which Marie-Hélène appears, and we are therefore left with the impression of a mother-daughter relationship which, a generation on, has begun to be healed in way that proved impossible in the case of Marie-Hélène's relationship with her own mother, or of Véronica's with hers. Indeed, it may be said that we are left with the impression of a daughter who is 'mothering' her mother, who is undertaking more overtly what all of Marie-Hélène's daughters have always been aware, more tacitly, of attempting. That is, to alleviate their mother's sense of exile, to create a 'home' for her:

Puisqu'elle parlait rarement de son pays à elle et toujours en termes négatifs, elles essayaient vainement de lui bâtir un cadre où elle serait à sa place, heureuse, épanouie, loquace et non pas taciturne, irritée avec de brusques accès de tendresse. (*Rihata*, p. 170)

This reverse relationship of 'mothering' is, for Irigaray, one of the ultimate aims of the vital effort to (re)invent the relationship between mother and daughter. For Irigaray, 'la relation mère/fille, fille/mère constitue un noyau extrêmement explosif dans nos sociétés. La penser, la changer, revient à ébranler l'ordre patriarcal'.[84] However, she insists, it is only truly radical if, in attempting to resist patriarchal representations of women only as mothers for men, women do so along with, not at the expense of, their mothers:

Il nous faudra en quelque sorte faire le deuil d'une toute-puissance maternelle (le dernier refuge) et établir avec nos mères un rapport de réciprocité de femme à femme, où elles pourraient aussi éventuellement se sentir nos filles. En somme, nous libérer avec nos mères.[85]

As she explains, the reinvention of the mother-daughter relationship represents the very condition of women's accession to subjectivity. It is only when the mother-daughter relationship — 'la verticalité' — is symbolized, that the relation between women in general — 'l'horizontalité' — may begin to exist in a mode other than rivalry: that women may begin to relate *to* each other as subjects, rather than as objects exchanged *for* each other by men.[86] What is more, if women cease to exist solely as objects of exchange — 'si les "marchandises" refusaient d'aller au "marché"'[87] — the hom(m)osexual economy that is the foundation of patriarchy will indeed be 'shaken': it will no longer be capable of functioning.

For Irigaray, the reinvention of the mother-daughter relationship is therefore the condition both of female subjectivity, and of the transformation of the patriarchal order itself. In the context of Condé's work, however, neither of these radical objectives would appear entirely to be achieved. First, although Condé's first two novels certainly attempt to provide more positive representations of the possibilities for black, female self-definition than do the earlier texts of Manicom and Lacrosil, neither Véronica, Marie-Hélène nor Sia can be seen to have gained a sense of identity as black and as female in terms which would compare with the sense of identity apparently achieved by the heroes of negritude. Instead, we are left with the overwhelming impression that nothing has changed for these women: in the final scene of *Heremakhonon*, as we have seen, we are left with the image of Véronica returning despondently to France. In the final scene of *Rihata*, we are left with the image not only of an equally despondent Marie-Hélène, but also with that of Sia herself who, while praying: 'Mon Dieu, je vous en prie, faites que ma vie ne ressemble pas à la sienne', remains entirely aware that her prayer is in vain, that her life, like that

of her mother, will be little more than '[des] promesses qui ne seraient jamais tenues. Jamais. Jamais. Jamais' (*Rihata*, p. 209).

This conviction that Sia's life will represent a repetition of that of her mother — as Marie-Hélène's was a repetition of that of her own mother — has everything to do with the fact that the relationship between mother and daughter, though represented in a way that was never true in the work of Manicom and Lacrosil, cannot be seen to have been radically *reinvented*. Just as Véronica, as a daughter, is never able to heal her relationship with her mother, Marie-Hélène, as a mother, is apparently not ready to accept her daughter's attempt to 'mother' her, to relate to her in a more positive way. Ultimately, Marie-Hélène remains too invested in the idea that self-fulfilment must take place only via relationships with men: her grief at the death of Madou is bound up with her conviction that he, instead of Zek, could have constituted her 'vrai retour'. Indeed, for Sia too, with his promises of holidays in the capital N'Daru, Madou was to be her means of escape from Rihata: it is, specifically, these broken promises which she feels will render her life a repetition of her mother's. The relationship between Marie-Hélène and Sia, their 'intimité neuve', is one which takes place not between autonomous subjects, but via the relationship of each of them to Madou.

This ultimate portrayal of the lack of revolution in the relationships of women to each other and to themselves is, significantly, immediately juxtaposed with the final scene in the novel, in which we return to the story of Toumany's political régime. In fact, Toumany himself is portrayed in this scene, as he, too, mourns the death of Madou, 'son fils spirituel' (*Rihata*, p. 213). Here, in order to avenge Madou's assassination, he plans to execute Muti (a name which means 'mother'), an old woman who was arrested towards the beginning of the narrative for hiding Victor and his revolutionary friends. At the same time, he plans to make Madou posthumous Prime Minister in order both to honour him, and to avoid the possibility of a living Prime Minister who may threaten his own absolute power. We are thus presented, here, with a portrayal of the lack of revolution also in the patriarchal-neocolonial structures which have

predominated throughout the narrative. In the final words of the text, and in a way which echoes Sia's comments upon her own life, Toumany's wife Kunene comments, speaking both of her own unsatisfactory relationship with her husband and of the political régime itself: 'sacré Toumany, ce n'est pas de sitôt qu'ils en viendraient à bout!' (*Rihata*, p. 215).

Neither on a personal nor on a more generally socio-political level are the structures which have proved so harmful to women like Marie-Hélène and Véronica, changed in any lasting or radical manner. Instead, in the juxtaposition of the two final scenes of *Une Saison à Rihata*, an implicit connection is drawn — like that more overt connection made in Irigaray's work — between the impossibility both of imagining female subjectivity and of 'shaking' patriarchal structures, before representations of women, and of relationships between them, are reinvented. In Condé's second novel, in particular, any tentative attempts at reinventing these relationships, and representing them more centrally, ultimately recede into the background once more, as relationships between men, and representations of dominant, patriarchal structures are foregrounded ever more clearly. As we shall see in the following two chapters, this continues to be the pattern in later novels by Guadeloupean women. Indeed, it becomes increasingly evident not only that relationships between women subtend and shore up patriarchal structures and representations — and, primarily, androcentric Antillean discourses of liberation — but that their re-representation is as vital to black female self-definition as it is threatening to those very structures and representations themselves.

NOTES

1. Although *Heremakhonon* was first published 1976, the edition referred to here is a re-edition, *En attendant le bonheur (Heremakhonon)* (Paris: Seghers, 1988).
2. *Une Saison à Rihata* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1981).
3. For more detailed discussions of negritude in general, and on the work of Aimé Césaire in particular see, for example: Lilyan Kesteloot and Barthelemy Kotchy, *Aimé Césaire: l'homme et l'oeuvre* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1973); M. a M. Ngal, *Aimé Césaire: un homme à la recherche d'une patrie* (Dakar: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1975); René Depestre, *Bonjour et adieu à la négritude* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1980); A. James Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude:*

*The Poetry and Poetics of Aimé Césaire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981); Raphaël Confiant, *Aimé Césaire: Traversée Paradoxale d'un Siècle* (Paris: Stock, 1993); Gregson Davies, *Aimé Césaire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

4. Although it was not the first literary magazine by black students and writers in Paris, *L'Etudiant noir* represented for its founders a significant break with predecessors such as *Revue indigène, La Revue du Monde Noir* and *Légitime défense* which they felt had all been concerned, to a greater or lesser extent, with imitating the style of contemporary French writers and poets. For more details on these, and other, magazines, see A. James Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude* (Massachusetts: Harvard, 1981), and for a view of *Légitime défense* as a precursor not simply of of *L'Etudiant noir*, but of the negritude movement itself, see Edward Ako, '*L'Etudiant noir* and the myth of the genesis of the negritude movement', *Research in African Literatures*, 15 (1984), 341-53. See also Chapter 1 of Christopher Miller, *Nationalists amd Nomads: Essays on Francophone African Literature and Culture* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998) on 'pre-negritude', anti-colonial writing by Africans in 1920s Paris.
5. See Edward Ako, '*L'Etudiant Noir* and the myth of the genesis of the negritude movement', p. 347.
6. Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1983). The first version of this work was originally published in 1939 in a Parisian magazine entitled *Volontés*.
7. This journey to the native land of Africa is, of course, as much a theme of the African negritude of writers like Senghor as of Antillean writers like Césaire, though the 'return' of the Antillean is inevitably one to a much more distant and unremembered Africa. On the necessary differences between these African and Antillean return journeys, see Jacqueline Leiner, 'Africa and the West Indies: Two Negritudes' in Albert S. Gerard, ed., *European Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa*, (Budapest: Akadémici Kiado, 1986), pp. 1135-53.
8. As Condé has admitted, her own journey to Africa, where she lived from 1960 to 1970, was motivated both by a desire to flee Guadeloupe, and by a realization, while a student in France, that she was not French: 'ne pas être français, cela voulait dire être nègre. Etre nègre, cela voulait dire... être africain' (Condé, 'Notes sur un retour au pays natal', *Conjonction: Revue Franco-Haitienne*, 176 (1987 ), 7-23 (p. 12)).
9. For examples of this preoccupation with the thought of Frobenius and Gobineau, see Suzanne Césaire, 'Léo Frobénius et le problème des civilizations', *Tropiques* 1 (1941), 28-36 and Senghor's *Liberté I: Négritude et humanisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1964). For fuller discussions of these issues, and critiques of them, see Hal Wylie, 'Negritude and Beyond: The Quest for Identity and Meaning', in Kofi Anyidoho, Abiosch M. Porter, Daniel Racine and Janice Spleth, eds, *Interdisciplinary Dimensions of African Literature* (Washington DC: African Literature Association & Three Continents Press, 1985), pp. 43-51; Alexandre Kimenyi, 'The 'Popularity' of Negritude', *The Journal of Ethnic Studies,* 9 (1981), 69-74; Leiner, 'Africa and the West Indies', p. 1145; Jean Corzani, 'La négritude aux Antilles françaises', in, Jeanne-Lydie Goré, ed., *Négritude Africaine, Négritude Caraïbe* (Université de Paris-Nord, Centre d'Etudes Francophones: Editions de la Francité, 1973), pp. 118-28.
10. Maryse Condé, 'Pourquoi la négritude? Négritude ou révolution?', in Goré, ed., *Négritude Africaine, Négritude Caraïbe*, pp. 150-54 (p. 153). See also Maryse Condé, 'Négritude césairienne, Négritude senghorienne', *Revue de littérature comparée*, 3 (1974), 409-19.
11. Vèvè Clark, 'Developing Diaspora Literacy: Allusion in Maryse Condé's Heremakhonon', in Boyce Davies and Savory Fido, eds, *Out of the Kumbla*, pp. 303-20 (p. 315).
12. In 'Notes sur un retour au pays natal' Condé describes her own, similar disappointment in Africa: 'moi, je vivais en Guinée où j'ai vu emprisonner le mari de ma soeur, exiler des dizaines d'amis, assassiner des jeunes' ('Notes', p. 15).

13. Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre* (Paris: Editions la découverte, 1987), originally published in 1961. Although Césaire and Fanon would seem to be Condé's main intertexts in *Heremakhonon*, allusions abound to the black diaspora in general: to African-American actors and singers (James Brown, The Supremes); authors and philosophers (Booker T. Washington, Kwame Nkrumah, Marie Chauvet, Mayotte Capécia); Ebony magazine, to Antillean and African traditions, the 'gwo ka', the 'biguine', voodoo and so on. This aspect of the novel requires the reader to be what VèVè Clark has termed 'diaspora literate', to be able 'to read and comprehend the discourses of Africa, Afro-America and the Caribbean from an informed, indigenous perspective'. This ability, argues Clark, is vital in the creation of a diaspora tradition no longer solely identified as the 'other' of Western European literary, historical, musical traditions and so on (See Vèvè Clark, 'Developing Diaspora Literacy and Marasa Consciousness', in Hortense J. Spillers, ed. *Comparative American Identities: Race, Sex and Nationality in the Modern Text*, London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 40-61).
14. Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre*, p. 122.
15. See Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre*, in particular the chapter entitled 'Mésaventures de la conscience nationale', pp. 109-47.
16. Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre*, p. 43.
17. See also Fanon, ibid., p. 163.
18. Fanon, 'Antillais et Africains', pp. 19-33. This experience of Africa as a place of exile is not peculiar to the work of Condé. In Myriam Warner-Vieyra's novel *Juletane* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1982), we see the similar 'return' of a Guadeloupean woman to Africa. Juletane also goes to Africa with the explicit hope of recovering her African past only to find herself ostracized, 'une étrangère' (*Juletane*, p. 35) or 'une toubabesse' (*Juletane*, p. 79). Indeed, Condé, in 'Notes sur un retour au pays natal' describes how she, too, found herself ostracized in Africa, and especially after the publication of her two-volume African historical novel *Ségou* (*Les murailles de la terre*, Paris: Laffont, 1984 and *La terre en miettes*, Paris: Laffont, 1985). Like Juletane, she was accused of being 'une toubabesse, une blanche' ('Notes', p. 17).
19. See, for example, *Heremakhonon*, p. 58 and p. 174, and 'Pourquoi la négritude?', p. 151.
20. Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, p. 38.
21. Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude*, p. 158.
22. See April Ane Knutson, 'Negritude and Surrealism, Marxism and Mallarmé: Ideological confusion in the Works of Aimé Césaire', in April Ane Knutson, ed., *Studies in Marxism: Ideology and Independence in the Americas* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1989), pp. 47-65 (p. 57).
23. For an account of this meeting, see Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude*, p. 75.
24. Knutson, ibid., p. 57.
25. Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' in James Strachey, ed., *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), XVII, 239-55.
26. Ibid., p. 244.
27. Ibid., p. 247.
28. Ibid., p. 245.
29. Ibid., p. 245.
30. Luce Irigaray, *Ethique de la différence sexuelle*, (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1984), p. 99. In *Speculum. De l'autre femme* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1974), Irigaray makes reference, in a footnote, precisely to this part of Freud's essay (*Speculum*, p. 51).
31. Irigaray, *Le Corps-à-corps avec la mère* (Montréal: Editions de la pleine lune, 1981), p. 84.
32. Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, pp. 21-2.

33. Ibid., p. 23.
34. Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude*, pp. 153-54. On the 'gendering' of modernist discourses generally, see also: Shari Benstock, 'Expatriate Modernism', in Mary Lynn Broe and Angela Ingram, eds, *Women's writing in exile* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), pp. 19-40.
35. Abiola Irele, *The African Experience in Literature and Ideology* (London: Heinemann, 1981), p. 143. Emphasis mine.
36. In the poetry of Senghor, too, Africa is imagined and figured alternately as 'mother' and as 'woman-lover'. 'Ndessé', for example, is addressed throughout to 'Mère' ('je ne suis qu'un enfant qui souvient de ton lait maternel', Senghor, ed., *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948, p. 159), while his 'Nuit de Sine' is addressed throughout to 'Femme' ('ma tête sur ton sein chaud comme un dang au sortir du feu', *Anthologie*, p. 150). In 'A l'appel de la race de Saba', a poem once again addressed to 'Mère', the narrator asks for recognition from Africa-as-mother, while the rather emblematic 'Femme noire' is addressed to Africa-as-woman: 'Femme nue, femme noire... je te découvre terre promise du haut d'un haut col calciné' (*Anthologie*, p. 151).
37. Fanon, 'Antillais et Africains', p. 28.
38. Edson Rosa Da Silva, 'La Rêverie de l'eau et de la terre dans le *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* de Césaire', *Présence Francophone*, 29 (1986), 105-25 (p. 106).
39. Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, p. 45.
40. Ibid., p. 48; p. 56.
41. Ibid., p. 29.
42. Ibid., p. 47.
43. Ibid., p. 46.
44. Ibid., p. 34.
45. Ibid., p. 49.
46. Da Silva, 'La Rêverie de l'eau et de la terre', p. 123. Similar images and preoccupations abound throughout Césaire's poetry. In 'Corps perdu', for example, first published in 1950 in the collection of the same name, the narrator-hero imagines his rebirth as one which entails re-entering the earth — 'la vivante semoule d'une terre bien ouverte' — in search of an 'original chaos'. This is a chaos which is described not only as life-giving and watery, as 'une retraite sous-marine' but, as Arnold explains with reference to the original version of the poem, it was originally likened explicitly to 'une femme noire'. It is to this feminized earth that the hero addresses his command: 'choses écartez-vous faites place entre vous/place à mon repos qui porte en vague/ma terrible crête de racines ancreuses/qui cherche ou se prendre/...je pèse et je force et j'arcane/j'omphale' (Aimé Césaire, 'Corps perdu', in Aimé Césaire, *The Collected Poetry*, ed., Clayton Eshelman and Annette Smith, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, p. 242). By the end of the poem, penetration and ejaculation have once more become the necessary prerequisites both for the rebirth of the hero, and for that of the Antilles themselves: 'je me lèverai un cri si violent/que tout entier j'éclabousserai le ciel.../et par le jet insolent de mon fût blessé et solennel/je commanderai aux îles d'exister ('Corps perdu', p. 244). Similarly, in 'Batouque', originally published in the 1946 collection *Les armes miraculeuses*, we are confronted, as Bernadette Cailler points out, with equally violent images of rebirth: 'the victory is that of the black Sun which is going to strangle, cut up, rape, the night of the islands... and impregnate it' (Bernadette Cailler, *Proposition poétique: une lecture de l'oeuvre d'Aimé Césaire*, Sherbrooke, Québec: Naaman, 1976, p. 73. Cited in Arnold, p. 129).
47. Da Silva, 'La Rêverie de l'eau et de la terre', p. 124.
48. Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, p. 57. Emphasis mine.

49. Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *La jeune née* (Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1978), p. 173. My emphasis.
50. Sartre, 'Orphée Noir', in Senghor, ed., *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache*, pp. ix-xliii (p. xvii).
51. Elleke Boehmer, 'Stories of Women and of Mothers: Gender and Nationalism in the Early Fiction of Flora Nwapa', in Susheila Nasta, ed., *Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia* (London: The Women's Press, 1991), pp. 3-23 (p. 6).
52. Susheila Nasta,'Introduction', in Nasta, ed., *Motherlands*, p. xv.
53. As Elleke Boehmer has argued in the more general context of nationalist discourses, it has been necessary that the colonized nation in particular represent itself as excessively masculine; that its heroes, like those of negritude poetry, are phallic, thrusting, a 'rising strength' in Boemher's words. This becomes especially pertinent when it is remembered that the colonized nation is typically represented as passive, inert, weak, disordered: as feminine. It is unsurprising that, faced with the gendered discourses of colonialism, anti-colonial discourses such as negritude should also '[rely] heavily on gendered languages to imagine itself' (Elleke Boemher, 'Stories of Women and Mothers', pp. 7-8). For similar discussions of the gendering of nationalist discourses, see also Susheila Nasta, ed., *Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia* and Andrew Parker; Mary Russo; Doris Sommer; Patricia Yaeger, eds, *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1992).
54. As Irigaray explains, she is not referring, in the use of this term, to homosexuality as a sexual practice: 'partout régnante, *mais interdite dans son usage*, l'hom(m)o-sexualité se joue à travers les corps des femmes, matière ou signe, et l'hétérosexualité n'est jusqu'à présent qu'un alibi à la bonne marche des rapports de l'homme à lui-même, des rapports entre hommes' (Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, p. 168, emphasis mine). Though Irigaray's term, it would seem, is intended to include a critique of the heterosexism of patriarchal social structures, some feminist critics and theorists have rejected it as a homophobic term itself. Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick, for example, discussing patriarchal organization in a similar way, amends Irigaray's term to 'homosocial' — precisely in order to rid it of heterosexist and homophobic associations (Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
55. Toril Moi, cited in Lemuel Johnson, 'A-Beng: (Re)calling the body In(to) Question', in Boyce Davies and Savory Fido, eds, *Out of the Kumbla*, pp. 111-42 (p. 115).
56. As I have explained in the introduction I am, of course, aware that negritude as a 'patriarchal discursive construct' does not operate in the same way as those Western patriarchal discourses upon which Irigaray's analyses are based. Different men have different access to 'patriarchal oppression'.
57. Margaret Whitford, ed., *The Irigaray Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 75-76. Whitford's citation from Irigaray here is from 'The power of discourse', p. 123 in the same volume.
58. Irigaray, *Le Corps-à-corps avec la mère*, p. 81.
59. Ibid., p. 20.
60. Ibid., p. 81.
61. Da Silva, 'La Rêverie de l'eau et de la terre', p. 112.
62. Ibid., p. 115.
63. Irigaray, *Speculum.De l'autre femme*, p. 282.
64. Interestingly, in an interview, Condé herself also figures Guadeloupe as 'motherland': 'être femme et Antillaise, c'est un destin difficile à déchiffrer. Pendant un temps, les Antillais ont cru que leur quête d'identité passait par l'Afrique... J'aurais aimé que l'Afrique devienne une mère

adoptive, mais elle ne peut être une mère naturelle. Les Antilles sont ma mère naturelle et c'est avec elles que j'ai des comptes à régler, comme toute fille avec sa mère, avant de devenir entièrement adulte', (Marie-Clotilde Jacquey and Monique Hugon, 'L'Afrique: un continent difficile. Entretien avec Maryse Condé', *Notre Librairie*, 74 (1984), 21-25 (pp. 22-23).

65. Irigaray, *Speculum. De l'autre femme*, p. 47.
66. Irigaray, *Ethique de la différence sexuelle*, p. 101.
67. This term, as Margaret Whitford explains, is used by Irigaray to describe women's state of abandonment within the patriarchal symbolic order: 'Irigaray also defines it as the original state of loss and separation constituted by being born..., losing one's original home. But her main point is that the symbolic provides alternative homes for men, while women lack an adequate symbolization to house them' (Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*, London: Routledge, 1991, p. 205).
68. Jane Marcus, 'Alibis and Legends: The Ethics of Elsewhereness, Gender and Estrangement', in Broe and Ingram, eds, *Women's Writing in Exile*, pp. 269-94 (p. 276).
69. See 'Le Corps-à-corps avec la mère' and 'Les Femmes-mères: ce sous-sol muet de l'ordre social', both in *Le Corps-à-corps avec la mère*, as well as Irigaray's *Ethique de la différence sexuelle*, in particular the essays 'L'amour de soi' and 'L'amour du même, l'amour de l'Autre'.
70. Elaine Savory Fido, 'Mother/lands: Self and Separation in the work of Buchi Emecheta, Bessie Head and Jean Rhys', in Nasta, ed., *Motherlands*, pp. 330-49 (p. 343).
71. I borrow this term from Susan Hardy Aiken, 'Writing (in) Exile: Isak Dinesen and the Poetics of Displacement', in Broe and Ingram, eds, *Women's Writing in Exile*, pp. 113-32 (p. 114).
72. Janice Lee Liddell, 'The Narrow Enclosure of Motherhood/Martyrdom: A Study of Gatha Randall Barton in Sylvia Wynter's *The Hills of Hebron*', in Boyce Davies and Savory Fido, eds, *Out of the Kumbla*, pp. 321-30 (pp. 321-22).
73. Liddell, ibid., p. 321. Véronica, too, is confronted with the reality of maternity, for not only does she see Oumou Hawa constantly encumbered by her role as mother, but as she comments in relation to Sory's sister, Ramatoulaye: 'outre ses cinq enfants, elle élève deux enfants d'une soeur cadette qui a perdu son mari, un bon à rien, plus trois enfants d'un frère de son mari' (*Heremakhonon*, p. 114).
74. Johnson, 'A-Beng', p. 136.
75. Jane Marcus, 'Alibis and Legends', pp. 272-73.
76. Marcus, ibid., p. 273.
77. Marcus, ibid., p. 273.
78. Cixous and Clément, *La jeune née*, p. 173. Emphasis mine
79. According to Carole Boyce Davies, 'the house as source of self-definition' is a common trope in Caribbean women's literature in general (Boyce Davies, 'Writing Home: Gender and Heritage in the Works of Afro-Caribbean/American Women Writers', in Boyce Davies and Savory Fido, eds, *Out of the Kumbla* (pp. 59-74), p. 67). Certainly, it is a theme which recurs in the work of Warner-Vieyra, and although it is most obvious in *Une Saison à Rihata*, Condé also makes use of it in *Heremakhonon*, in which Véronica is repeatedly seen waiting in Sory's house for his return. This house, with its Malinke name, 'Heremakhonon', and its traditional decor and furnishings, is depicted precisely as Véronica's desired source of self-definition through Sory, and is the site of her usually solitary self-questioning about her quest for identity in Africa.
80. Evelyn O'Callaghan, 'Interior Schisms Dramatised: The Treatment of the "Mad" Woman in the Work of Some Female Caribbean Novelists', in Boyce Davies and Savory Fido, eds, *Out of the Kumbla*, pp. 89-110 (p. 107). O'Callaghan's citation is from Brodber's *Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home* (London: New Beacon, 1980), p. 130.
81. Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, p. 134.

82. For Marie-Hélène, the Church is intimately associated with the Caribbean motherland, since it is perhaps the only element of her Antillean culture which she has retained in Africa, and which sets her apart from the culture and traditions of the Africans around her. Indeed, for her children too — and especially for Christophe, her nephew and stepson — her insistence, each year at Christmas, on visiting the small Catholic church in Rihata is one of the things which continues to mark her as foreign.
83. Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, p. 76. Here, Irigaray is describing the radical potential, precisely, of hysteria.
84. Irigaray, 'Les Femmes-mères: ce sous-sol muet de l'ordre social', p. 86.
85. Irigaray, 'Les Femmes-mères: ce sous-sol muet de l'ordre social', p. 86. As Elleke Boemher points out, in relation specifically to the work of Alice Walker, many women writers, in their attempts to demythologize androcentric representaions of the nation as exploitable mother's body, may choose simply to *re*mythologize it as a nourishing mother for women. As Boemher asks: 'how are such myths, such apparently redemptive symbols, to be separated from those which continue to shore up patriarchal desire and a system of gendered national authority?' (Boemher, 'Stories of Women and Mothers', p. 9).
86. See Irigaray, *Ethique de la différence sexuelle*, p. 106, as well as Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*, p. 78.
87. Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, p. 193.

# THREE

## THE CONTINUING QUEST FOR ORIGINS — HISTORY AS FILIATION

As we shall see during the course of this chapter, the quest for Africa, whether that of the negritude poets, or that of more recent writers such as Condé, by no means represents the ultimate manifestation of the Antillean preoccupation with origins. The obsessive search for the motherland which characterizes all of the texts examined in the previous chapter, is but part of the Antillean desire to situate him or herself outside of a relationship with Europe. The positing of Africa as nurturing, maternal source, it would seem, fails to constitute an adequate rehabilitation of lost origins. As Condé herself has pointed out, the sense of non-belonging which haunts the Antillean of slave ancestry manifests itself not only as a feeling of exile or homelessness but also — and perhaps fundamentally — as a feeling of *bâtardise*: of 'illegitimacy'.

This sense of *bâtardise*, like that of 'homelessness', is one which quite obviously afflicts a transplanted people — and especially when that people is itself made up of several quite distinct peoples who share neither the same language nor belief system. As Condé explains, since slaves were typically separated from their own people upon arrival in the Caribbean, disparate tribal beliefs slowly disappeared. For Condé, the most harmful effect of this situation was that it left Antilleans of African descent not simply with no sense of a *place* of origin, but also with no shared *explanation* of origins, with 'aucun *mythe* d'origine, aucune généalogie de héros ou de rois semi-légendaires'.[1]

Edouard Glissant, on several occasions, makes a similar point. For him, too, what is vital to any community or people is a myth of origins which is not simply concerned with locating what may be called the 'primordial source' of that people, but which is concerned also with providing 'l'expliqué fondamental, l'écho de la Genèse'.[2] That is, it is necessary that a myth of origins should furnish a community with:

Une raison d'être sur la terre où elle est, qui devient son territoire... [et] par laquelle... on s'exprime que, de tout temps, on a été sur ce territoire, et que par conséquent, on détient la légitimité de la possession de la terre.[3]

As Glissant goes on to explain, such 'legitimation' of a people's existence is one which requires, most fundamentally of all, '*une filiation* avec légitimité'[4] — a clear line of descent which may be traced back to an original Ancestor. Within the Western tradition — and, as Glissant points out, 'c'est elle qui nous surdétermine ici'[5] — the biblical model prevails: the original Ancestor must be a *Father*-Ancestor, for only a paternal line of descent is able to guarantee the legitimacy of a people.

It is thus perhaps unsurprising that within the Antillean literary tradition, the recurring theme of the quest for motherland is accompanied by the equally recurring theme of the quest for the Father-Ancestor. As Eloïse Brière has pointed out, Antillean literature is marked indelibly by 'le discours du père absent'.[6] The 'inquiétude généalogique' of the Antillean descended from slavery finds its literary expression in the heroic attempts of the 'orphan' or 'bastard' figure to trace both his own family's genealogy, and that of an entire commmunity or even people, back to the primal, African Ancestor. This, indeed, is the overriding theme of the texts which will be examined in this chapter. Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Ti Jean L'horizon*[7] and Condé's *Les Derniers Rois Mages*,[8] though written thirteen years apart, and though stylistically very different, are important and complementary literary explorations of the Antillean 'inquiétude généalogique'.

Each of these texts follows the quest of an Antillean both for his lost father and for his people's origins — a quest necessitated precisely by a sense of *bâtardise*, and by an apparent inability to move forward without first gaining proof of legitimate ancestry. At the same time, as we shall see, each text examines the limits and complexities of this Antillean quest, and the way in which it is bound up not only with questions of literal legitimacy, but also (and consequently) with questions of history and of writing. As may perhaps be expected — and especially given the very evident movement of both authors

away from female-centred texts — each novel also explores the way in which the quest for the Father-Ancestor is one which is every bit as masculine as is that for the African motherland.[9] This particular search for identity, too, is seen to be the affair of Africa's exiled sons — a fact which is shown to have serious implications as far as the maternal genealogies discussed in the previous chapter are concerned.

As Zimra has demonstrated in great detail, Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Ti Jean L'horizon* is exemplary as a text in which the Antillean drama of lost origins and genealogical quest is played out.[10] Set in Guadeloupe, unlike any of the novels examined in previous chapters, *Ti Jean L'horizon* explores the relationship between the two separated communities of Fond-Zombi: En-bas, which has lost sight almost entirely of its origins, and En-haut, which has remained acutely aware that it is directly descended from African peoples brought to the Caribbean during slavery. It is through the people of En-haut, steeped as they are in the traditions of Africa, and especially through their leader Wademba, 'le dernier nègre d'Afrique' (*Ti Jean*, p. 55), that issues of origins, legitimacy and paternity are first introduced — via the issue of naming.

Crucially, we are introduced to Wademba before we are told his name: the importance of the name itself is thus effectively highlighted. Having heard of his power and his greatness, we are told:

> L'homme portait le nom de Wademba, le nom-là même qu'il avait ramené de l'Afrique dans les cales d'un bateau négrier. Mais depuis qu'on le savait immortel, les gens du plateau l'appelaient bonnement le Vert, ou bien le Congre vert aussi, parce qu'il s'était lové sur ces hauteurs comme un congre vert au creux de son roc, et rien ne l'en délogerait plus... Wademba avait le visage immobile des siens et leurs pommettes larges, ocrées, leurs yeux imprenables. (Ti Jean, p. 16)

It is Wademba's name which assures him of his African ancestry, which proves the fact of his belonging to an ancient people. What is more, it is his name which enables him to trace his line of descent — and therefore also that of his people — back to 'le Vieux-pays' (*Ti Jean*, pp. 55-6). It is this line of descent itself which, before he dies and leaves Fond-Zombi for Africa,[11] Wademba must

ensure is in safe hands: he must ensure that he provides both himself and his people with a descendant who will continue to link them back to Africa and who, moreover, will provide a link between the estranged peoples of 'En-haut' and 'En-bas'.

As mother of his son — for it must necessarily be a son to whom the genealogy is entrusted — Wademba chooses his own daughter Awa and, marrying her off to Jean L'horizon from En-bas before 'spiritually' impregnating her himself, he then insists that his son take not his own name, 'un nom d'Afrique' (*Ti Jean*, p. 28), but that of his stepfather. In so doing, Wademba ensures both the purity of his lineage — Ti Jean is at once his son and his grandson — and that his descendant is the archetypal Antillean orphan-bastard, a position which will in turn ensure that he is willing to carry out the quest which Wademba has planned for him. This is a quest about which Ti Jean learns as his (grand)father lays dying, but upon which he does not embark until, several years later, a huge Beast descends upon the village of Fond-Zombi and eats the sun, plunging everything into darkness. Realising that it is he who must try and liberate the sun, for Guadeloupe and for the entire world, Ti Jean enters the Beast's mouth, but once there his mission undergoes a radical transformation, for he finds himself, magically, in Africa — literally in 'le ventre maternel' of the negritude quest for motherland. For the moment, he forgets his mission to liberate Guadeloupe from darkness and becomes entirely sidetracked by a search for his grandfather's village of Obanishé, for his African origins, and for a legitimate, African name. That is, he embarks upon the quest that Wademba had told him about on his deathbed, as he himself prepared to return to Obanishé:

Si tu te présentes un jour là-bas, toi ou ton fils ou ton petit-fils, jusqu'à la millième génération, il vous suffira de dire que votre ancêtre se nommait Wademba pour être accueillis comme des frères... car j'appartiens à un sang très lourd et pesant, un sang de très longue mémoire et qui n'oublie rien, pas même le passage d'un oiseau dans le ciel... Obanishé, souviens-toi... sur la boucle du Niger... (*Ti Jean*, pp. 65-6)

As we shall see later, however, it is a quest which proves to be much more complicated than either Ti Jean or Wademba could have imagined.

Ti Jean's quest is manifestly that of an illegitimate, Antillean son not only for his own, legitimate, African origins but also, if we remember that he is actually from 'En-bas', for an explanation of those of his people. As we have seen, his is a people which has forgotten its African past: for the majority of the inhabitants of 'En-bas', disparate and half-believed stories have gradually taken the place of actual explanations of origins. These may be 'des contes': 'des histoires d'animaux d'Afrique, histoires de lièvres et de tortues, d'araignées qui agissaient et pensaient comme les hommes, et mieux qu'eux, à l'occasion' (*Ti Jean*, p. 14) or, like those told by Awa to Ti Jean, stories of spirits and zombis, of creatures that are half-man and half-God (*Ti Jean*, p. 104). Alternatively, they may be stories about Wademba himself, stories again told by Awa to Ti Jean, but also told by all of the inhabitants of Fond-Zombi — of 'En-bas' and of 'En-haut'. While for some, Wademba remains an Ancestor whom they can remember, for others he is a more ancient, more mythical Creator-figure '[qui] avait fait la pluie et le beau temps, là-haut, depuis l'entaille de terre rouge du plateau' (*Ti Jean*, p. 37). 'Certains villageois', however, 'avaient été jusqu'à mettre en doute la réalité de ces histoires' (*Ti Jean*, p. 15). For them, stories about Wademba are pure fiction, little more than '[une] simple histoire de parler, d'enjoliver leurs craintes anciennes pour rehausser la vie...' (*Ti Jean*, p. 37).

As Ti Jean's quest continues, it becomes possible to imagine that part of his project is to prove the veracity of these many stories and legends, for if he succeeds, he will have provided his people with a definitive explanation, even myth, of origins to take the place of these confused and often contradictory stories. This aspect of Ti Jean's quest, though it is not made explicit within the novel, is important because it can be seen to coincide with the project of Schwarz-Bart herself. It must be remembered that, along with what Condé identifies as 'les contes animaliers' ('des histoires d'animaux d'Afrique' told in Fond-Zombi), there are numerous 'contes à personnages humains' which

continue to circulate in the Antilles — the most widespread and most varied of which is, of course, that of Ti Jean.[12]

Thus Schwarz-Bart's text belongs to a cycle of tales about Ti Jean, and is but one version in a long tradition of stories which, in various forms, tell of the Antillean quest for origins. Indeed, we are reminded of this at various points in the text: the story of Losiko-Siko, told to Ti Jean by the deformed woman who remembers it from her native village in Africa, is one which turns out to be his own (*Ti Jean,* p. 204). Similarly, when Ti Jean journeys to France and tells his story to Eusèbe l'Ancien, Eusèbe remarks: 'c'était comme s'il avait déjà entendu une version de l'histoire, comme si les paroles de Ti Jean étaient déjà tombées dans le creux de sa cervelle, en un autre temps, un autre monde peut-être' (*Ti Jean*, pp. 243-4). When these explicit references to the Ti Jean cycle of tales itself are added to the numerous references made by Schwarz-Bart to other popular figures from Antillean *contes* (Maman Dlo, Ananzé), it becomes possible to imagine the scope of Schwarz-Bart's project. If Ti Jean goes in search of origins, then Schwarz-Bart herself may be seen to be utilising what Zimra calls 'the collective memory of the folktale'[13] in order to create an Antillean myth of origins for her people, a people still collectively haunted by a sense of *bâtardise*. Indeed, for both Schwarz-Bart and for Condé, the folktale is of primary importance in the Antilles precisely because while no origin myths survived the journey from Africa to the Antilles, many *contes* did — and especially those which, like the Ti Jean cycle, belonged to several parts of Africa, and to several peoples.[14] For both women, as for Zimra, the *conte*, in its many forms, can be seen to have taken the place of the origin myth in the Antilles.

This, too, is the contention of Glissant, though he is careful to point out first that Antillean folktales, in their existing form, can in no way be seen to constitute actual origin myths. As he demonstrates, though they often thematize the search for origins, the majority of *contes* remain unconcerned with *explaining* origins, and are primarily 'des contes sarcastiques, caustiques, sceptiques'.[15] For both Glissant and Condé, Antillean folktales have developed

as a reaction against the effacement of origins, against the brutality of slavery, as strategies of resistance and even revolt. They are tales of ruse and of trickery and, crucially, 'de la survie en milieu hostile et semé d'embûches'.[16] As Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant explain: 'face à la mort réelle et à la mort symbolique des esclaves, [le conte] incite à ne pas arrêter la vie, à ne pas soumettre au silence des afflictions, et, dans cette vie ressaisie, *à vouloir exister*'. For this reason, as they also point out, the very act of tale telling, on the Plantation and at night, may be seen to have represented an act of resistance and survival arguably far more immediately necessary than was an explanation of origins.[17]

However, for Glissant, the *conte* nonetheless remains the vital starting point for current attempts by Antillean writers to invent an explanation of origins for their people. As he explains in a discussion of the development of coherent origin myths in other, more 'established' cultures:

> On a commencé par entasser les grandes oeuvres de l'oralité. Et c'est ce qui a donné, à mon avis, les livres fondateurs de l'humanité, qui sont les livres des commencements des peuples, tels que... l'Ancien Testament, les livres homériques..., le Popol-Vuh des Amérindiens.[18]

For Glissant, and this perhaps further elucidates Schwarz-Bart's own apparent use of the Antillean folktale, it is necessary not only to gather together 'les grandes oeuvres de l'oralité' but, crucially, it is necessary also to write them down, to create 'les *livres* fondateurs' with which a people may unequivocally define itself. For Glissant, the movement from *conte* to origin myth is, vitally, a movement from the oral to the written.[19]

The importance of this movement from oral *conte* to written origin myth, for Glissant, lies not simply in the fact of a people's need for a 'livre fondateur', but also in that to which the 'livre fondateur' may subsequently give rise. According to Glissant, the founding text, the attempt to explain origins, represents no less than the first manifestation of 'la conscience historique, encore naïve' of a given people.[20] More than this, 'le mythe non seulement préfigure l'histoire et est parfois producteur de l'histoire mais semble préparer l'Histoire'.[21] That is, as

Glissant explains more specifically elsewhere, 'la source, en Occident, de l'Histoire... c'est le Mythe fondateur'.[22] This second movement of progression, from myth to history, is one which is of crucial importance, as Glissant goes on to explain, because of the way in which Western discourses of exploration and 'New World' discovery have defined the Antilles as 'historyless'; have confined them to a state of 'prehistory' before the advent of colonialism.[23]

Glissant's crucial analysis of the problem of history in the Antilles — his explanation of the way in which the 'New World' in general has been defined as historyless because it possesses no form of history as the West has defined it — is useful and informative here. For him, Western, colonial history is 'l'Histoire [qui] s'écrit avec un grand H': linear, all-encompassing, written history, 'une totalité qui exclut les histoires non-concomitantes de celle de l'Occident'.[24] That which is excluded is 'l'*h*istoire', what Brière calls 'l'histoire non-officielle... [de] la tradition orale'.[25] It is this which has failed to be defined as 'History', and precisely because it has not been written down, because it has not followed the Western model of historical development: from oral story, to origin myth, to written, official, legitimate history.

For Glissant, the Antilles have continued to exist in a state of 'non-histoire' because this 'unofficial' history has not been allowed to develop, to 'settle', '"sédimenter", si on peut ainsi dire, de manière progressive et continue, comme chez... les Européens'.[26] As Zimra puts it, the Antilles have been systematically 'refused the right to their own historicity'.[27] That 'Antillean' history which does exist, which has been written down is, of course, simply part of official, Western History: Antillean history has been successfully subsumed within official historical discourses. Consequently for Glissant, Antillean history can be reduced to a chronology of events which come from 'elsewhere', from France, and towards the beginning of *Le Discours antillais*, he sets out just such a chronology of Martinican history: from its 'discovery' in 1502, to departmentalisation in 1946 and the doctrine of economic assimilation in 1975. He then writes: 'une fois ce tableau chronologique dressé, complété, tout reste à débrouiller de l'histoire martiniquaise'.[28]

This, indeed, is Schwarz-Bart's point throughout *Ti Jean*. From the beginning, we are made aware of the 'historylessness' of 'l'île où se déroule cette histoire': 'une lèche de terre sans importance [dont] l'histoire a été jugée une fois pour toutes insignifiante par les spécialistes' (*Ti Jean*, p. 9). After having been presented with a brief survey of the pre-colonial and colonial history of Guadeloupe, 'ce pays perdu', we are told that 'les nègres de Fond-Zombi ne pensaient pas qu'il s'y trouve un seul événement digne d'être retenu' (*Ti Jean*, p. 11). For the inhabitants of 'En-bas', in particular, rumours about the past remain rumours: 'ils ne pouvaient s'agir de vrais événements car, enfin, en quels livres étaient-ils écrits?' (*Ti Jean*, p. 15). Guadeloupe represents, throughout Schwarz-Bart's text, simply 'cette tranche du monde qui ne figurait pas dans les livres de l'école, car les blancs avaient décidé de jeter un voile par-dessus' (*Ti Jean*, p. 42).

It is precisely this sense of 'historylessness' which has given rise, as Glissant, Condé and Schwarz-Bart all point out, to the strongest sense of cultural illegitimacy in the Antilles, and to the concomitant obsession with legitimation. Indeed, it is for this reason that the creation of coherent origin myths is of such importance: not only in order to explain the origins of a people, but in order also that the vital movement from unofficial 'history' to 'History' may be effected in the Antilles. In other words, in order that unofficial 'history' may be 'legitimated', *written down*, and therefore passed into the realms of official History, as an alternative or counter-history. Lauren Yoder, citing Mircea Eliade, makes just such a point about the dual importance of the myth of origins: 'ce désir d'un retour aux origines, d'un recouvrement d'une situation primordiale, dénote... le désir de *recommencer* l'histoire' — that is, as Yoder explains, to refuse 'the traditional historical past'.[29]

For Glissant, this is the necessary project of the Antillean writer not simply of history, but — like Schwarz-Bart — of literature. As he explains, myth is the realm in which history and literature first come together: it represents not only 'le premier donné de la conscience historique', but also 'la matière première de l'ouvrage littéraire'.[30] Literary texts are therefore a quite necessary part of the

attempt to effect a movement of progression, in the Antilles, from the unofficial history of myth to the official History sanctioned by the written word. As we shall see, this would seem precisely to be Condé's own project, following that of Schwarz-Bart, in *Les Derniers Rois Mages*.

## FROM 'HISTORY' TO 'HISTORY'

Like *Ti Jean*, Condé's novel focuses upon the life of a central, male character, Spéro, and is a story of masculine quest and paternal genealogies, of a Guadeloupean's search for his own and his family's legitimate origins in Africa and a legitimate African ancestor like Wademba. What is more, although this Ancestor remains nameless throughout — and this itself is of vital importance to his descendants' quest — he is, like Ti Jean, a figure already present within the Antillean imagination. An African king who was exiled from his kingdom of Dahomey to Martinique in 1894, and who died in Algeria several years later (*Rois Mages*, p. 18), this ancestor would seem to be 'Béhanzin: Roi du Dahomey, [qui] s'opposa à la pénétration française en Afrique. Exilé en Martinique' — a figure who may or may not have existed, '[mais qui] rôde encore dans nos inconscients'.[31] Like Schwarz-Bart, Condé takes a figure who is part of unofficial, Antillean 'history' and, as we shall see, builds around him — and writes down — a 'myth' of Antillean origins. More than Schwarz-Bart, however, this process of 'double legitimation' — this desire both to trace a line of descent back to its legitimate origin, and then to write down the story of that descent, to transform it into the beginnings of an alternative version of History — can be seen not only to be the project of Condé's novel, but to be thematized also within the text itself.

*Les Derniers Rois Mages* takes up the story of this king's imagined, illegitimate Antillean descendants — of his son Djéré, of Djéré's son Justin, and of Justin's son Spéro, from whose perspective we, as readers, follow the story. Spéro's account begins with the story of Djéré, whose memory of his father is one which is associated with trauma — with the first great trauma of his own life, and with the New World trauma *par excellence* of illegitimacy, exile and

abandonment. Born of the Ancestor's liaison with his Martinican mother, Hosannah, Djéré is then taken by her to live in Guadeloupe with Romulus — like Jean L'horizon an Antillean stepfather — where he waits in vain for his real father to claim and legitimate him. As he grows older, Djéré seeks solace in memories not simply of his father but, more specifically, of the stories which he told to him — African stories of animals and of origins like those which circulate in Ti Jean's village, and stories which, crucially, Djéré begins to write down. Indeed, it is this which brings him the greatest sense of relief from the trauma of his illegitimacy: writing down his family history endows it, for him, with a sense, precisely, of authenticity and 'legitimacy'.

Parts of what have become known, within the family, as *Les Cahiers de Djéré* are included within Condé's text, as Spéro himself rereads them. The first, perhaps unsurprisingly entitled 'Les Origines', is a myth of origins written down by Djéré from the version told to him by his father, and it explains both the genesis of the world, and of the Ancestor's people:

> La forêt secoue son feuillage et souffle: 'Je suis la plus vieille'. Et c'est vrai qu'elle a toujours été là, la forêt... Dans la forêt, il n'y a pas de saison sèche. L'eau est partout. Elle tombe d'en haut, elle flotte dans l'air, elle clapote sur la terre où les larves pullulent... Un jour la forêt a écarté ses cuisses. Et une à une, une à une, les cases rondes avec les toits de paille ont tombées de son ventre... Ce fut le premier village des Aladahonu. (*Rois Mages*, pp. 87-8)

The story continues by recounting the origins of this people's primal ancestor Tengisu, 'le fondateur' (*Rois Mages*, p. 91), son of the queen's daughter Posu Adewene and Agasu, the panther feared by the village. It is this origin story which both unites the community, and forms a bond between this particular father and son: it ensures that Djéré feels himself to be a part of the Ancestor's people, 'le fils de la Panthère' (*Rois Mages*, p. 92).

The precise importance of this link with the Panther-as-Ancestor, however, is revealed in the next extract from the *Cahiers*, which is entitled 'Totem et Tabou'. Indeed, it becomes clear that the origin myth of *Cahier* number one is itself the story of the birth of a *totemic* genealogy which this *Cahier* simply

continues and consolidates. Its title of course recalls that of Freud's study of the same name in which, especially in his final essay 'The Return of Totemism in Childhood', the idea of totemism has been most famously worked out.[32] Here, Freud explains totemism to be a ritualistic link between a particular clan and a particular species of animal, in which the clan may adopt the name of the totem animal — as does the Ancestor's people that of the Panther — and then pass the clan totem, by inheritance, from generation to generation.[33]

Freud observes that 'the members of the totemic clan often believe that they are related to the totem animal by the bond of a common ancestry'[34] — a belief which is made evident in the case of the Ancestor's clan by the story of the panther Agasu's relationship with Posu Adewene. The key to Condé's apparent attention to Freud's text, however, and to the importance of the idea of totemism in her own text, would seem to lie in the emphasis given by those theories discussed by Freud not only to the idea of totemic ancestry, but also to that of nomenclature, 'the core of totemism'.[35] As in Schwarz-Bart's text, the issue of naming, as we shall see, is vital to the drama of illegitimacy, legitimacy and paternity around which *Les Derniers Rois Mages* revolves.

In a discussion of the work of Andrew Lang on the subject, Freud explains that 'Primitive races (as well as modern savages and even our own children) do not, like us, regard names as something indifferent and conventional, but as significant and essential. A man's name is a principal component of his personality, perhaps even a portion of his soul'.[36] His, or Lang's, theory is that totemism arose as a phenomenon because 'the origin of names had been forgotten' by the clan. That the clan bore the name of an animal was thus interpreted as an indicator of common ancestry with that animal:

> The fact of a primitive man bearing the same name as an animal must lead him to assume the existence of a mysterious and significant bond between himself and that particular species of animal. What other bond could there be other than that of blood relationship?[37]

A shared name, then, is of primary importance: it enables a relationship, a lineage, to be traced: in this case back to an animal ancestor like the Panther. It

enables, in other words, the legitimation of a given clan: a genealogy can be traced back to specific origins. This, then, is the significance of the Ancestor's insistence, to Djéré, on the importance of his people's link with the Panther. The Panther has, in fact, become the Father-Ancestor of the clan: for Freud too, the totem animal crucially represents a substitute for the 'original Father'.

For Freud, however, it is possible also eventually to trace a movement away from the worship of the totem animal as father-surrogate, and towards that of an Ancestor in which 'the Father has regained his human shape'.[38] Indeed for Freud, this is the origin of organized religion, of the ritualized worship of 'the Father': calling God the Father amounts to the same thing as calling the totem animal the Ancestor, it is but the next, logical, step.[39] Most crucial to our examination of Condé's text, however, is Freud's suggestion that this movement from animal-worship to the worship of 'God' is most likely to occur if 'in the process of time *some fundamental change had taken place in man's relation to the father*, and perhaps, too, in his relation to animals'.[40]

In *Les Derniers Rois Mages*, such a 'fundamental change' did, indeed, occur: 'l'Ancêtre', an African king legitimately descended from the Panther, was exiled to Martinique and an illegitimate, Antillean line of descent was begun. The effect of this for that Antillean line of descent, was the loss of the name-link with the Panther-Ancestor: if 'l'Ancêtre' remains nameless throughout, it is because neither Djéré nor his descendants know, or possess, his clan name. They have been given, instead, the name of 'Jules-Juliette' — the illegitimate 'nom bien martiniquais' of Djéré's mother (*Rois Mages*, p. 127). In accordance with Freud's theory, it is at this point that a movement away from animal-worship and towards the veneration of a Father-Ancestor in human form, takes place. What is more, the family's veneration of 'l'Ancêtre' bears the signs, precisely, of organized religion, for they elevate him to a God-like status and celebrate a Mass in his honour each December. Even more than this, the *Cahiers* themselves can be seen to fulfil a function similarly associated with organized religion: like 'le livre fondateur d'un peuple', they come to replace both the oral stories of the Panther's clan and the name-link with the Panther, as

that which is handed down from generation to generation of the Antillean descendants as 'proof' of legitimacy.

It is via the *Cahiers* that Djéré's son Justin finally becomes seriously interested in his father's stories of an African Ancestor, and it is when Justin finds them, after his father's death, that he begins both to believe Djéré's stories and to envisage a way in which to avenge his unhappy life: by publishing the *Cahiers* and thus filling the gap in the history books that he has read in the Schoelcher library. His aim, it would seem, is precisely to transform 'un livre fondateur' into counter-history; to challenge and to redefine (colonial) History by legitimating what is at once a story of illegitimacy and an illegitmate (hi)story. Such a project can, of course, be undertaken only by sending the *Cahiers* to a publishing house in Paris — a task which was itself to prove impossible at that time because of World War II. Justin quite rightly assumes that 'France' will have more pressing concerns than the story of an exiled African king and his Antillean descent, caught up as it is in the recording of still more official, European History (*Rois Mages*, p. 58).

Justin therefore postpones his plans for publication, but he nevertheless brings up his own son Spéro in the cult of the Ancestor, telling him stories from the *Cahiers* and teaching him to venerate a prized family possession: a photograph of Djéré with the Ancestor. Indeed Justin chooses Spéro, and not one of his other sons, to continue the cult of the Ancestor because he is convinced, when Spéro is born, that he bears the mark of the Panther, for he is 'couvert de taches sombres tout le long du dos' (*Rois Mages*, p. 59). These marks move Justin to circumcize his son and to mark his forehead with 'les incisions rituelles que portait son père', incisions which represent 'les trois griffes de la Panthère' (*Rois Mages*, p. 68). These markings are all that remains of the lost link with the Panther, and they are thus a vital means of ensuring that the Antillean descendants remain linked with their African Ancestor. It is not until he learns of the exiled king in a history lesson at school, however, that Spéro himself becomes obsessed with the Ancestor, and with proving a link between History and his own family's story. After fruitlessly searching libraries

and history books for an official reference to his family, Spéro eventually seeks out a Parisian historian who is an expert on 'les rois-dieux de Bénin' (*Rois Mages*, p. 21), and presents him with the photograph of Djéré, as a baby, with the king, his wives, and their children.

For this historian, however, the photograph is insufficient proof of a relationship between Djéré and the king: the only acceptable proof, for him, would be furnished by a birth certificate bearing the name of the Ancestor, or a record of the birth in the existing historical accounts of the period. And it is here not only that the full weight of official History is brought to bear upon Spéro's quest, but also that the inextricability of personal and historical 'legitimacy' is made painfully evident. First, no such birth certificate exists, for as we have seen, Djéré was registered under his mother's name of Jules-Juliette. At the same time, no such historical record exists because, as we now learn, the official account of the Ancestor's life has been authored by his legitimate son, Ouanilo who, according to this historian, 'a tenu le journal très fidèle des dernières années de son père... [et n'a] jamais fait mention de cette naissance' (*Rois Mages*, p. 127). As we know from a different part of the narrative, however, this official account — as if emblematic of official History as a whole — is far from disinterested, for according to Djéré, Ouanilo had always openly despised Djéré's Martinican mother Hosannah.

Legitimate history and legitimate personal genealogy are therefore not only explicitly linked, but they are shown to amount, in this particular Antillean quest for origins, to the 'same' thing. While Ouanilo's personal legitimacy guarantees the veracity of his historical account, for Djéré (and his descendants), personal and historical 'illegitimacy' are mutually obstructive. If Spéro is unable to prove the legitimacy of his own family's relationship with the Ancestor, then it will remain equally impossible for him to legitimate his alternative history — to transform the *Cahiers* from 'livre fondateur' into counter-History. Indeed, it becomes clear that it is precisely because the *Cahiers* themselves do not really constitute 'le livre fondateur' of *Spéro's* people — the explanation of his personal genealogy — that he is unable to effect this transformation. Though

they may explain the origins of the Panther's clan, for Djéré's family — as Spéro himself realizes — they represent little more than the explanation of a people's *loss* of origins, 'le récit d'une défaite, d'une dépossession et d'un exil qui n'avait pas connu la fin. Ce n'était pas seulement l'ancêtre qui avait perdu son bien. Mais Djéré. Justin. Et lui pour finir' (*Rois Mages*, pp. 147-8).

As such, the *Cahiers* are also, of course, the story of the Antillean people as a whole: Béhanzin, or Condé's evocation of him, is shown to be '[ce] miroir des exilés... [qui] erre dans nos semblants'.[41] His exile, quite evidently, mirrors that of slavery, and Djéré's loss of the name-link with his clan mirrors the fact that, as Condé points out, 'dans les îles où le Fon côtoyait le Bambara ou le Moudongue dans la même misère... la tribu est détruite'.[42] In both cases, imprecise memories of an African past remain, but links with a specific tribe, and much less with a specific ancestor, are irretrievably obliterated. As Glissant points out, the exile of slavery ensures only that 'la linéarité [se] perd... dans un inextricable lacis d'alliances, apparentements et procréations'.[43] This, as we shall examine in more detail later, is precisely Spéro's discovery: that, as both Condé and Glissant pointed out, the Antillean situation *per se* is one of *bâtardise*. What is more, as we shall now see, such is the discovery also of Ti Jean in his own, much more literal quest for the African Ancestor.

## 'LES HÉROS DU TEMPS PASSÉ...'

Almost as soon as Ti Jean arrives in Africa and sets out on the journey to his ancestral village of Obanishé, it becomes evident that Wademba had underestimated what would be involved in his son's quest. He learns almost immediately that Wademba himself has recently passed along the same route, on his own long-awaited 'return' to Obanishé. He learns also, however, that he was neither welcomed nor venerated by the villagers: instead, he was killed, 'fléché' — a fate which, moreover, also awaits Ti Jean. The story which is then told to Ti Jean, of his (grand)father's rejection, is one which itself proves to be of lost and illegitimate lines, of confused and complicated genealogies, of a young Wademba sold into slavery by his own people — themselves already enslaved,

long ago, by a more powerful tribe, the Sonanqués — and forcibly exiled to Guadeloupe. Thus twice enslaved, twice orphaned, and twice illegitimate, it is for this reason that the returning Wademba is killed, and why Ti Jean himself is unwelcome: '"nous sommes des hommes libres, et... il n'y a pas de place ici pour ceux qu'on met dans les cordes"' (*Ti Jean*, p. 149). That he was enslaved by his own people is of no consequence: they are unable to accept those who have been 'dishonoured' by slavery back into the confines of the village. Recalling the experiences of Véronica and Marie-Hélène in Africa, the only advice that Ti Jean is offered is simply: 'retourne parmi les tiens...', and all that he is able to reply is, simply: 'les miens? ne suis-je pas parmi eux?' (*Ti Jean*, p. 148).

Nonetheless convinced that his journey cannot have been in vain, Ti Jean continues to Obanishé and, with the help of the king's son Maïari, he succeeds in being accepted there. Crucially, as a symbol of this acceptance, he is named: Ifu'umwâmi, 'il-dit-oui-à-la-mort-et-non-à-la-vie' (*Ti Jean*, p. 162). He has thus apparently found the African name in search of which Wademba himself sent him, and with it comes the right to belong to an African line of descent and, moreover, to perpetuate that line via the numerous Ba'Sonanqué women that he is given as wives. However, despite these wives, and his many children, Ti-Jean/Ifu'umwâmi never feels that he belongs to the village, for: 'quelle que fût la bienveillance du roi..., pas un grain de terre ne pouvait appartenir à l'étranger qu'il demeurait, pas un tige de chaume sous lequel il dormait, pas une goutte de sang qui coulait dans les veines de ses fils' (*Ti Jean*, pp. 179-80).

Eventually, his non-belonging is discovered and proven and, expelled from Obanishé to wander the underworld, Ti Jean finally begins to understand that slavery does, indeed, render a straightforward genealogical quest back to the African origin impossible. Not only this — and here the double enslavement of Wademba makes the point all the more forcefully — he realizes that such an African origin no longer exists to be discovered, that Wademba — the 'original', African Ancestor in whom the people of 'En-haut' placed so much faith — is in fact a false Father. Rejected as irretrievably illegitimate by his

African ancestors, Wademba, like all Antilleans, is simply one more orphan for whom Africa represents the only apparent possibility of self-legitimation. This, Ti Jean becomes aware, is why, having been swallowed by the Beast, he himself was transported 'magically' to Africa. Not because Africa was his ancestral home but because, like his (grand)father, '[il]... avait trop rêvé à l'Afrique' (*Ti Jean*, p. 186). As he now understands, 'la Bête n'[avait] fait que l'envoyer dans son propre songe, dans le pays même et l'époque qui couraient au plus profond de leur sang' (*Ti Jean*, p.186).

Unlike his (grand)father, and like Spéro instead, Ti Jean begins to understand, and to accept, his Antillean position of *bâtardise*. Like Véronica, he begins to realize that he has mistaken his ancestors, that he has sought them in the wrong place. What is more, as he does so, memories of a different ancestral past, one much more closely linked to Guadeloupe than to Africa, begin to haunt him. These memories take the form, primarily, of stories told to him by Wademba long ago, stories which he had forgotten in his preoccupation with Africa. They are stories of 'des héros du temps passé: Ako, Mindumu, N'Décondé, Djuka le Grand et les autres' (*Ti Jean*, p. 186), of heroic ancestors like Obé, 'un nègre qui vécut autrefois sur ce plateau' (*Ti Jean*, p. 57).[44] As Ti Jean also recalls, it was from Obé, and men like him, that his (grand)father had claimed both his own and his people's ancestry. According to Wademba, all of the families of Fond-Zombi 'descendaient en droit ligne des esclaves qui s'était révoltés autrefois, avaient vécu et étaient morts les armes à la main' (*Ti Jean*, p. 14).

Wademba's people, it thus transpires, are the descendants not simply of a distant, African people but, much more recently, of the maroons — those slaves who, like Obé, escaped from the Plantation to the mountains and forests of Basse-Terre, where the village of Fond-Zombi is now to be found, and who revived and kept alive the African traditions which have since provided them with the sense of rootedness and community destroyed on the Plantation. The importance of Antillean maroon communities, and their role in sustaining African traditions, is an issue which is also discussed by Glissant. For him, however, as for Micheline Rice-Maximin, maroon communities by no means

represented simply an attempt to recreate 'Africa' in a different land. Rather, for them it is possible to see in the maroons' way of life a first attempt at becoming rooted in the new land.[45]

As Glissant explains, the Antillean relationship to the land, to the Caribbean soil, has always been one of dispossession. Transported to the Antilles in order to work the land, that land has never been theirs, it has always been 'à l'autre'.[46] The maroon, however, though also a fundamentally dispossessed figure, has of necessity had a relationship with the land quite unlike that of the slave. For the maroon, the connection with the land has always been intimate, for s/he was forced to know its every contour in order to survive — not only in terms of food but, more, in order to escape and to remain fugitive. It is this connection with the new land, rather than the preservation of traditions from the former land which, when coupled with the maroons' direct action against slavery, makes of the maroon, for Glissant, the primal, Antillean Ancestor. As he explains:

> Il n'en reste pas moins, nous ne le soulignerons jamais assez, que le Nègre marron est le seul vrai héros populaire des Antilles, dont les effroyables supplices qui marquaient sa capture donnent la mesure du courage et de la détermination. Il y a là un exemple incontestable d'opposition systématique, de refus total.[47]

If, for Glissant, the maroon is thus the Antillean Ancestor *par excellence*, the whole history of *marronnage* similarly represents what might be called the 'real' history of Martinique and Guadeloupe. It is this, rather than the myth of a precolonial past in Africa (what may, perhaps, be termed 'l'histoire *africaine* de la Martinique et de la Guadeloupe') which, for Glissant, constitutes 'l'histoire *antillaise* de la Martinique [et de la Guadeloupe]'.[48] What is more, if, as we saw earlier, Guadeloupean and Martinican history does not exist, if it has been erased, or at the very least distorted by official History, it is this 'Antillean' history which, for Glissant, has been subject to the most thorough and the most damaging censorship. As we have seen, Antillean communities like that of 'En-bas' in Fond-Zombi have, however imprecisely, remained aware of the fact of slavery, of the fact of their ancestors' transportation from Africa to the Antilles. It is not this, but rather the history of *marronnage* which has never been allowed

to 'settle' — '"sédimenter" si on peut ainsi dire' — within the Antillean collective memory. In Schwarz-Bart's text, it is this history, more than any other, 'qui ne figurait pas dans les livres d'école, car les blancs avaient décidé de jeter un voile par-dessus' (*Ti Jean*, p. 42).

As Glissant goes on to explain, the idea of *marronnage* as 'contestation culturelle' was slowly eroded by official accounts of the colonial period and an image imposed, instead, of the maroon as 'bandit vulgaire, assassin seulement soucieux de ne pas travailler', 'le croquemitaine scélérat dont on menace les enfants'.[49] It was, of course, vital for the colonial authorities that stories of maroon resistance should be covered over, and that the dispossession of slavery, the exile from Africa as native land, should be maintained at the origin of their life in the Antilles. Only thus could the slaves be convinced of their passivity and their powerlessness, of their inability to survive outside the Plantation in a country not their own. The maroon thus became not a hero for the people but, rather, a somewhat shadowy, largely fictitious character or else a dangerous deviant to be punished. What has remained, quite evidently, is 'une communauté qu'on a dépouillée de ses héros "naturels", populaires, et qui donc, en les reniant sous la pression aliénante de l'action colonialiste, s'est reniée elle-même'.[50] In other words, what has remained, as we have seen, is a community haunted by a sense of *bâtardise*, a community forced to seek its heroic past elsewhere, in a different time and a different place because, as is now clear, it has been deprived of an indigenous, and much more recent heroic past with which to define itself.[51]

If official, colonial History is effectively to be countered, if a specifically Antillean alternative history is to be proposed, it is thus this heroic past which must be reclaimed and revived. It is this story of *marronnage* which, alone, would seem capable of providing an explanation of origins no longer rooted solely in the exile and dispossession of slavery. As Ti Jean discovers, the search for ancestral origins in Africa is one which does not simply prove unsatisfactory, or even impossible, but which serves, perhaps more damagingly, to repeat the colonial gesture of erasing the Antillean past. Just as Ti Jean now

sets about actively remembering his heroic, Antillean ancestry, so Schwarz-Bart herself, it would seem, sets about remembering it too — in order, as we shall see, to create an explanation of origins which affirms rather than denies the black Antillean's relationship with the Caribbean land.

As Ti Jean wanders the underworld, and as he is increasingly haunted by memories of his more recent heroic past, he begins to realize that, as Maïari had advised him when they first met, he must search for a way to return 'parmi les [siens]'. He therefore begins searching not only for a route back to Guadeloupe but for a route back to Fond-Zombi and, more specifically, for 'le sentier d'En-haut' — for the trail of his maroon ancestors (*Ti Jean*, p. 275). It is at this point that Ti Jean finally recalls the real reason for his journey into the stomach of the Beast: to rescue the sun and thus liberate the people of Guadeloupe from darkness. It is only after a long journey, however — from the kingdom of the dead, to France, and then by boat back to Guadeloupe — that Ti Jean finds himself magically outside of the lands contained within the Beast's stomach, and back in the darkness of Fond-Zombi.

It is thus that Ti Jean's quest begins once more as, in a second movement of return which recalls that of the heroes of negritude, he embarks upon another search for the Beast. As he hunts for the Beast, it becomes evident that this is a search which, again like that of the negritude hero, has been enabled by his initial journey to Africa. However disappointing as a quest for lost origins, the journey to Africa, for Ti Jean, proves a vital first stage in his search for self-legitimation. When he finds the Beast, it is upon the advice of those whom he has met on his journey that he draws, and he is finally rewarded by the appearance of 'un globe doré qui écarta les lèvres de la plaie et s'éleva lentement au-dessus des arbres' (*Ti Jean*, p. 278). The restoring of the sun to the sky, however, marks only the beginning of events:

> La plaie s'élargit et une déchirure courut le long de la peau nacrée, y creusant des zones profondes de néant. Comme elle atteignait une mamelle, un lait fluide inonda tout à coup le sol... Aussitôt, effleurées par cette liqueur, les herbes alentour furent en proie à une diablerie, avec frissons et gonflements de sève, poussées de feuilles et de tiges nouvelles. (*Ti Jean*, p. 278)

As the Beast's skin continues to tear, so the earth continues to be made fertile and productive by the milk which flows. One by one:

> Montagnes et vallées, rivières, silhouettes humaines s'échappaient des entrailles de verre, en fumerolles, parmi un débondement et une presse de soleils et de lunes de toutes les couleurs... Penché sur le ventre fertile, Ti Jean n'en finissait pas de suivre la féerie des mondes qui regagnaient leur bercail. (*Ti Jean*, p. 279)

We are thus presented, at last, with a myth of Antillean origins — one which is reminiscent both of the Christian myth of genesis, in which the bestowing of light upon the world signals the origin of that world, and of the African myth of origins told to Djéré by the Ancestor, in which the forest at once gives birth to the world and to the Ancestor's people. Indeed, here, too, we are presented also with an explanation of the birth — or, rather, rebirth — of the Antillean people, for as his world takes shape around him, Ti Jean himself begins to undergo an immense change. Suddenly gripped by overwhelming pain, Ti Jean's body starts to smoke, and then to become transparent, and when he regains consciousness, he realizes that he, too, has been reborn:

> Il s'aperçut qu'une pellicule vitreuse le recouvrait en entier, soulevée par endroits sur des plages de peau lisse et noire. Il contempla un instant sa poitrine intacte, où avait disparu toute trace de la lance des Sonanqués; puis vint au marais, s'y agenouilla doucement pour découvrir l'image d'un adolescent immense, surmonté d'une masse incroyable de cheveux. (*Ti Jean*, p. 279)

After centuries of wandering unknown worlds, he has become young once more, reborn, like the hero of negritude, in and with his native land — intimately connected, like his maroon ancestors, to the Antillean landscape.

What is most significant, of course, is that Ti Jean is not simply created with this new world, as its first man or original inhabitant. Rather, it is he who creates the world: he is a God-like figure, the Father, who brings light to the world — who, in this case, brings the world out of the darkness to which it has been consigned in History.[52] He is at once the original Ancestor and the original Father: an Antillean Ancestor-Father to replace Wademba as guarantor of his people's legitimacy, to ensure that those who come after him are not haunted by

the same, irreparable sense of non-belonging as both himself and those who came before him. Even more significant, however, and especially in the light of the previous chapter, is what may be seen to be at stake in Ti Jean's accession to the position of Ancestor-Father. This Antillean myth of origins is made possible only at some cost: the affirmation of Antillean identity, as in the poetry of negritude, is once more founded upon the exploitation and destruction — or at least the erasure — of what may be termed the 'maternal-feminine'. Ti Jean's rebirth is dependent, it is made clear, upon the sacrifice of the fertile and life-giving female Beast.[53]

Although the maternal role in bringing about the rebirth of both native land and native hero is apparently foregrounded in this myth of origins, it is of course Ti Jean, and not the Beast, who becomes the original Ancestor for the Guadeloupean people. The Beast-mother's role is written out of this myth of origins, just as she herself is destroyed. What is more, it is not only the Beast who is sacrificed in this manner. Everywhere, from Awa his mother, and Egee his childhood friend and then lover, to other women like Onjali, his wife in Africa, to the deformed woman he meets in the kingdom of the dead and 'la Reine-aux-longs-seins' in her cavern, women function solely as helpers and enablers on the hero's journey. Indeed, like the Beast, both Awa and Egee, the women closest to him, must die in order even for Ti Jean's quest to begin.

From the beginning, for example, Awa serves merely as an intermediary in a lineage which is not deemed to be hers, the mediator of the heroic relationship between Wademba and Ti Jean. She is neither consulted about, nor does she play any active part in, her role as mother of a hero — a fact which is manifested in the drama of naming which surrounds Awa just as it surrounds both Ti Jean and Wademba. As Zimra points out, 'Awa' is the African name for Eve, the primal Mother, which in turn confirms Wademba in his role as original Father.[54] However, as she also points out, Awa's name is actually contained within that of *Wa*demb*a*. Even more than this, when Awa is sent to live amongst the people of 'En-bas' she is baptized, and thus renamed, as Eloïse. Both of these facts serve to strip her of her identity as primal Mother, and again place

responsibility for legitimate origins solely in the hands of the father. That she must literally die before Ti Jean's quest may begin is thus but a more manifest signifier of her function throughout.

ILLEGITIMACY AS ORIGIN?

The erasure of the maternal-feminine as guarantee of Antillean legitimacy, whether it is sought in Africa or in the Antilles, is central also to *Les Derniers Rois Mages*. Indeed, more explicitly than that of Schwarz-Bart, Condé's text is concerned not only with examining the obsessive, Antillean quest for legitimacy itself but also, like *Heremakhonon* and *Une Saison à Rihata*, with examining what is at stake in a quest so exclusively masculine. Djéré's African myth of origins, for example, which so resembles the Antillean myth of *Ti Jean*, is the story of the erasure of a maternal line of descent. At the origin is a feminized forest which, in turn, gives birth to a founding female Ancestor, Posu Adewene. However, once Posu Adewene has been impregnated by the Panther, she then gives birth to a boy, Tengisu, and it is he who becomes known as 'le fondateur de notre dynastie' (*Rois Mages*, p. 91). Equally, it is his *aïeul*, the Panther, and not his *aïeule*, the Forest, who becomes the clan totem, its original Ancestor, and whose markings are then handed down from generation to generation of fathers and sons.[55]

This line of descent, however complicated it may otherwise become, continues to be a paternal line of descent, as we have seen, even once the Ancestor has been exiled from Africa to the Antilles. What is more, as Spéro remembers another story of the Ancestor's exile, this time to Algeria, it becomes clear that it can only ever be imagined as a paternal line. This story tells of the Ancestor's attempts, just before he dies, to imagine a way in which his death will ensure both his own return home, to Africa, and the perpetuation of his lineage:

Il avait bien appris que si l'envie lui en prenait, il pouvait se faufiler dans le corps d'un nouveau-né du clan qui héritait alors de ses qualités et de ses défauts. Lui-même,

n'était-il pas la réincarnation d'un ancêtre terrible et amoureux des combats qui avait apporté la guerre contre tous ses voisins? (*Rois Mages*, p. 290)

Growing steadily more obsessed with this idea, the Ancestor takes to wandering around neighbouring concessions in order to spy on pregnant women,

Pour lorgner les ventres des femmes du clan sous leur pagnes. Il les surprenait dans leur sommeil et les examinait. Ventres ronds commes des calebasses. Ventres en obus. Ventres hauts et pointus. Ventres affaissés et pesants. Ventres glorieux. Ventres mous. (*Rois Mages*, p. 290)

Eventually he chooses Abebi, who is about to have twins, and waits each night for her labour to begin. When she finally gives birth, the first of the twins, a girl, is dead, but the second, a boy, lives: 'l'ancêtre eut tout juste le temps de se précipiter à l'intérieur de son corps et de s'y faire une place. Paré pour une nouvelle existence!' (*Rois Mages*, p. 294). Significantly, of course, the Ancestor ensures the continuation of his lineage, as well as his own rebirth — a rebirth which, like that of the negritude hero or of Ti Jean, is also a return to the native land — precisely by sacrificing a maternal genealogy, by breaking the link between the mother and her dead daughter. Abebi, like Awa, is no more than the unwitting intermediary of a genealogy whose continued existence depends upon the erasure of the maternal side.

It is after having resigned himself to the futility of his family's obsession with seeking legitimacy in Africa that Spéro remembers this story. It is thus in a mood of resignation and acceptance, acceptance of his unalterable Antillean situation of *bâtardise*, that this African story of return and rebirth evokes in him a final desire: the desire, at last, to return home, like Ti Jean, to Guadeloupe. Like those of the Ancestor, Spéro's initial thoughts of return become merged with thoughts of a son — in his case, the imaginary son that he has never had. He vows that had he had a son he would never have told him the story of the Ancestor, nor forced him to read the *Cahiers de Djéré*. Instead, he would have taken him to Guadeloupe, 'quand il en aurait l'âge', and shown him his native village:

Il lui dirait: 'Regarde! C'est là que ta race a poussé! Voici le lit sur lequel ton père a été conçu par un malheureux qui se croyait Roi Mage. Si tu veux vivre heureux, ne fais pas comme lui. Oublie toutes ces bêtises-là'. (*Rois Mages*, p. 295)

He imagines how he would have taught his son to love Guadeloupe, to remain firmly rooted in his native land ('de garder les deux pieds sur la terre', *Rois Mages*, p. 295), rather than caught up in dreams of elsewhere. What is more, he imagines how he would then have cemented his son's return — and, vicariously, his own — by choosing for him a black Guadeloupean woman as his first mistress, 'une négresse *bo kaye* qui saurait ce que donner du plaisir veut dire' (*Rois Mages*, p. 295).

Spéro is aware, however, that such a return will never be possible, and not least because his only child is a daughter who, as we shall see, has fled to Africa on her own genealogical quest. It is thus that his thoughts turn to a more figurative, more 'magical' return like Ti Jean's, and one which is in fact rooted, though less explicitly, in the heroic Antillean past remembered by Ti Jean prior to his own return. Spéro goes to stand on the edge of the shore on Crocker island and begins to contemplate suicide as a possible means of 'return' — like the Ancestor, like Wademba, and like Ti Jean — through death. As he looks for his reflection in the water, however, he is unable to see anything but images of shipwrecks at the bottom of the sea, 'des forêts de crustacés s'agripp[ant] à leur coque' (*Rois Mages*, p. 304). As Elizabeth Wilson explains, the shipwreck is an image which has haunted the Antillean collective memory for centuries, for it recalls not only slavery itself but, more specifically, slave drownings — the *marronnage* which took place even before the slaves' arrival in the Antilles.[56] This was a means of *marronnage* which has been seen as not only an attempt to escape slavery but, more significantly, as an attempt to return 'home', to Africa, through death. Throughout the text, however, Spéro has been haunted by nightmares about the sea, about being eaten alive by crabs and other sea creatures, and he cannot bring himself to jump. Unlike Ti Jean, he is unable to continue the heroic past of his forbears: 'Non! Pas pour lui! Il faut du courage pour braver la mort et devancer son temps' (*Rois Mages*, p. 304).[57]

Like Véronica or Marie-Hélène, Spéro is thus unable — either literally or figuratively — to return to his native land. Rather than undertaking what may by now be seen to be the expected move of masculine return, he begins, instead, to reexamine his family and its genealogy. Indeed, he begins to understand not simply the complexity of the quest for legitimacy, but to see that the complexity of this quest has everything to do with what it depends upon, what it erases — those other genealogies, predominantly maternal, which intersect with that of the Ancestor. The genealogy most obviously connected with that of Spéro is, of course, that of his African-American wife, Debbie, and then of their daughter, Anita. It is once Spéro and Debbie have moved back to the United States that he becomes aware that a sense of illegitimacy and non-belonging is as typical of the African-American diaspora as it is in the Antilles, and that this has informed Debbie's decision to marry him. A historian, Debbie has uncovered a series of unworthy ancestors and false heroes in her own family's past: a mulatto slave buyer, for example, and a teacher reputed to be a follower of Martin Luther King who, in reality, 'traitait [ses élèves] de bons à rien de nègres' (*Rois Mages*, p. 98). As Spéro begins to realize, Debbie's marriage to him would seem to have been motivated, for the most part, by her desire to possess 'une généalogie dont elle pouvait se vanter' (*Rois Mages*, p. 146) — for as he becomes less and less interested in the story of the Ancestor, Debbie herself becomes more and more obsessed with it.

The growing differences between Debbie and Spéro are further magnified with the birth of their daughter. When Spéro is told that his child is a girl, he immediately recalls how his father had desperately wanted sons, 'disant que la descendance d'un pareil ancêtre ne pouvait être que mâle' (*Rois Mages*, p. 31). For Spéro, who has by now realized the futility of his family's obsession with genealogy, a girl is exactly what is required if the destructive chain of Ancestor-worship is to be broken. Indeed, he congratulates himself that, 'par sa naissance il avait rompu la tradition et cette transgression l'amarrait dans le présent, manifestant que hier était bien hier, que seul comptait l'aujourd'hui' (*Rois Mages*, p. 32). For Debbie, however, marrying into the Ancestor's lineage

represents 'le vrai retour' dreamt of by Véronica and undertaken by Marie-Hélène. Herself deprived of a viable genealogy — that of her mother Margaret, as we might expect, having been subsumed into her husband's when she was forced, by her father, to marry him — it is of vital importance to Debbie that she provide her own daughter with a sense of belonging and ancestry.

To this end, Debbie takes sole charge of Anita, and brings her up, as Djeré had brought up Justin and as Justin had brought up Spéro, entirely within the cult of the Ancestor. For Anita, the power of the Ancestor's story is such that she herself becomes the archetypal New World orphan like Ti Jean and, like him, like Véronica and like Marie-Hélène, she undertakes '[ce] long voyage à rebours' (*Rois Mages*, p. 106), 'ce voyage jusqu'aux sources du temps d'antan' (*Rois Mages*, p. 124) — she goes to Bénin (the former Dahomey) and she settles there. Anita, like Véronica deprived of a relationship to her mother unmediated by the shadow of the Father-Ancestor — either that of Spéro's family or that of Debbie's father George Middleton — goes off to Africa in search of a Father-Ancestor who, as we know from Spéro's own search, as well as those of Véronica and and Ti Jean, cannot exist.[58]

Debbie and Anita are not, however, the only women whose search for legitimacy becomes intimately bound up with Spéro's ancestral past. Indeed, it is perhaps the complexities of Spéro's own mother's lineage which intersects most tellingly with the genealogy of the Ancestor. Like the majority of the stories of women in the text, that of Spéro's mother, Marisia, is recounted in passing — as a vital, but subordinated, part of the story of the Ancestor. When Justin meets Marisia, she is called Marisia Boyer d'Etterville, and she is seriously ill in the hospital where he works. What is significant, is that this illness has apparently been precipitated by a sudden, and quite literal, crisis of legitimacy.

Marisia is the child of a Guadeloupean mother, Lacpatia Boisripeaux, and a *béké* father, Monsieur Boyer d'Etterville. This *béké*, eighteen years after Marisia's birth, 'dans sa terreur des flammes de l'enfer..., légitima ses soixante et un bâtards et bâtardes disseminés à travers les savanes de la Grande-Terre,

puis partit vers l'au-delà' (*Rois Mages*, p. 52). Marisia was thus obliged to change her name, 'le nom de sa mère... et de sa grand-mère avant elle' (*Rois Mages*, p. 52) and take that of the dead *béké*. It is at this stage that she falls ill, so ill that it is assumed that she will die. Those who try to explain the cause of her illness decide — and here we are reminded of Freud's comments on naming in his study of totemism — that it is because 'le nom charroie l'essence des générations et s'amarre dans les grandes profondeurs':

> Des successions de femmes Boisripeaux nées et décédées avant elle avaient légué à Marisia depuis le jour de sa naissance, ou peut-être même avant, depuis le temps où elle avait commencé à nager dans le ventre de Lacpatia, leur vaillance, leurs espérances, leurs ambitions ensevelies... Brutalement arrachée à cette lignée-là pour entrer dans une autre qu'il ne connaissait pas, l'esprit de Marisia n'y avait pas résisté. Il s'était effondré et son corps l'avait suivi. (*Rois Mages*, p. 53)

For Marisia, 'legitimation' in the sense of finding the guarantee of *paternal* origins, is in fact an alienating experience: rather than affirming her identity — which, as we have seen, is typically taken to be the goal of the ancestral quest — it entails instead further dispossession. When Justin tells Marisia the story of the Ancestor she, like Debbie, is so captivated by the story that she decides to marry him and to take his name: she then makes a miraculous recovery. The only possible 'cure' for Marisia's illness, it would seem, is the discovery of an authentic, African line of descent to replace the inauthentic lineage of a *béké*. However, the situation is much more complex, for the line of descent into which both Marisia and Debbie marry is neither legitimate nor truly paternal. That is, it is paternal in everything but *name*: the name that Marisia takes, and which 'cures' her, is that of 'Jules-Juliette', 'le nom bien martiniquais' of Hosannah's mother, Djéré's grandmother (*Rois Mages*, p. 127). For Marisia, 'legitimacy' — in the sense of that which accords identity and belonging — is conferred, both before and after her marriage, by the maternal, and 'illegitimate', side.

Spéro's own name, of course, is also 'Jules-Juliette'. For him, too, the only reliable and recoverable ancestors, the only ancestors to whom he is able to prove a definite link, are maternal. Not only this, but these maternal ancestors

— Marisia and Hosannah, for example — are themselves the only ancestors who are Antillean: who are, and have always remained, rooted in the Antillean land. It is this realization, perhaps, which leads him, after years of fixation upon his paternal ancestry, eventually to turn his attention towards his forgotten, maternal past. As he lies in bed with one of his lovers, Arthé, he begins finally to wonder: 'peut-être l'ascendance maternelle est-elle aussi importante que la paternelle?' (*Rois Mages*, p. 174). And as he momentarily forgets the story of the ancestor — which he usually uses to impress women — he begins to talk, instead, about Marisia: he begins, at last, to tell his mother's story and to speak about his mother's land, Guadeloupe. What becomes clear, though this is by no means made explicit, is that the failure of Spéro's family's quest for legitimacy may not simply be the result of the impossibility of tracing Antillean genealogies back to Africa. Rather, it may have everything to do also with the exclusive obsession with paternity upon which such quests are typically based. In other words, in a culture which is quite manifestly matrifocal — in which, as Fritz Gracchus points out, maternal names and maternal lines of filiation are commonplace — the idea that 'legitimacy' is conferred solely by the paternal side is perhaps inappropriate, and its pursuit thus doomed to failure.[59] As Gracchus makes clear, it is a Western idea whose imposition upon the Antilles has served to render non-Western models of descent and self-definition 'pathological', or 'illegitimate'.[60]

As we saw earlier, both Spéro and Ti Jean had accepted the futility of the Antillean quest for paternal origins in Africa, and had realized that the Antillean situation *per se* is one of 'illegitimacy', of *bâtardise*. However, each of them reacted in a quite different manner to this realization: Ti Jean set about returning to his native Guadeloupe, while Spéro was unable to effect such a return. What becomes evident here, is that it is precisely this inability which is the more radical response. Ti Jean, in choosing to posit himself as a legitimate Father-Ancestor for his people, may now be seen not only to have erased the maternal-feminine, but to have erased also that which is associated with it — 'authentic' Antillean identity. That is, to have refused to accept the 'illegitimacy' of

Antillean identity, and to have repeated instead the Western erasure of non-Western forms of self-definiton and self-legitimation. In *Les Derniers Rois Mages*, however, we glimpse the possibility of an alternative model of descent and of self-definition, as Spéro accepts the unalterable 'illegitimacy' of the Antillean situation as the root of Antillean identity. That is, as he begins to accept that the Antillean sense of 'legitimacy', for him and for Marisia, may more widely be seen to be conferred by the 'illegitimate' (the maternal) side.

It must also be remembered that both of the texts examined in this chapter have not simply been concerned with, or motivated by, a quest for personal 'legitimacy' or self-definition. The literary quests of Ti Jean and Spéro can be read, as we have seen, as symptomatic of a wider Antillean quest for historical legitimation — or, rather, for a legitimate history, for a counter-history with which to oppose the West's erasure of the Antillean past. That the quest for History has taken the form of a quest for legitimate origins and for filiation is precisely because the Western model of history is itself premised upon the Western obsession with legitimacy — with the search for a single, identifiable origin from which to trace and explain a people's lineage in an all-encompassing and linear manner. For Glissant, it is this conception of History which is 'une des conséquences les plus terrifiantes de la colonization',[61] and not simply because it imposes 'une Histoire totalitaire' that erases the histories of colonized peoples. Rather — and it is this which will be examined in the following chapter — because it imposes an historical *model* which, like the model of personal legitimacy that has dominated the lives of Ti Jean and Spéro, may prove inappropriate and inadequate in an Antillean context.

NOTES

1. Maryse Condé, *La Civilisation du bossale: réflexions sur la littérature orale de la Guadeloupe et de la Martinique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1978), p. 7.
2. Edouard Glissant, 'Le chaos-monde, l'oral et l'écrit', in Ralph Ludwig, ed., *Ecrire la 'parole de nuit': La nouvelle littérature antillaise* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), pp. 111-30 (p. 119).
3. Ibid., p. 119.
4. Ibid., p. 119.
5. Glissant, *Le Discours antillais* (Paris: Seuil, 1981), p. 137.

6. Eloïse Brière, 'L'Inquiétude généalogique: tourment du Nouveau Monde', *Présence Francophone*, 36 (1990), 57-72 (p. 59).
7. Simone Schwarz-Bart, *Ti Jean L'horizon* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1979).
8. Maryse Condé, *Les Derniers Rois Mages* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1992).
9. As Zimra has pointed out, the recurring textual figure of 'the Ancestor', in Antillean literature, is one which can in fact be traced back to the negritude tradition itself (Clarisse Zimra, 'On Ancestral Ground: Heroic Figuring in Aimé Césaire', in *L'Esprit créateur*, XXXII (1992), 16-30).
10. See Clarisse Zimra, 'In the Name of the Father: Chronotopia, Utopia and Dystopia in Ti Jean L'horizon', *L'Esprit Créateur* XXXIII (1993), 59-71. This article is, as the title suggests, an exploration of the many complexities of the Antillean's quest for the Father-Ancestor. For this reason, my examination of Schwarz-Bart's text here will serve mainly to demonstrate the way in which it functions as an important — and this time female — pre-text to Condé's later *Les Derniers Rois Mages*.
11. This belief that death signals the long-awaited return of the Antillean to Africa recalls how, as Condé explains, 'dans les premiers temps de l'esclavage, les noirs croyaient qu'après leur mort, ils retournaient en Guinée, terre de la liberté perdue et se réjouissaient' (Condé, *La Civilisation du bossale*, p. 31).
12. Condé, *La Civilisation du bossale*, p. 34 and pp. 40-5.
13. Zimra, 'On Ancestral Ground', pp. 24-5.
14. See Condé, 'Survivance et mort des mythes africains dans la littérature des Antilles francophones', *Afrique littéraire et artistique*, 54-55 (1979), 56-57 and Francine Mil's interview with Schwarz-Bart, 'Simone Schwarz-Bart et le merveilleux antillais', *Flash Antilles-Afrique*, 14 (1979), 31-33. See also Raphaël Confiant's introduction to his collection of contemporary Antillean contes, *Les Maîtres de la parole créole* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), pp. 7-15.
15. Glissant, 'Le chaos-monde', p. 121.
16. Condé, *La Civilisation du bossale*, p. 38.
17. Chamoiseau and Confiant, *Lettres créoles*, p. 63; p. 36.
18. Glissant, 'Le chaos-monde', p. 113.
19. This movement is one which will be problematized in the following two chapters — as, indeed, it is by Glissant himself throughout Le Discours antillais.
20. Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 138.
21. Ibid., p. 151.
22. Glissant, 'Le chaos-monde', p. 119.
23. See Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 132, and Brière, 'L'Inquiétude généalogique', p. 58.
24. Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 141.
25. Brière, 'L'Inquiétude généalogique', p. 58.
26. Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 131.
27. Zimra, 'In the Name of the Father', p. 60.
28. Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 27. It is, of course, interesting to note that throughout his study of 'Antillean discourse', Glissant refers almost exclusively to Martinique, making explicit reference to Guadeloupe only occasionally. This has the rather unfortunate effect not only of further marginalising questions about Guadeloupean history, but also of repeating the colonial game that I mentioned in my introduction, of reinforcing differences between Martinique and Guadeloupe.
29. Yoder, 'Mythmaking in the Caribbean: Jean-Louis Baghio'o and Le Flamboyant à fleurs bleus', *Callaloo*, 12 (1989), 667-79 (p. 668). Yoder's quotation, here, is from Mircea Eliade's *La Nostalgie des origines* (Paris, 1971), p. 163.

30. Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 138.
31. Ibid., p. 496. Glissant himself, in his novel *La Case du commandeur* (Paris: Seuil, 1981) similarly evokes the story of the exiled king Béhanzin — a fact which, once more, points to the importance, for Condé, of Antillean pretexts. On Béhanzin, see also Bridget Jones, 'Telling the Story of King Béhanzin', *ASCALF Yearbook*, 3 (1998), 13-22
32. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, in Albert Dickson, ed., *The Origins of Religion* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 43-224. See also Robert A. Paul, 'Freud's anthropology: A reading of the "cultural books"', in Jerome Neu, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Freud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 267-86.
33. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 162.
34. Ibid., p. 161.
35. Ibid., p. 170.
36. Ibid., p. 171.
37. Ibid., p. 171.
38. Ibid., p. 210.
39. Ibid., pp. 206-9.
40. Ibid., p. 210. Emphasis mine.
41. Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 18.
42. Condé, *La Civilisation du bossale*, p. 8.
43. Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 148.
44. Obé's story resembles that of several popular, Antillean heroes of slave rebellion: Louis Delgrès, Ignace, Codou, Palème, Noel Corbet (See, for example, Lucien-René Abenon, *Petite histoire de la Guadeloupe*, pp. 96-97). Louis Delgrès, perhaps the best-known of these heroic figures, is the subject of the following chapter.
45. See Micheline Rice-Maximin, 'The Maroon in Guadeloupean Literature', *West Virginia University Philological Papers*, 32 (1986-7), 15-21.
46. Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 276.
47. Ibid., p. 104.
48. Ibid., p. 27.
49. Ibid., p. 154 and p. 104.
50. Ibid., p. 104. In a similar manner, it was vital that the colonial authorities play down the role of the maroons in the 1848 abolition of slavery. In so doing, Victor Schoelcher, was able to be presented as the sole person responsible for abolition itself, precisely as a benevolent 'Father' to the passive Antilleans in his care. As Mireille Rosello, too, points out: 'faire de l'abolition le résultat de l'avènement de la IIe République et du travail de Schoelcher revient à entériner le mythe selon lequel le peuple antillais se serait vu octroyer sa liberté sans s'être battu pour elle' (Mireille Rosello, *Littérature et identité créole aux Antilles*, Paris: Karthala, 1992, p. 12). She, like Glissant, points to the possibility of writing 'une autre histoire de l'abolition', a history which, as in Caribbean islands which gained their independence, like Jamaica, would celebrate the vital role played by the maroons — as well as by European abolitionists — in the final abolition of slavery.
51. Though Africa, as we have seen, has functioned as the most obvious source of a heroic past for the dispossessed Antillean, other Caribbean islands have also provided Guadeloupe and Martinique with heroes to replace their own. The most notable example, of course, is the Haitian maroon-rebel Toussaint Louverture, whose role in gaining Haitian independance in 1804 has become legendary, and to whom Césaire pays hommage first in the *Cahier* and then in the major historical study *Toussaint Louverture: La révolution française et le problème colonial* (1960).

Indeed Glissant, too, has written his own hommage to the Haitian hero, in his 1961 play, *Monsieur Toussaint*.

52. Ti Jean can, in fact, be seen not merely to be the giver of light, the creator of the sun which then, in turn, engenders the world — rather, he can be seen as a sort of 'Sun-God'. On several occasions, he is explicitly likened to the sun — described, for example, as '[un] jeune homme beau comme le soleil...' (*Ti Jean*, p. 173), 'un jeune homme étincelant comme le soleil' (Ti Jean, p. 171). As an issue of Antillean intertextuality, and especially as far as Condé's own evocation of Antillean pre-texts is concerned, it is interesting to note that her novel *La Colonie du nouveau monde* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1993), a text which is again concerned with questions of genealogy and descent, tells the story of the exile and wanderings of a Guadeloupean family who believe themselves to be descended from the Sun, Rê, and who worship him as their God.
53. Indeed, Ti Jean's heroic role, like that of the negritude hero, is prepared for throughout by references to his masculinity and virility — to his capacity, precisely, for fatherhood. He is 'un taureau de parade capable de vous faire trois enfants à la fois' (*Ti Jean*, p. 171). From the beginning, the people of 'En-bas' remark upon 'la façon dont sa petite queue se dressait au milieu des combats de son âge, pour reprendre sa forme ordinaire à la fin des hostilités' (*Ti Jean*, p. 30). Everywhere, references are made to '[sa] baguette magique' (*Ti Jean*, p. 113), 'une verge en or... [qui] se devinait même dans son pantalon..., un ciboire..., un tabernacle qu'il promenait entre ses cuisses' (*Ti Jean*, p. 169), 'son bengala [qui] se dressa comme une épée' (*Ti Jean*, p. 241).
54. Zimra, 'In the Name of the Father', p. 65.
55. This, too, is Freud's point in his essay on totemism, for he explains how totemism was originally handed down the female line, and then switched to the male line in order to ensure the 'legitimacy' of that line — that is, that it was marked by the father's name and thus authorized by him (Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 211).
56. Elizabeth Wilson, '"Le voyage et l'espace clos" — Island and Journey as Metaphor: Aspects of Woman's Experience in the Works of Francophone Caribbean Women Writers', in Boyce Davies and Savory Fido, eds, *Out of the Kumbla*, pp. 45-58.
57. It is interesting to note, here, that crabs in particular — about which Spéro is having a recurring nightmare as *Les Derniers Rois Mages* itself begins — may be seen, like the shipwreck, to be a common image in Antillean literature. Dominique Deblaine explains that this, too, has everything to do with the legacy of slavery. Deblaine links the behaviour of the crab to that of the Antillean, forced by 'la douloureuse histoire' to act in a similar manner: 'le crabe... renvoie immédiatement à l'idée de la fourberie... Sa démarche oblique s'accompagne d'une projection en avant des pinces, rappelant sans cesse qu'il est sur la défensive. Tout dans le comportement du crabe, jusqu'à sa manière de rentrer dans son trou, nous renvoie à une attitude de méfiance, toujours craintif, sur ses gardes' (Dominique Deblaine, 'Simone Schwarz Bart: Imaginaire et espace créole', unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Bordeaux, 1989, pp. 592-93). What she does not point out, however, and which is important as far as this episode in Spéro's life is concerned, is that such wariness, mistrustfulness, and potential for treachery can, more specifically, be seen to be characteristics associated with the maroon Antillean. I am very grateful to Régis Antoine for drawing this thesis to my attention.
58. With Anita, Condé would seem to have returned once more to explore the themes of female exile and genealogical dispossession familar to us from her first novels. Indeed, in many ways, Anita is the African-American counterpart of Véronica in *Heremakhonon*, and she recalls the African-American encountered and mocked by Ibrahima Sory. The similarities between the two characters perhaps account for the lack of attention paid in *Les Derniers Rois Mages* to the story of Anita: it is a story, we must assume, which merely repeats that not only of Véronica, but also of Marie-Hélène.

59. In an essay on the question of fatherhood in the Antilles, Gracchus examines how the (rural, non-bourgeois) Antillean family, as elsewhere in the Caribbean, has typically been characterized by a high incidence of fathers who leave their children in the sole care of their mother (see Fritz Gracchus, 'L'Antillais et la question du père', in *CARE*, 4 (1979), 95-115). See also the 1988 INSEE report (INSEE & Secretariat d'Etat Chargé des droits des femmes (Délégation régionale de la Guadeloupe), *Femmes en Chiffres: Guadeloupe*, 1988). As Claudie Fougeyrollas also points out (and this, of course, is by no means an exclusively Caribbean phenomenon) even when both parents share the family home: 'dans le tissu des relations interpersonnelles qui constituent la famille antillaise, les responsabilités économiques et la prééminence affective vis-à-vis des enfants ont été et demeurent le fait des femmes' (Claudie Fougeyrollas, *Les Femmes antillaises*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1979, p. 75).
60. Gracchus, 'L'Antillais et la question du père', p. 105.
61. Edouard Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 159.

# FOUR

## HISTORY, IDENTITY, *MÉTISSAGE*

In this chapter, the continued quest for Antillean history and identity will be examined in two texts — Lacrosil's *Demain Jab-Herma*[1] and Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove*[2]. These are texts which represent, for both of their authors, a return to Guadeloupe after a long preoccupation either with France, in the case of Lacrosil, or with Africa in the case of Condé. Like the novels examined in the previous chapter, these are texts which are separated by a number of years, and which deal with apparently disparate themes, yet which can be seen, upon closer examination, to have a great deal in common. Like Schwarz-Bart's novel, that of Lacrosil is an effort to provide an alternative history for the Antilles via a (re)inscription of the story of an 'original', Antillean heroic Ancestor. At the same time, however, Lacrosil's text is one which interrogates its own literary project in a far more thorough manner than does that of Schwarz-Bart, and which questions, in particular, the status of the heroic figure himself.

It is this interrogation of the very basis of Antillean attempts to rewrite history which clears the way for Condé's own, apparently new and radical project, some twenty-two years later. Like *Les Derniers Rois Mages*, *Traversée de la mangrove* examines the reliability of the figure of the Ancestor (Antillean this time) and, in consequence, the whole notion of both history and identity as a quest for filiation. What is more, as alternative discourses of history and identity begin to emerge — discourses which, again, have much to do with the work of Glissant — so the question of the position of women in these revised discourses is simultaneously posed. As we shall see, the possibility, glimpsed at the end of the previous chapter, of a model of Antillean history and identity more appropriate for all sections of Antillean communities begins, at last, to be imagined. Before examining Condé's more recent text, however, it is necessary to go back to that of Lacrosil — a novel which, like *Ti Jean L'horizon* and *Les Derniers Rois Mages* has at its centre an heroic figure already present within the Antillean collective memory. This time, moreover, the figure is the Antillean

hero *par excellence*: Louis Delgrès — the Martinican famous for his heroic opposition to the reinstatement of slavery in Guadeloupe in 1802.[3] Although Delgrès may occupy an ambiguous position in French historical accounts of the period, his suicide at Fort Matouba has come, as Michèle Rice-Maximin points out, to constitute 'one of the most symbolic moments in Guadeloupean history'.[4]

It is this moment that Lacrosil is seeking to inscribe in her literary text. She does so, however, not by recreating in fictional form the events of 1802, but instead via what has been called a 'detective novel',[5] set on a Guadeloupean plantation in 1952 when, the sugar economy in decline, control of sugar production was passing from the local plantocracy to centralized, French sugar companies. The narrative begins with the arrival of Philippe Bonnier, an official from just such a company, who has been sent to investigate both the continuing viability of the plantation at Pâline, and a number of mysterious crimes. These crimes are linked, it becomes clear, by none other than the figure of Delgrès, a figure who also provokes those questions about Guadeloupean history, heroism, and identity which prove central to Lacrosil's text. It is through the stories told and retold by the workers about the legend of Delgrès that these connections are made, stories which revolve around one legend in particular — that of Delgrès' gold, forty barrels of which was allegedly buried by two of his soldiers on the island of Tirêha, near Pâline, as he made his way to Matouba (*Jab-Herma*, p. 25).

The plantation workers dream of what they would do should they ever find Delgrès' gold, and their plans centre upon improving their community's living conditions. One worker named Cragget, however, refuses to participate in the collective mythmaking and declares instead: 'moi, je foutrais le camp' (*Jab-Herma*, p. 17). He despises his fellow workers' endless storytelling as he believes that it prevents them from taking action, something which he feels to be at odds with the ideals of their hero Delgrès, who committed 'un acte pur': 'il est allé, lui, au bout de sa révolte' (*Jab-Herma*, p. 24). It is for this reason that Cragget himself decides to act, to search for 'la route de Delgrès' by crossing the bridge to Tirêha. Cragget's particular investment in the story of Delgrès soon becomes clear: son of a black mother and an unknown white father, he is, like Ti Jean or Djéré, on a quest for legitimacy. This time, the quest is an attempt to

claim none other than Delgrès — a mulatto like himself — as legitimate father.[6] For this reason Cragget undertakes to fulfil the conditions, demanded by the legend, which will allow him to make the journey to Tirêha. In so doing, he commits all of the crimes under investigation by Philippe: he sends for an African fetish to carry when crossing the bridge; he steals rum in order to make the necessary libation of three hundred and two litres and, it would seem, he murders the child Saça, in order to make the necessary sacrifice.

Cragget's quest is in fact quite complex, as Zimra points out, for it is inspired by the belief, on Cragget's part, that if he acquires the gold he will acquire not only Delgrès' power — 'the Law of the legitimate Father' — but also, and more problematically, that he will be able to buy himself back into the lost 'whiteness' of his privileged childhood as ward of his mother's wealthy employer.[7] However, he figures such a project not in these terms, but instead in terms of an heroic act to rival that of Delgrès himself: 'commander les fétiches à ce copain indien... était une tentative désespérée; voler, une protestation; tuer, un cri de révolte. Voler et tuer pour devenir un autre' (*Jab-Herma*, p. 244).[8] For Cragget, his is a 'revolt' and 'protest' against the condition of slavery into which he feels he has been unjustly reduced as plantation worker at Pâline. His quest, however, ultimately fails, apparently because his knowledge and execution of the legend are imperfect, though it is possible to argue also, as does Zimra, that this failure occurs for a far more fundamental reason: because of his motives, precisely because he wished 'to steal the hidden powers of the black Ancestor (Delgrès) in order to become the white man'.[9]

As Zimra points out, Cragget fails because he breaks the rules of the heroic code as it has been generated around the figure of Delgrès. As Mireille Rosello explains, this heroic code is premised upon suicide and self-sacrifice: it is a code in which suicide is presented as 'l'acte par excellence',[10] in which the hero 'accède en effet au statut du héros mythique pour avoir *choisi* la Mort de son plein gré'.[11] What is more, the suicidal act is one which is supposed to signify the hero's individual refusal *and* 'le point de départ, l'origine d'une nouvelle ère qui inaugure la libération de la collectivité'.[12] Cragget does, indeed, commit suicide — and he does so moreover, 'under the sign of the Ancestor' Delgrès on the

bridge to Tirêha.[13] Indeed, he does so also in the manner of countless heroic maroons before him — by drowning. However, he does not act for the benefit of the community at large: while the workers had agreed, in their collective mythmaking, that they would share both the discovery and benefits of the gold, Cragget acts contrary to the interests of the collectivity. First, his quest is motivated purely by self-interest and, second, when it fails, his suicide is motivated simply by a desire to escape the humiliation of being punished for crimes which he intended as heroic acts. For Zimra, Cragget's fundamental error, and the reason for his failure, is to divorce Delgrès' act from the context of the communal black struggle for liberation, and to appropriate the codes of heroism for his own non-heroic ends.

Cragget is not, however, the only would-be hero in search of the power of Delgrès, and nor is he the only figure in *Jab-Herma* to be tempted by suicide when he fails. Much to Philippe's surprise, Sougès the white plantation owner also claims Delgrès as 'notre héros' (*Jab-Herma*, p. 229), and admires his choice of suicide as act of revolt. Just as Cragget had identified with Delgrès as a mulatto given privileges which were then taken away, Sougès identifies with him by positioning himself as a Guadeloupean victim of the modern-day tyranny of the French. Also like Cragget however, as Zimra points out, Sougès divorces Delgrès' heroic act from its context as part of a slave revolt, and identifies only with his individual situation, with his betrayal, and with his power to oppose that betrayal by choosing his own death (*Jab-Herma*, p. 155). During a night in which almost all the prominent male characters of the text dream of Delgrès, Sougès dreams simply 'le rêve d'être puissant' (*Jab-Herma*, p. 41). Like Cragget, he apparently wishes to 'steal' the power of the black Ancestor in order, in his case, to regain the power — associated with his whiteness as it was with that of Cragget — of his former days as owner of Pâline. For Zimra, it is for this reason — not because he is white, or even of the planter class — that Sougès is unable to claim Delgrès as his Ancestor.

It is possible, however, to problematize Zimra's reading of the actions of Cragget and Sougès, especially in the light of the recent work of Rosello on Delgrès and the Antillean heroic code. Rather than constituting a reinscription of

Delgrès as 'authentic Antillean hero', whose actions both Cragget and Sougès are incapable of emulating, Lacrosil can be seen to be proposing quite the reverse. That is, that neither Cragget nor Sougès misinterpret Delgrès' act but instead, as Rosello suggests, that Delgrès may himelf be seen to have been a figure simply 'retranché dans son héroïsme individualiste'.[14] As Glissant explains in the glossary to *Le Discours antillais*: 'on débat de savoir s'il fût un héros qui refusa le rétablissement de l'esclavage, ou déjà un intoxiqué des idées "républicaines" qui n'osa pas appeler à l'insurrection totale et préféra la mort à l'effondrement de son idéal'.[15]

This is not to suggest, however, that Lacrosil is simply interrogating Delgrès' personal motives, for such an undertaking could be seen to be rather futile, in the sense that the events surrounding Delgrès' actions are irretrievably and irrecuperably obscured by the historical and mythical narratives which have grown up around him. Lacrosil's project, instead, may be interpreted more radically as an examination of the entire heroic code which has developed in the Antilles. As we saw in the previous chapter, the figure of the Antillean hero — the Ancestor-Father — has been fundamental to recent attempts both to discover and to reinvent an Antillean counter-History capable of challenging the occluding tactics of Western History. However, as we have also begun to see, this counter-History has, perhaps inevitably, repeated the structure of the History that it has set out to challenge: both Western and Antillean historical narratives have typically been monolithic and monologic; unitary and universalising — discourses fixated upon absolute and unassailable origins.

Antillean history has, in other words, remained within the realm of what Glissant calls 'le Même': 'un humanisme universel' whose hero, whether a Ti Jean or a Delgrès, has conventionally been constructed in the manner of subjectivity in the Western humanist tradition — as a self-certain, self-sufficient and self-present individual.[16] It is thus unsurprising that the actions of Cragget and Sougès, or indeed of Delgrès, may be interpreted as highly individualistic, for individualism, upon closer examination, can be seen to be the cornerstone of the Antillean heroic code. This, indeed, is the thesis of Rosello, who examines specifically what is at stake in Antillean notions of heroism predicated upon

individual self-sacrifice, upon 'un appel au suicide', which sees the 'choice' of death or type of death as an important — if not the only — resource of oppressed peoples.[17]

For Rosello, the link between death and heroism in the Antilles is 'tragic'. Not only for the individual concerned — who, like Césaire's Rebel, merely attains his eventual punishment by death more quickly — but also, and more fundamentally, for the community as a whole. As Rosello makes clear, the form of individualism in which such a hero must necessarily be invested proves precisely to be *at odds* with the interests of the community for whom he is allegedly acting. In remembering Delgrès, and in elevating him to the status of Ancestor-Hero, the three hundred men and women who died with him are necessarily obscured.[18] As Bernadette Cailler points out in relation to the early fictional work of Glissant himself, there is a danger that 'the exaltation of the Maroon, the Negator — as Glissant came to call him — as historical referent, poetic metaphor and a source of the narrative plot... obstruct[s] the birth of story of the *people*'.[19]

It is here that Cragget's and Sougès' own effacement of the collective project in favour of the individual may begin to be examined in a different light. That is, it becomes possible to imagine that Lacrosil is signalling what may be at stake in the investment of Antillean historical narratives in the individual hero, in the self-certain subject inherited from the Western humanist tradition. Indeed, that she may even be seeking — albeit tentatively — to undermine, to 'demythify', that subject in a manner reminiscent of better-known figures like Glissant. More than this, and here the project of Condé's own, later text begins to intersect with that of Lacrosil, she may be seen to be moving towards an examination of what happens to the community effaced by its hero and to imagine, if possible, ways of refocusing attention upon that very community.

## HEROISM REDEFINED

*Traversée de la mangrove*, like *Demain Jab-Herma*, ostensibly revolves around one man's search for ancestral origins, and a community's search for a Father-

Hero. It begins with the discovery of the body of Francis Sancher, an enigmatic figure who had 'returned' to his native land only a year earlier in search of the mystery of his genealogy and of the 'curse' which has entailed the death, in middle age, of all of his male ancestors. Just as the workers of Pâline tell endless stories around the figure of Delgrès, so the community of Rivière au Sel becomes increasingly fascinated with the discovery of Sancher's origins. Indeed, their endless conjecturing about his life is born out of the same need as that of the workers of Pâline: as Lucien Evariste recognizes, his community is in need of a heroic figure to alleviate at last 'la torpeur de cette terre stérile qui ne parvenait pas à accoucher de sa Révolution' (*Traversée*, p. 229).

Long convinced of the link between Guadeloupe's lack of a revolutionary hero and its still-dependent status as a DOM, Lucien Evariste is a pro-independence activist who runs a radio programme, 'Moun an tan lontan' ('figures d'autrefois', p. 229), which is preoccupied solely with tales of 'la vie des héros, martyrs, patriotes, leaders, grandes figures disparues de mort naturelle et plus souvent de mort violente qui avaient bataillé pour que se lèvent debout et marchent les damnés de la terre' (*Traversée*, p. 229). Having embarked also on a book about those other heroic figures, the maroons, he abandons both projects — which he had always felt he was undertaking for the benefit of his community as a whole — in order to write instead the story of Sancher's life and heroic travels in Cuba and beyond. In a typical Antillean movement of looking elsewhere for heroes and revolutions, Lucien comments: 'Ah, être né ailleurs! Au Chili! En Argentine! Ou tout simplement à un jet de pierre, à Cuba!' (*Traversée*, p. 229). Now, he decides that his new book will finally necessitate a journey of his own, on the trail of his hero and his origins: '[pour] suivre son héros à la trace... Mettre ses pas dans les siens... Europe. Amérique. Afrique' (*Traversée*, p. 240). Like Cragget, Lucien uses what may be imagined by others as a necessarily communal project — the revival of a much-needed hero — and converts it into a purely personal quest. Following his hero's tracks becomes little more than a welcome excuse to leave behind an island whose passivity he experiences as paralysing, and to leave behind a community that he no longer has any interest in 'saving'.

Lucien's interpretation of Sancher's heroic status has little to do with the figure of Sancher himself, however, or with his actual function within both the community of Rivière au Sel and within the narrative. Indeed, it is here that Condé's own revision of the traditional Antillean heroic code begins to become evident for, as Sancher warns Lucien: 'je ne suis pas ce que tu crois' (*Traversée*, p. 233). As we shall see, Sancher *refuses* to be the type of hero desired by Lucien and by the others, choosing instead a different 'heroic' positioning. At the same time, the text itself refuses to proceed, as would that of Lucien, in a linear fashion, working towards reconstituting the life (and explaining the death) of its hero by tracing a line back to the 'founding event': the ancestral curse and the crime which precipitated it. Instead, Sancher himself becomes an increasingly unknowable, unfixable, origin-less figure, as each member of the community comes forward to narrate her or his relationship to the dead man.

If the text does not resemble Lucien's proposed novel, it comes to resemble instead that of Sancher himself for he, too, is a writer: as he tells his lover Vilma Ramsaran, he is writing a novel entitled 'Traversée de la mangrove'. When Vilma objects — as does Patrick Chamoiseau in his reading of Condé's own text — that it is impossible to *cross* a mangrove, that if one tries to do so: 'on s'empale sur les racines des palétuviers. On s'enterre et on étouffe dans la boue saumâtre', Sancher simply replies: 'c'est ça, c'est justement ça' (*Traversée*, pp. 202-3).[19] Like Sancher's mangrove, there proves to be no clear way either through his life, or through Condé's text: there remains instead a sense of opacity and entanglement. Although his mysterious death is evidently linked to the ancestral curse, no-one ever discovers the details of the crime, or of any other part of Sancher's life: it is apparent that there is no single truth to be unearthed. As each member of the community tells of her or his relationship with Sancher, it becomes clear that while he certainly functions as a focal point in the community, he never comes to constitute the communal hero dreamt of by Lucien. Rather, he serves to unite the inhabitants of Rivière au Sel in a manner which is quite different, or so it would at first seem, from that of the traditional hero.

It is here that the work of Rosello once more becomes informative, for in her study of the Antillean heroic code she not only problematizes, but attempts also to reimagine, the figure of the Antillean hero. Rosello imagines a figure who, instead of privileging himself at the expense of the community as a whole, seeks to redefine himself *in relation to* that community and, in so doing, unites and redefines it. This is a figure which Rosello calls, in a radical bid for redefinition, the 'figure métis', a figure as traditional in Antillean literature as the heroic figure himself, and a figure equally desperately in need of reimagination. As we have seen in the work of Lacrosil, for example, the 'figure métis' has hitherto been the literal *métis(se)*: the mulatto, and most especially the 'tragic' mulatto like Cajou or Cragget. The *métis(se)* has traditionally been constructed as 'orphan', as 'bastard', as 'half-caste', torn between identities as is the Antillean between Africa and Europe.[20] Rosello's reimagined 'figure métis' is one which, instead of being paralysed by this position between 'pure' extremes, actively adopts it as a mode of resistance, in order to undermine the system within which those extremes have been constructed. This system is, of course, the same system — the system of the Same — to which the figure of the Antillean hero belongs, a system whose extremes have worked also to efface and to restrict entire communities. What is more, it is a system which, in its obsession with singularity and purity of origins, has worked not only to efface the cultural and racial mixing characteristic of the 'figure métis', but also the *métissage* of entire Antillean communities. It is thus not by chance that Rosello should choose the figure of the *métis(se)* for her redefinition of the function of the Antillean hero.

In this undertaking, Rosello owes much to the work of Glissant for whom, as we shall see later, *métissage* — part of his wider notion of 'la Relation' — is at the heart of contemporary attempts to undermine the investment of Antillean historical narratives in the figure of the individual hero. Her work apparently also owes much to that of Françoise Lionnet who, in an earlier discussion of the positive potential of the 'figure métis', also makes use of the idea of the *métis(se)* not as the product of literal racial mixing, but instead as a 'site of undecidability and indeterminacy'.[21] For Lionnet, too, it is the very ambiguity of the identity of the 'figure métis' which enables it to be used as a strategy of resistance. Indeed,

she seeks to show also the ambiguity of the term *métis*, linking the French term, one used specifically in relation to racial categorisation, with the wider meaning of:

> Its homonym in ancient Greek, metis..., the allegorical 'figure or function of power', a cunning intelligence like that of Odysseus, which opposes transparency and the metaphysics of identity and is thus closely related, in practice, to the meaning of métissage.[22]

As Lionnet goes on to explain, the Greek *metis* is a usefully polyvalent term: 'a form of savoir faire which resists symbolisation within a coherent or homogenous conceptual system since it is also the power to undo the logic and the clarity of concepts'.[23] It is just such a form of 'savoir faire' which Rosello attributes to her own 'figure métis', a figure who, as Lionnet recommends, is not necessarily literally *métis* but who inhabits 'intermediary spaces', the 'interstices' of both texts and communities. Crucially, it is by so doing that the 'figure métis' functions to allow notions of 'community' to be rethought. According to Rosello, the 'figure métis' may define her or himself in two ways: according to the notion of 'appartenance', or according to that of 'alliance'. 'Appartenance' is that which has traditionally defined the 'figure métis' in terms of inclusion and exclusion, while 'alliance' describes how such a figure may define her or himself according to a notion of shifting links with a given community: 'non plus le même et l'autre mais l'allié et l'adversaire, non plus "je suis comme x" et/ou "je suis différent de x" mais "je suis l'ami et/ou l'ennemi de x" ou bien "x est mon ami et/ou mon ennemi"'.[24]

For Rosello, the notion of 'linking' is important because, as the 'figure métis' — positioned somewhere between the (racial) extremes of a given community — defines and redefines him or herself in relation to the disparate members and groups of that community, so also does a redefinition of the community itself inevitably take place. What is more, this redefinition is one which takes place also in relation to the orientation in time of a given community. The traditional heroic figure typically works to focus communities towards the past, towards actions committed in the past which subsequently dictate and constrain actions

which may be committed in the present and in the future. The 'figure métis' imagined — perhaps rather optimistically — by Rosello, however, is entirely future-oriented and, more importantly, orients the community at large towards its own actions in the future.

As far as Condé's text is concerned, the community of Rivière au Sel is literally 'une communauté métisse', and this *métissage* — and its importance — is apparent at every level of society. From Moïse, for example, son of a poor, Guadeloupean father and of a Chinese mother Shawn, to the two most prominent families at the top of the social ladder. One of them, the Ramsaran family, is of East Indian origin and, faced with the prospect of becoming *métisse* through one son's relationship with 'une câpresse', still looks constantly towards India, not Africa, as the origin and source of its identity. The Lameaulnes family, on the other hand, is already thoroughly *métisse*, and is made up of 'illegitimate' half-brothers and sisters of multiple racial origins and shades of skin-colour. What is significant about this community's *métissage* is that it is largely divisive: Rivière au Sel is a community split apart by petty rivalry, by class, by wealth and, most manifestly, by colour differences. In Rosello's terms, it has defined itself largely in terms of 'appartenance', obsessively working to keep separate the various strata of the village. And it is only with the arrival of Sancher that this situation begins to change.

Sancher, we eventually discover, is a literal *métis* — 'un mulâtre foncé' with a *béké* ancestor but of otherwise uncertain origins (*Traversée*, p. 159). Quite apart from his literal *métissage*, however, Sancher acts as 'figure métis' primarily because of the position which he chooses to occupy in relation to a community in which he has actively decided to come and live. This is a position which becomes most manifest when Loulou Lameaulnes goes to implore Sancher to treat his daughter Mira as he feels her status as mulatto demands. Phrasing his request by appealing to what he perceives to be their common ancestry as mulattoes, he tells Sancher: 'nous appartenons au même camp' (*Traversée*, pp. 133-4). Crucially, however, Sancher is unmoved by such an appeal, and tells Loulou:

Tu as tort. Nous ne sommes plus du même camp et je vais te dire que je n'appartiens plus à aucun camp. Mais d'une certaine manière, tu n'as pas tort. Au début, c'est vrai, nous étions du même camp. C'est pour cela que je suis parti de l'autre bout du monde. Je ne peux pas te dire que ce voyage-là s'est bien terminé. Je suis naufragé, échoué sur la grève. (*Traversée*, p. 134)

It is thus that Sancher chooses to position himself *between* 'camps', on the borders of communities. His is a position of 'non-belonging' which, in a similar manner to that described by Rosello, enables him to form links with members of a community separated by a rigid and exclusive system of 'belonging'. Apparently invested in self-definition according to the logic of 'alliance' rather than 'appartenance', he builds links with many, if not most, of the culturally and racially disparate members of the village community. When the members of this community then come together at his wake[25] to tell of their particular relationship to him, it is therefore but a literal manifestation of Sancher's role since his arrival in Rivière au Sel. His is, it would seem, and as several critics have already pointed out, the literal 'death of the hero', for his death apparently works to unite rather than to efface an entire community.[26] What is more, Sancher — again like Rosello's 'figure métis' — can be seen to enable, through his death, the 'rebirth' of an entire community, for most of the villagers end their evocation of their relationship with Sancher by evoking also their own plans for the future. The emphasis in Condé's text is thus apparently one which moves, as Rosello recommends, away from the self-serving individual hero towards an alternative 'heroic' figure who effaces himself in order that the community may begin to come into focus.

In this respect, Condé's version of the 'figure métis', like that of Rosello, apparently comes to resemble Glissant's own reimagined figure of the 'Négateur'. As Cailler explains, in Glissant's work, the 'Négateur', 'from being a master figure... progressively yields his leadership position to the many unstable, impure, 'poetic' figures of resistance or endurance, sometimes even figures of betrayal and often figures of mere survival'.[27] Glissant's own project, as we shall see in more detail later, is one in which the heroic individual of Antillean writing is 'demythified' in order that ways of refocusing upon the communities hitherto

effaced may be envisioned, in order that a collective 'we' may begin to be imagined. Sancher's new, revised 'heroic' role, a role which apparently goes beyond the more 'traditional' heroism of a Cragget, or even of a Delgrès, is not, in fact, without precedent in Lacrosil's text. Here, too, is a figure who ostensibly acts as a 'figure métis', who works to enable rather than to efface the community of Pâline: the eponymous, yet strangely absent, Jab-Herma himself.

The only one of the four central characters in Lacrosil's text not to be tempted by suicide, Jab-Herma is not, like Sancher, a literal *métis*, but he is a positive alternative to the literal *métis* Cragget who remains trapped within the 'tragic mulatto' paradigm. Very black, thoroughly connected both to African traditions and to the land and people of Guadeloupe, Jab-Herma acts as a 'link figure' between the disparate sections of his community. He is at once Sougès' chauffeur and confidant, as well as the village *quimboiseur*, a position which guarantees that it is in him that the villagers confide. Thus, 'il avait à faire le point puisque les gens du salon et ceux du village étaient si loin les uns des autres' (*Jab-Herma*, p. 223). Jab-Herma's position as *quimboiseur* is in fact even more significant, for it means that he is directly linked both to the legend of Delgrès, and to the power that it exerts over the village as a whole. If both Cragget and Sougès dream of appropriating the power of Delgrès for themselves, it was Jab-Herma who, many years ago, set out the conditions of the retrieval of Delgrès' gold which have since become part of the legend.

It becomes evident, however, that while he is trusted and respected by the villagers, Jab-Herma's own belief in his powers as *quimboiseur* is waning, and when Sougès and Cragget both dream of Delgrès and of their own power, Jab-Herma dreams of 'une troupe hagarde, un colonel couvert de sang qu'il s'efforçait de rejoindre' (*Jab-Herma*, p. 41). Fearing that he has become no more than 'un sorcier privé de foi', he dreams of a *lost* link with the power of the Ancestor. As events unfold, however, Jab-Herma comes to realize that his own lack of belief in fact matters little, for everyone else in the village, including Sougès, either believes in, or fears, his 'magical' power: 'sur leur foi unanime, j'ai établi mon pouvoir. Il s'écria: un pouvoir formidable, respecté des vivants et des morts' (*Jab-Herma*, p. 69). The black Jab-Herma is thus not only a more

powerful figure than the mulatto Cragget but also than the white planter Sougès and, importantly, not simply because he has more successfully appropriated for himself the power of Delgrès. Rather, the 'fake' power which he has over the village is one which he intends not to misuse, but which he intends to use to the benefit of the very community who believes in him as it believes in Delgrès.

As Zimra points out, Jab-Herma refuses to divorce Delgrès' actions from their context, as did Cragget and Sougès, preferring instead to reclaim them as 'an integral part of the black fight for freedom'.[28] In other words, his own 'heroic' role is to reinterpret the legend in order that it may be used once more as a strategy of communal resistance, a role which finally becomes evident as Philippe decides that the future of Pâline lies either in the destruction of the Sougès ancestral home to make way for a new factory, or in the closure of the plantation altogether. When he learns that it is Sougès who will be asked to decide between his own personal ruin and that of the entire village, Jab-Herma hurries to tell the villagers before Sougès is able to make the decision on their behalf. He therefore uses his position on the borders between the disparate sections of a community in order to mobilize the most disadvantaged of those sections and allow them to negotiate, for themselves, with Philippe for the future of their village. Towards the end of the narrative, we therefore see the village united in its efforts — apparently successful — to persuade Philippe to make the final decision, and not to allow the plantation to be closed down in order to save Sougès' family home. The ancestral power of Sougès is thus superseded by that of the *quimboiseur* — the 'figure métis', Jab-Herma.[29]

The power of Jab-Herma as a figure who inhabits borders is one recognized also by Philippe, who resolves to deploy him as a literal go-between in the plantation's new recruitment office, where he will mediate the relationship between workers and owners. For his part, Jab-Herma is is satisfied that Sougès, who as a planter visibly represents what remains of the system of slavery, should be replaced by the more anonymous French sugar company. For him, as for Césaire when he supported departmentalisation in 1946, it is only via voluntary cooperation with France that Guadeloupe will accede to independent status: it is through the bridging of differences between the disparate sections of the

community that Pâline will be saved in any meaningful way. Gesturing towards the house, he remarks: 'Cela est le passé. Seul l'avenir compte' (*Jab-Herma*, p. 253) and, by the end of the novel, Jab-Herma has himself come to represent the future, as Philippe announces his plans officially to Sougès and shouts: 'faites entrer Jab-Herma' (*Jab-Herma*, p. 254).

It is these final words, however, and their focus upon the future, which betray a potential problem with Jab-Herma's role as 'figure métis', for it is immediately evident that the focus upon the future at the end of the text is primarily a focus upon the single figure of the *quimboiseur*. Philippe's words themselves serve to centre the entire text upon this figure, for although it focuses at several points upon the life of the workers, and even on specific, named members of the workforce, these final words recall the novel's title: the future, the 'demain', is that of Jab-Herma. Although he undeniably acts throughout in a way which is enabling for his community, Jab-Herma does not entirely escape the taint of self-interest reminiscent of the traditional heroic code. As with Delgrès himself, it is Jab-Herma who is remembered as the text's hero, while the rest of the community remains behind, only implied in his name.

Sancher's role as 'figure métis' can eventually be seen to be similarly problematic. Although he, too, undeniably precipitates links between members of an estranged community, he is motivated by reasons closer to those of a traditional 'héros suicidaire' like Cragget. First, he comes to Rivière au Sel, as we saw earlier, for extremely personal reasons: in order to seek out the site of his ancestral crime. Then he proceeds to act primarily in order to relieve himself of the personal burden of guilt and humiliation associated with 'his' crime, a crime which paralyses him so completely that he, like Cragget, is unable to envisage any future beyond his own imminent, and desired, death. If Jab-Herma erases the role of the community in his desire to imagine the future of that community, Sancher himself is in fact unable to imagine the future at all.

It is possible, however, to suggest that the inadequacies of both Sancher and Jab-Herma are indicative not simply of character flaws on their part, but perhaps once again of a more general problem inherent in the (now revised) heroic model itself. In many ways, the very notion of the enabling 'figure métis' can be seen to

be too easily recuperable into the traditional notion of the self-sacrificing hero. As useful as Rosello's refiguration of the heroic role may be, it remains, undeniably, a heroic role — one in which a single individual has the means to undertake 'radical' acts which turn out, in this case at least, to be undertaken *for* a community, and once more to deprive that community of the means of acting for itself.

## FROM 'FIGURE MÉTIS' TO 'COMMUNAUTÉ MÉTISSE'

If the figure of Sancher does not unproblematically unite the community of Rivière au Sel there remains, in Condé's text, another important and enabling figure yet to be taken into account. This is Xantippe — a figure who resembles both Sancher and Jab-Herma, but whose role vis-à-vis the community is radically different. Like Jab-Herma, Xantippe is enigmatic yet omnipresent and, instead of being literally *métis*, is very black and very conscious of his connections both to Africa and to Guadeloupe. Like Sancher, there is a mystery which surrounds Xantippe, and one, too, which is never entirely solved. Indeed, Xantippe preoccupies Sancher as he repeatedly glimpses him during their parallel wanderings through the woods, and it soon becomes evident that this preoccupation is motivated primarily by fear. It is specifically to him that Sancher's sense of foreboding about death is linked, and in Xantippe's own narrative we learn why, for Xantippe is apparently the only inhabitant of Rivière au Sel to remember the crime committed by Sancher's ancestors:

> Un crime s'est commis ici, ici même, dans les temps très anciens. Crime horrible dont l'odeur a empuanti les narines du Bon Dieu... Personne n'a percé ce secret, enseveli dans l'oubli. Même pas lui qui court comme un cheval fou, flairant le vent, humant l'air... Pourtant ce crime est le sien. Le sien. (*Traversée*, p. 259)

Xantippe is not, however, omnipresent only in the imagination of Sancher. Along with Sancher himself, he is the only figure to be present in the narrative of every one of the villagers and this is the key to his wider importance within Condé's text.

It transpires that Xantippe's memory of '[le] crime horrible' which has marked Rivière au Sel's past is in fact a memory of something far wider than Sancher's personal ancestral crime. As he explains: 'Je sais où sont enterrés les corps des suppliciés. J'ai découvert leurs tombes sous la mousse et le lichen' (*Traversée*, p. 259). His is a memory of the 'crime' of which Sancher's ancestral crime has become emblematic: of the deaths of those slaves and maroons who attempted to escape, or perhaps even of Delgrès' men, pursued and killed as revenge for Delgrès' own 'heroic' deed. Xantippe's is a memory of the 'primordial' crime of slavery, which he remembers because he himself is its hero, the archetypal 'neg mawon' who, after the fire that destroyed his house and killed his wife, took refuge amongst the trees and plants of the woods — 'nos amis depuis l'Afrique' (*Traversée*, p. 255). In fact, his relationship with the landscape turns out to be even more significant, for his narrative goes on to read like a tale of creation as he tells of how he named these trees and plants. With a quotation from Césaire's *Cahier*, he describes also how he named the rocks and 'les ravines, sexes grands ouverts' (*Traversée*, p. 255). Evoking also the origin myths of *Ti Jean L'horizon* and *Les Cahiers de Djéré,* he decribes how the world in which the villagers live is one '[qui] est sorti de [s]es reins dans une giclée de foutre'. Like the hero of negritude, and like his father and his grandfather before him, he planted both the earth itself and the womb of his wife Gracieuse (*Traversée*, pp. 255-6).

Xantippe is thus the 'Original Father' of Rivière au Sel, and as such is apparently much more appropriate as a 'heroic figure' for that community than is an outsider such as Sancher. Importantly, however, he never comes forward to occupy a central position in the text. Rather, he effaces himself from the origin, remaining at all times present in the narratives of the villagers, but barely perceptible, and never as the subject of those narratives. In a manner far more radical than Sancher, Xantippe comes to occupy the position of the 'new' Negator imagined by Glissant, for this is a position which, it transpires, is not necessarily synonymous with Rosello's 'figure métis'. As Cailler once again points out in relation to Glissant's fictional texts, the figure of the 'new' Negator imagined there is one who 'yields his leadership position' not only to the people but, more specifically, to 'the people as *makers* of history and literature'.[30]

As each villager completes his or her narrative, what we begin to see in *Traversée de la mangrove*, too, is a shift in focus from the individual hero — of any sort — to the community itself, a movement from an individual 'I' to a communal 'we', to 'a collective plural subject' who acts and, above all, who speaks.[31] That is, what we see is the refusal of a community to allow itself to be effaced by a heroic figure who may 'represent' or 'unite' it, and the redefinition, instead, both of that community's relationship to the past, present and future of Rivière au Sel, and of its individual members to each other. As we shall see, in place of the heroic figure as consolidator of these communal relationships, is the more radical operation of what may be called, after Glissant, 'la poétique de la Relation'.[32]

This is a term which, as Cailler explains, is part of Glissant's own attempts to redefine the 'heroic' role in the Antilles, and it is apparently the source of Rosello's notion of 'alliance'. Just as 'alliance' is conceptualized as the opposite of 'appartenance', so 'la Relation' — a term itself derived from Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the 'rhizome' — is described by Glissant as a means of conceptualising identity in terms which are the very opposite of ideas of filiation, of single origins, and of 'enracinement'. That is, 'la Relation', like 'alliance', is a term which reclaims the importance of the cross- and inter-cultural relationships — the *métissage* — which is characteristic of Antillean culture even as it has been repressed and denied. It, too, speaks of the importance of chosen links across cultures, of 'leur partage consenti, non imposé', and describes the principle by which 'toute identité s'étend dans un rapport à l'Autre'.[33] It is a name, as Barbara Webb explains, for 'the dynamics of identity and difference in the complex interrelationships of cultures'.[34]

What is most significant about this term as far as Condé's text is concerned, however, is its multiple meanings. As Glissant explains in an essay of 1989, 'la Relation' is at once 'le relié (ce qui est relié)' and 'le relatif (ce qui s'oppose à l'absolu)', *but also* 'le relaté (ce qui est dit)'.[35] In *Poétique de la Relation*, he reiterates this further, and describes how, crucially, 'la Relation se dit':[36]

La Relation n'instruit pas seulement le relayé mais aussi le relatif et encore le relaté. Sa vérité toujours approchée se donne dans un récit... La Relation qui démène les

humanités, a besoin de la parole pour s'éditer, se continuer..., son relaté... se révèle comme la totalité des relatifs mis en rapports et dits.[37]

Not only is this significant because Condé's text, as we have seen, is made up of the disparate 'récits' of the villagers of Rivière au Sel. Rather, it is the function that these disparate narratives serve, for as the community is shown together at the end of the wake, the nameless sur-narrator of the final, framing section comments: 'il y eut un choeur de soupirs d'approbation, sans qu'on sût très bien si c'était la vie ou le commentaire sur Francis Sancher qui faisait l'unanimité' (*Traversée*, p. 264).

It is indeed evident that the villagers are by no means telling only of their relationship with the dead man — rather, they are telling also of their relationships with each other as the different narrators appear in each other's narratives, and as the same memory, or the same character's life, is narrated from different perspectives. As for Glissant, in Condé's text it is the very act of 'relating' (narrating) which relinks, and redefines, the community as a whole. More specifically, it is the act of narrating/relating the disparate and hitherto repressed memories of that community, and it is here that the role of Xantippe becomes clear. If it is not around him that the community gathers at Sancher's wake, any more than it is around Sancher, it is around those communal memories of which he serves as repository. These are memories not only of slavery and of *marronnage*, but they are of 'toute son histoire', a history which, like that of Fond-Zombi, has until now remained 'ensevelie dans l'oubli' (*Traversée*, p. 259). What is more, they are memories which, while they have paralysed Sancher and Xantippe — leaving them obsessed with, and fixed in, the past — enable the community, now, to orient itself towards its own future.

It is thus that Condé's text comes to resemble not that of Lucien Evariste, nor even that of Sancher himself, deliberately opaque. Rather, it resembles more closely that envisioned by Emile Etienne who, though called 'l'historien' by the villagers, is planning a book which will be the very antithesis of traditional History, of what he remembers as 'les tristes leçons d'histoire, le défilé monotone des batailles perdues, gagnées' (*Traversée*, p. 249). Instead, it will be:

> Une histoire de ce pays qui serait uniquement basée sur les souvenirs gardés au creux des mémoires, au creux des coeurs. Ce que les pères ont dit aux fils, ce que les mères ont dit aux filles. Je voudrais aller du Nord au Sud, de l'Est à l'Ouest recueillir toutes ces paroles qu'on n'a jamais écoutées. (*Traversée*, p. 251)[38]

What is evoked within *Traversée de la mangrove* is therefore the possibility that Antillean history may be rewritten otherwise than through the story of a 'heroic' figure — of any sort.[39]

What begins to become evident as Condé's text progresses, as it had also in *Ti Jean L'horizon* or *Les Derniers Rois Mages*, is that if there is a recoverable 'origin' of Antillean history at all, then that origin is clearly slavery, the 'ancestral crime' which haunts Rivière au Sel. As Glissant points out, the Plantation is 'la deuxième matrice, après le bateau négrier'.[40] However, as both he and the narratives of *Traversée de la mangrove* make abundantly clear, if slavery is such an origin, it is one which is neither single nor simple. It is not simply the story of the transportation of a people to a different land, nor simply that of the resistance of maroon heroes like Ti Jean, Delgrès, or Xantippe. Rather, it tells of cultural contact, of 'la rencontre des cultures... [un véritable] choc de cultures'[41] which led, eventually, to the creation of a new people, to the transformation of disparate peoples into 'une nouvelle donnée du monde... un autre peuple'.[42] As such, it is inevitably a story which is made up, like *Traversée de la mangrove*, of many stories: it is 'une tresse d'histoires',[43] woven from the disparate and interlocking memories of its disparate community. In other words, it is a story which is premised not upon 'le Même' — upon ancestral heroism and filiation — but upon what Glissant calls 'le Divers'. This 'Diversity' is, of course, that of 'la Relation', in which Antillean history is inevitably founded. It is this diversity — the *métissage* of Antillean history rather than simply Antillean history *per se* — which has most damagingly been effaced by the West.

For Glissant, it is only the recognition and rediscovery of the many strands of Antillean history which is capable of undermining the reign of 'le Même' in the Antilles. It is only this which will counter not simply the West's erasure of Antillean history, but the Antillean move of repeating that erasure via its obsession with History as heroism and filiation. What is more, such a radical

redefinition of history can only be effected by the Antillean people itself, by the mass of disparate Antillean communities. If the individual is the hero of History, the community itself is the 'hero' of history-as-diversity: 'comme le Même s'élève *dans* l'extase des individus, le Divers se répand *par* l'élan des communautés'.[44] It is for this reason that Glissant examines neither the potential of the traditional heroic figure nor, like Rosello, that of the individual 'figure métis'. Instead, he examines the dynamics of the 'communauté métisse', the way in which it may 'relate' itself, in all senses of the term. In particular — and here Condé's project intersects quite evidently with that of Glissant — he examines the *discourse* of Antillean communities: 'la trame obscure où leur silence se dit', 'l'élan des peuples néantisés qui opposent aujourd'hui à l'universel de la transparence, imposé par l'Occident, une multiplicité sourde du Divers'.[45]

This effort to redefine history is one which has wider implications for the Antillean people, for through it a new sense of community, a new sense of what it means to be Antillean, can be seen to be established. As we have seen, the realm of 'le Même', the obsession with origins and filiation, is not confined to the domain of history in the Antilles: at the same time, and inextricably, it governs also the Antillean attitude towards identity, both individual and as a people. What becomes clear in Glissant's work, as in that of Condé, is that as Antillean history is slowly reimagined, so *métissage* becomes not simply an inevitable characteristic of the Antillean people but — and here Spéro's acceptance of his Antillean situation of 'illegitimacy' is recalled — it comes to function as a new mode of communal self-definition. That is, the Antillean community, like that of Rivière au Sel, comes slowly to redefine itself no longer in terms of 'appartenance', or filiation, but in terms of 'alliance', or 'la Relation', as they build, however tentatively, 'a new sense of community... envisioned as a bridge across cultures'.[46] It is, moreover, this reimagined sense of communal identity which confers upon the individual her or his identity as Antillean: in the realm of 'le Divers', it is no longer the individual who acts for the community, but the community who enables the individual, who allows the Antillean, thoroughly linked — 'relié(e)/relaté(e)' — to her or his people, to claim her or his identity as *métisse*. As Glissant explains:

L'Antillais ne renie plus la part africaine de son être; il n'a plus, par réaction, à la prôner comme exclusive. Il faut qu'il la *reconnaisse*... Il n'est plus contraint de rejeter par tactique les composantes occidentales, aujourd'hui encore aliénantes, dont il sait qu'il peut choisir entre elles. Il voit que l'aliénation réside d'abord dans l'impossibilité du choix... Il conçoit que la synthèse n'est pas l'opération d'abâtardissement qu'on lui disait, mais pratique féconde par quoi les composantes s'enrichissent. Il est *devenu* antillais.[47]

It is this notion of 'becoming Antillean' which brings us back to *Traversée de la mangrove*, and specifically to an emblematic figure within the text: Sancher's son Quentin, born of his relationship with Mira. Quentin is, of course, the archetypal Antillean son: 'un bâtard' who, as Mira's brother Joby points out, 'n'aura aucun souvenir de son père' (*Traversée*, p. 105). Indeed Mira herself imagines him leaving Rivière au Sel when he is older and, 'comme Ti-Jean', wandering the countryside in search of his father. However, more importantly, she imagines also that when he asks if they knew his father — 'ou té konnet papa mwen?' — no-one will be able to answer him. Instead, some will reply that he was 'un fou', others that he was 'un maléficier', and others that he was 'un vagabond... On ne sait même pas si c'était un Blanc, un Nègre, un Zindien. Il avait tous les sangs dans son corps' (*Traversée*, p. 243). Crucially, Quentin will never discover the 'truth' for, as we have seen, no 'discoverable' truth exists. Here, the heroic quest for the legitimacy of the original Father is transformed precisely into a realisation that the quest is endless, that what is discovered at/as the 'origin' of Guadeloupean identity is *métissage*: uncertainty, impurity, conflicting and confused memories of origin. It is in this way that Quentin, although hardly present within the text of *Traversée de la mangrove*, can be seen to become emblematic of the future of Rivière au Sel as a refigured and revitalized Antillean community.

Such a reading of Quentin's role, however, is by no means that of his father: for Sancher, Quentin's *métissage*, indeed his birth itself, is far from liberatory. On the contrary, it is something which must, at all costs, be avoided, for Sancher is capable of imagining for Quentin only a repetition of his own life, spent searching for paternal ancestors and fleeing the curse of an ancestral crime. He sees his son, even before his birth, as a figure destined to be alienated rather than

enabled — or enabling for others — by the uncertainty of his paternal origins. Crucially, this is a form of limited vision on Sancher's part which works not only to restrict the life of Quentin himself but which, more widely, works to reabsorb the potential radicality of that which Quentin represents — *métissage* — back into a discourse of filiation. Rather than the emblematic, 'new Negator' figure imagined by Mira, Quentin resembles for Sancher a figure closer to the 'tragic mulatto' of traditional representations of *métissage*, those situated firmly within the discourses of filiation which have hitherto haunted the Antillean imagination and within which Sancher, entirely oriented towards the past and paralysed by his own genealogy, has himself remained squarely positioned.

Once again, Sancher's actions are potentially damaging, rather than enabling, for the redefinition of the community of Rivière au Sel. What is more, and even more importantly for the final part of this chapter, Sancher's attempts to claim his relationship to Quentin as the sole line of filiation possible, work also to restrict the life and expectations of Quentin's mother Mira. In so doing, Sancher effaces both the role of Mira in reproduction, and her relationship with her child — just as he had done also in the case of her stepmother Dinah, whom he drugged and then aborted. Indeed, this situation should come as no surprise for, as we have seen in previous chapters, traditional discourses of (heroic) filiation are, above all, discourses of masculine filiation, in which women are figured primarily as the mediators of all-male genealogies: as either 'guardians' or as 'pollutors' of the race, with no place of their own within these genealogies.

Thus the traditional constructions of *métissage* which these discourses have inevitably produced, and in which Sancher is apparently invested — *métissage* as 'impurity', as 'monstrosity and degeneracy' — are manifestations of 'a fear of conquest by the other' which is not only that of a Western imagination obsessed by 'Sameness' but, more specifically, is that of a Western imagination obsessed by a 'Sameness' which is masculine. As Lionnet has pointed out, the 'fear of conquest by the other' is a fear which has, necessarily, been mediated through the female body.[48] As she goes on to explain: 'what is at stake in the conservative resistance to *métissage* is clearly a patriarchal desire for self-reproduction, self-duplication, within a representational space — female bodies — uncontaminated

by the presence of the other'.[49] 'Le Même' is also patriarchy, its discourses of unity, of origins and of binary divisions are also those of phallogocentrism.

## MÉTISSAGE AND THE MATERNAL

As we began to see in the previous chapter, the effacement to which the diverse, communal memories of the Antillean people have been subjected is also the effacement to which the figure of woman, and indeed maternal genealogy in general, has been subjected. History's obsession with the Hero, and with heroic filiaton — whether that of the West or of the Antilles — has successfully effaced both the story of 'the people' *and* that of the women who have been the condition of existence of the Hero. As we have seen, however, the 'people' of Rivière au Sel are beginning to refuse to be thus systematically effaced, finding instead ways in which to link themselves together, to 'relate' to each other. Given the link between the effacement of communal memories, and that of maternal genealogies, it may seem fair to assume that any 'communal' discourse of liberation like the 'new' discourse of *métissage* might facilitate, more readily than a discourse of liberation based upon heroic filiation, the liberation also of women within that community. As Lionnet points out, in etymological terms at least, women would seem to have everything to gain from *métissage* as a discourse of liberation.[50] However, as we shall see, such links are by no means automatic as far as the (masculine) community at large of Rivière au Sel is concerned.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the community's interpretation of the relationship of the women of the village to Sancher himself, and in their ensuing treatment of them. Much of Condé's text is concerned with the scandal felt by the village at the news that both Mira and Vilma Ramsaran are pregnant with Sancher's children. The immediate and unanimous assumption, and especially given Sancher's status as outsider, is that he has raped both of them. What is then evoked sporadically throughout the text, are the various promises by the men of the village — and especially the women's brothers Aristide and Carmélien — that they will prove Sancher's guilt and seek revenge for his 'crimes'. It is clear,

however, that this desire to avenge Mira and Vilma is by no means motivated simply by concern for the women themselves. Rather, what is being played out is an all-male power struggle in which women, once more, figure only in a mediating role.

As Lionnet explains, and as we began to see also in chapters one and two, the wider discourse on women as mediators — 'pollutors' or 'guardians' — of paternal genealogies, has necessarily facilitated the emergence of more specific, nationalist discourses in which women, as guardians of the purity of a given race this time, are figured in terms of the protection and defence of the nation itelf. That is, the perceived need to protect a nation against invasion becomes figured as a national need 'to protect "our women" from being "taken" by the other, from becoming the instruments of miscegenation and *métissage*'.[51] Women themselves, and most especially female desire, disappear within this masculine scenario of conquest and defence. Within the context of *Traversée de la mangrove*, the men of Rivière au Sel interpret Sancher's relationship with both Mira and Vilma, with 'their women', precisely as an attempt on his part to 'invade' their community. Especially given the fact that Sancher is literally, and excessively, *métis*, and that the women are from the two most prestigious families in the village, it becomes clear that the men of Rivière au Sel see Mira and Vilma entirely as the desireless 'instruments' of *métissage*.

More specifically, given the precise context of the eventual relationship of the community to Sancher, the villagers' fear of Sancher's relationship with the two women can be seen to be one of Sancher's attempts to appropriate the radicality of *métissage* for himself, to become once more the central figure in the community. The threat is that of *imposed métissage*, of a *métissage* which is claimed by and belongs only to Sancher, and which thus threatens the agency of the men of Rivière au Sel itself. It is the threat, once more, of the engulfment and effacement of a community in the face of a 'heroic' figure. Unfortunately, in attempting to assert themselves against Sancher in this way, the masculine community of Rivière au Sel repeats the classic masculine and 'heroic' move of representing its movement towards liberation and towards 'authentic' identity as

one which depends upon the effacement of the figure of woman and of the female community.

What is effaced by the community at large as efficiently as by Sancher himself, is therefore not only female desire, but also, once again, the female role in both reproduction and, here, in *métissage*. Indeed, like Sancher, the men of the village attempt to dictate what constitutes 'appropriate' behaviour for Mira and Vilma once their pregnancies are discovered. Especially once Sancher is dead, both women are expected, in shame and humiliation, to return to their fathers' houses so that he might afford the protection necessary in the absence of Sancher. The converging discourses of Sancher and of the masculine community which resists him thus turn out to be equally narrow and restricting as far as the women of the community are concerned. In the narratives of the two women themselves, however, we see a different, and far more radical, interpretation both of their relationships with Sancher and of their consequences. In contrast with many of her previous novels, Condé does not simply demonstrate the limitations of masculine discourses for women: this time, the women are subject to a much less total erasure. In the narrative of Vilma, for example, we learn not of rape, but of the actions of a woman who decides to rebel against the very social and familial rules which have constructed her as exchangeable property (property 'to be raped'). It is when she is told that she is to have an arranged marriage to a local businessman, that Vilma goes to Sancher's house on the pretext of asking for work, becomes his lover and then discovers that she is pregnant. She thus effectively decides to challenge her father's attempts to sell her by devaluing herself as goods to be sold.

In a similar manner, we learn not of Mira's rape, but of her desire, for when her brother and father confront Sancher, the latter tells them: 'je ne lui ai pas dit de venir. C'est elle qui est venue. Je ne la retiens pas. Au contraire... c'est elle qui s'est offerte' (*Traversée*, pp. 74-5). It is at this point that Mira begins to speak for herself, and it becomes obvious that Mira did much more than simply 'offer' herself, or allow herself to be 'taken':

J'ai déboutonné sa chemise de gros bleu, défait sa dure ceinture de cuir. Il n'a pas soufflé un mot. On aurait dit un enfant devant une grande personne. Nous avons fait

l'amour sur le terreau au pied des fougères arborescentes. Il s'est laissé faire, non pas rétif, mais à l'affût de chacun de mes gestes. (*Traversée*, p. 58)

Like Vilma, Mira refuses to be constructed by the discourse of rape and powerlessness used by her father, her brother, and by the other men in the village and asserts instead her own desire as a woman. At the same time, and in a way that Vilma does not, Mira asserts also — and within the context of this chapter, more fundamentally — her role in Quentin's birth, and in what that birth represents in terms of the community's *métissage*. While we learn nothing of Vilma's attitude to the birth of her child, Mira is, as we have seen, quite certain about what she imagines for her son's future. Far from stifling his voice, as her father believes that she will out of shame at his 'illegitimacy', Mira imagines his future — as 'illegitimate' *and* as *métis* — in the same positive terms that Condé's text imagines the future of the community as a whole.

What is crucial, however, about Mira's own vision of the future is that it is a future which she refuses to imagine at the expense of her own. Rather, she imagines her own future in the same positive terms. She thus says of the attitude of both her father and of the other men: 'Il n'en sera rien. Ils se trompent les uns et les autres. Ma vraie vie commence avec [la] mort [de Sancher]' (*Traversée*, p. 245). Mira, as woman-mother, is inextricably *linked* to the 'avenir métis' of the community at large. In asserting her own desire, in deliberately occupying a position of active, desiring subject, Mira (and less explicitly Vilma) is also, and crucially, taking an active rather than passive or mediatory role in the communal *métissage* of which her offspring is the emblem. This time, woman has everything to do with, as well as to gain from, the vision of communal liberation as it is imagined here.

As the text develops, moreover, it becomes evident that women's involvement in *métissage* does not take place only at the quite literal level of reclaiming a role in the production of children who are actually *métis*. The *métissage* of the community of Rivière au Sel is one which, as we have seen, refers less to the literal racial mixing of the community, and more to 'la Relation' which links them together: the relation that is narration. Similarly, the involvement of women in this communal *métissage* is one which takes place primarily via narration, via

the relation of effaced communal memories. Thus *Traversée de la mangrove* becomes the text not only of a diverse commmunity but that also of a diverse community of women, a 'woman's text', for the narratives of Mira and Vilma are by no means the only inscriptions of female desire, nor are they the only spaces in which women's voices are heard.[52] It is at once the communal *and* the feminine texts — manifestations, both, of the Diversity which has been covered over — which are here working on the masculine, heroic text, the text of the Same, from within. It comes as no surprise that it is at the level of narrative that these two texts are linked, for it is once again Xantippe — that repository of communal memory — who facilitates a link. Xantippe appears not only in every villager's narrative, but he is also almost the only male member of the community to have a first person narrative, as do all of the women in the text.[53] What is more, this first/third person narrative split can itself be seen to be indicative of a further, much more significant, relationship between the feminine and the communal text.

As Lionnet explains, it is precisely first person narration which lends itself most obviously to *métissage* as resistance through narrative. This is because it enables more readily the self-creation in relation to other selves, across and between borders of race and culture, which is the basis of 'la Relation' as it is of Condé's text itself. Following this logic, it transpires that it is the women's narratives — those which take place in the first person — which are most active in the process of communal 'Relation'. Far from it being the masculine community at large which has the power either to liberate or to reefface women, it is in fact women themselves who, through the medium of narration, come not only to play a part in the process of *métissage* which takes place, but who come to occupy the most predominant role in that process. Everywhere, the multiple, 'feminine' stories do not merely run alongside the communal text — or much less underlie it, as was the case in *Demain Jab-Herma*[54] — but they actually move it forward; they are the condition of existence of the communal text of *métissage*.

Indeed, the entire text is actually mediated by women's narratives, for both the opening and closing framing sections focus on the women at the wake, the text

opening with the words of Léocadie Timothée and closing with the voice of Dinah singing psalms. What is more, many of the men's narratives themselves open with the direct speech of a female member of their family. Most crucially, however, just as Mira refuses to allow herself to be erased by/within the discourse of communal liberation, so the women's text mediates the communal text, but does so at the expense neither of itself, nor of the women who produce it. On the contrary, the women's text is predominantly the site of *women's* self-invention. The women's, first-person narratives become the spaces in which not only lost, communal links and connections are reclaimed, but, more specifically — and recalling chapters two and three — in which lost or effaced maternal links and connections are reclaimed. This is vital, as we shall see, if women are to become not only part of the community liberated, but part also of the very discourse of that liberation.

The narrative of Vilma, for example, does not only tell of her relationship with Sancher: it tells also of her relationship with her mother, Rosa. Equally, Rosa's own narrative tells of her relationship with Vilma, so that the two narratives become interlinked, like the lives of the two women. As we learn of Rosa's own unhappy marriage; of the way in which she has been denied a role in her sons' lives; of the death of her first daughter and her consequent inability to form a bond with Vilma, we see how mother and daughter, like those depicted in Condé's first two novels, have become separated and alienated from one another. It is Rosa, unable to imagine any other future for her daughter than a repetition of her own, who announces to Vilma that she too will have an arranged marriage. Rosa hands down to her daughter the same advice that she received from her mother, advice received also by generations of women before her: 'Une femme, c'est comme un oranger ou un pied de letchis. C'est fait pour porter! Tu verras comme tu seras contente quand ton ventre poussera lourd devant toi et que ton enfant remuera pressé de venir se chauffer au soleil de la terre' (*Traversée*, p. 198). This is advice which Rosa, from her own negative experience of motherhood, knows to be faulty, but which she nonetheless hands down to her daughter as part of the only maternal inheritance available to her to pass on. What is more, this is an inheritance which both conditions Vilma's first act of

resistance — her taking of Sancher as a lover — and prepares the way for a second, more complex, act of revolt after Sancher is dead.

When Sancher dies, Vilma looks for another method of rebellion — this time against the expected position of shame and repentance. Apparently paradoxically, it is to the traditions of her Indian ancestors that she now turns for inspiration, as she expresses her wish to follow Sancher in death by throwing herself onto his funeral pyre. For her, self-immolation constitutes the ultimate manifestation of her desire, of her power of choice, for it would link her irrevocably with a man to whom she was not married, but whom she chose in contravention of all the traditions to which her family adheres. This would apparently constitute a very different act indeed to that of Hindu widow sacrifice, or *sati*, in which the widows involved were called upon to show devotion to a man to whom they had been married via an arranged marriage like that which Vilma is fleeing. Indeed, as Gayatri Spivak points out, many such widows were even coerced into throwing themselves onto their husband's funeral pyre in order to prevent them from inheriting his wealth.[55] However, this was by no means the usual or even accepted version of the practice, but it was the version upon which the British came to focus during the years of colonial rule in India, and which led to *sati* being made illegal by them during those years.

Spivak's study of the implications of British law concerning *sati* is useful here, for it shows precisely how, in the colonial context, both imperialist and nationalist narratives are mediated through discourses on women's bodies, discourses in which women themselves disappear. Though on one level the abolition of *sati* was undeniably admirable, the conflicting discourse which sprang up around it meant that on another level, once more, 'the dubious place of the free will of the constituted sexed subject as female was successfully effaced'.[56] On one side of this binary of discourses was the British narrative of powerlessness and protection surrounding the widows, of 'white men saving brown women from brown men'.[57] This was a narrative in which women's bodies were used to represent the wider ideology of imperialism, in this case to help construct colonialism in India as a 'civilising mission'. On the other side of the binary, the discourses of Indian nationalism constructed *sati* as anti-colonial

action, as a manner of manifesting one's allegiance to ancient, pre-colonial law in an act of martyrdom not unlike that prescribed by the masculine heroic code of suicide and sacrifice in the Antilles. It is somewhere between these two extremes of the same discourse, somewhere 'between patriarchy and imperialism... [that] the figure of woman disappears'.[58] More specifically, it is within this space that *female desire* disappears, for the counter-narrative of *sati* as resistance — given that *sati* means 'good wife' — is in fact a construction of 'good female conduct', of 'the good woman's desire', and thus of female desire itself: the latter becomes synonymous with suicide.

The radicality of Vilma's own desired act can in this way be seen to lie in the fact that it is precisely *not* the conduct of a 'good wife', nor is it an act committed for the good of an anti-colonial 'cause'. She imagines it instead as a further manifestation of her desire, as a refusal to be constructed as powerless and passive. It remains, however, the manifestation also of a choice that is severely limited, of a choice between one discourse of effacement and another, and this has everything to do with the fact that the maternal ancestry upon which Vilma must rely — like Rosa, she possesses no other — is faulty. Rather, like *sati*, it has been rendered faulty by centuries of patriarchal-imperialist intervention and appropriation. It is, therefore, perhaps more radical that Vilma's revolt 'fails', that she never manages to commit the actions that she had desired to commit and is forced, instead, to return home. In so doing, Vilma commits a more meaningful act of refusal, for she refuses to undertake an act which has lost its meaning as a mode of resistance and become instead a mode of continued — and literal — self-effacement.

It is in this refusal that an alternative mode of resistance lies, for Vilma successfully breaks the patriarchal law which has hitherto governed the relationship of the women in her family to each other. In so doing, she awakens in her mother a form of self-realisation which then leads to a resuscitation of their relationship. Rosa realizes that her own disastrous relationship with her daughter has been part of a chain of such relationships, a chain whose unquestioned repetition has impoverished both of their lives as it has generations of mothers and daughters. Though it is rumoured that the wealthy Sylvestre will

continue to attempt to 'place' Vilma, Rosa herself, by the end of the narrative, imagines her daughter's return home as a chance to break this destructive chain of maternal inheritance by attempting instead to relink herself with Vilma:

> Je dirai à ma fille, mienne: 'Sortie de mon ventre, je t'ai mal aimée. Je ne t'ai pas aidée à éclore et tu as poussé, rabougrie. Il n'est pas trop tard pour que nos yeux se rencontrent et que nos mains se touchent. Donne-moi ton pardon'. (*Traversée*, p. 182)

It is with this decision, moreover, that Rosa herself begins to remember the more useful advice handed down to her by her own mother. This was advice which, contained in a story told to Rosa as a child, warned against the perils of marriage, thus subverting the patriarchal law that mothers were otherwise charged with perpetuating. Precisely because it was contained within an apparently inconsequential child's story, Rosa paid no attention to it years ago, but now it is with the same story that she begins her own narrative. The actions of her daughter have enabled her as mother and daughter to begin to reclaim a forgotten, maternal heritage, one hidden beneath paternal law but passed on, almost imperceptibly, at the same time. She now speaks her mother's words in order that they may enable her, in turn, to relink herself more efficiently with her own daughter.

Significantly, Rosa's is not the only female narrative to proceed in this way, for that of Dinah, too, begins with a song sung to her by her mother when she was young. Similarly, this is a song which warns against submission through 'love': they were the apparently inconsequential words of a mother, remembered now as vital maternal advice at a time when Dinah herself is undergoing a crisis. Dinah's narrative then goes on to evoke further memories of her mother's life, and especially of how she drew upon her own experiences in order to warn Dinah against marrying Loulou Lameaulnes and taking care of his motherless children. Like the daughter in the story told to Rosa by her mother, Dinah paid no attention to these warnings, 'parce qu'on n'écoute jamais les mères' (*Traversée*, p. 108), and it is only now that she decides to follow her mother's advice and, after years of mistreatment, to leave Loulou's house — 'ma prison, mon tombeau' (*Traversée*, p. 109).

At the same time as linking her own situation to that of her mother before her, Dinah also tells of her sympathy for Mira, her step-daughter whom she has always loved like a daughter, but whose sense of motherlessness she has always known she could do nothing to alleviate. In actual fact, Mira, unknown to Dinah, has managed perhaps more efficiently, and certainly much earlier than any of the other women, to link herself to her mother in an enabling way. Mira's mother, Rosalie Sorane, died at eighteen giving birth to her daughter, and though she cannot speak for herself, nor pass on to Mira cautionary stories of mothers and daughters, her daughter speaks for her and of her, evoking instead the paternal 'crime' which separated them:

S'il l'avait laissée tranquille, Rosalie Sorane, s'il l'avait laissée dormir dans la maison de sa maman qui s'asseyait cinq fois la semaine sur le marché de la rue Hincelin... mais qui voulait que sa fille parte étudier en métropole et devienne une licenciée, elle ne serait pas morte à dix-huit ans, vidée de tout son jeune sang, couchée les pieds froids entre deux draps de toile de lin brodée. (*Traversée*, p. 53)

Mira goes on to tell also of how, having been literally separated from her mother in this way, she was then separated from her once more when she was named. Faced with the refusal of the church to legitimize an 'illegitimate' child, Mira's father names her Rosalie Almira Sorane. However, both he and the rest of the community habitually call her Mira Lameaulnes: given that 'Almira' is the name of her paternal grandmother, Mira is effectively stripped once more of a connection with her own mother's side, and left instead with a double connection to that of her father.

Mira is left also with an acute sense of non-belonging and, from a young age, she takes to wandering the woods around Rivière au Sel and bathing in the forbidden ravine, in an attempt to escape the family from which she feels irremediably alienated. In fact, her wanderings in the woods become prolonged searches for her mother, for like Marie-Hélène and like Véronica, Mira reverses the masculine quest and goes in search of a lost maternal connection:

Je ne pouvais pas comprendre que, pour moi, il n'y avait pas de maman quelque part sur terre. J'étais persuadée qu'elle se cachait dans la montagne, qu'elle était protégée par les géants de la forêt dense... Un jour, à sa recherche depuis le matin..., j'ai buté sur

une roche et j'ai déboulé jusqu'au fond d'une ravine... Je n'ai jamais oublié cette première rencontre avec l'eau, ce chant délié, à peine audible... J'avais retrouvé le lit maternel. (*Traversée*, p. 54)

It is for this reason that Mira returns to the ravine as often as possible throughout her life, for also like that of Véronica and of Marie-Hélène, her relationship with her mother is figured via a relationship to her land. Unlike that of Véronica and Marie-Hélène, however, Mira's is a quest which succeeds, which leads to a maternal reconnection — a reconnection both to the Antillean land and to the mother — which, in Irigarayan fashion, is enabling.

It is this reconnection which distinguishes Mira — the only character to speak twice — from the other women in the text. She is at once the only woman fully to restore, in some manner, a broken link with her maternal ancestry and the only woman to assert herself successfully in the face of the discourses and practices which attempt to efface her as they had her mother. Hers is a reconnection which allows her to be part of the new discourse of communal liberation that is *métissage*, to resist the masculine and masculinist discourses which, as we have seen, make up the Antillean 'tradition'. Indeed, within the text under discussion here, Condé's Man Sonson, the black healer and female maroon-figure, describes her own experience of the Antillean tradition as both androcentric and excluding, as she tells of how, when she read Antillean *contes* as a child, she found them always to be lacking, for they never spoke about her, of 'moi, petite Négresse noire, née à Rivière au Sel' (*Traversée*, p. 90).

Man Sonson's reaction — which we learn before any other woman but Mira has spoken — was to invent her own stories. As she explains: 'j'imaginais mes histoires dans le creux de ma tête' (*Traversée*, p. 90). This, as we now see, has been precisely the project not only of Mira, but of almost all the other women whose narratives follow that of Man Sonson, for Mira does not come simply to occupy a privileged position in relation to the other women in the text. Rather, she can be seen to function as an emblematic figure, as an indication of what may be achieved by other Antillean women — within the text and outside it — if they reimagine their own stories at the same time as they reimagine those of the wider community. Thus the majority of women, like Vilma, end their narratives

looking forward to a future defined not simply in terms of their relationships with men — with husbands, lovers, fathers — but, more specifically, in terms of their capacity, at last, to take charge of their own lives. As Dodose Pélagie comments at the end of her narrative: 'voici venu le temps de mon re-commencement' (*Traversée*, p. 225). What finally becomes clear, is that once Antillean women cease to rely upon masculine discourses to liberate them, and attempt — with varying degrees of success — to imagine their own, it may be possible to invent a discourse of Antillean liberation which includes women, rather than effacing them. That is, that *métissage*, more than other discourses of Antillean liberation, may represent, as it does for Lionnet, a mode of rethinking *both* relations of race/culture, and of sex/gender, through the relation that is narration.[59]

Within *Traversée de la mangrove*, however, this possibility nonetheless remains, to a large extent, quite limited, for Mira's renewed sense of identity — and, indeed, that of the other women — is founded upon exclusions and erasures of its own. For example, Mira repeats, in many ways, the masculine move of achieving self-liberation at the expense of, rather than concurrently with, the mother. At the same time, and for Irigaray as a consequence, the sense of identity which both she and the other women acquire, is one which is obtained at the expense of each other. There is no sense of a renewed relationship *between* the women of Rivière au Sel, only of a continued rivalry between them and, moreover, a rivalry motivated by a desire to be desired by Sancher. This is especially true in the case of Mira's relationship with her stepmother, Dinah, and it is perhaps for this reason that her narrative ends looking towards the future, but towards a future which, she imagines, 'ne sera qu'une quête' (*Traversée*, p. 245). In this sense, the rethinking of relations of sex/gender, is one which is only just beginning. As we shall see in the following, and final, chapter, it is when Antillean history and identity in general begin even further to be redefined, that more empowering notions of Antillean female identity — both personal and communal — at last begin also to be imagined.

NOTES

1. Michèle Lacrosil, *Demain Jab-Herma* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967).
2. Maryse Condé, *Traversée de la mangrove* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1989).
3. For a fuller account of this period in Guadeloupean history, see Lucien-René Abenon *Petite histoire de la Guadeloupe* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992), pp. 83-96.
4. Micheline Rice-Maximin, 'The Maroon in Guadeloupean Literature', p. 16.
5. Beverley Ormerod, 'The Plantation as Hell: The Novels of Joseph Zobel and Michèle Lacrosil', in Beverley Ormerod, *An Introduction to the French Caribbean Novel* (London: Heinemann, 1985), pp. 56-86 (p. 58).
6. As Zimra comments, Delgrès occupies the position, in the text, of 'Guadeloupe's self-birthing first-born whom the folk always refer to as pure male principle ("un mâle")' (Clarisse Zimra, 'Righting the Calabash: Writing History in the Female Francophone Narrative', in Boyce Davies and Savory Fido, eds, *Out of the Kumbla*, pp. 143-60 (p. 153)).
7. Zimra, 'Righting the Calabash', p. 152.
8. Cragget's quest for whiteness is bound up also with the figure of Philippe, for with the latter's arrival in Pâline, Cragget is reminded of his desire for his own lost whiteness. Like Cajou before him, he turns his desire for whiteness into desire for Philippe himself: once again, Lacrosil 'turns on its sexist head the tragic mulatto paradigm' (Zimra, 'Righting the Calabash', p. 151) as she writes a homoerotic variation of Fanon's lactification plot into her text on Delgrès. Cragget dreams of Philippe at night, goes to his office each day in order to catch sight of him, and has sex with his lover Pilou in order, it would seem, vicariously to have sex with Philippe himself (*Jab-Herma*, p. 86).
9. Zimra, 'Righting the Calabash', p. 152.
10. Rosello, *Littérature et identité créole*, p. 27.
11. Ibid., p. 45.
12. Ibid., pp. 47-48.
13. Zimra, 'Righting the Calabash', p. 151.
14. Rosello, *Littérature et identité créole*, p. 55.
15. Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 497.
16 *Discours antillais*, p. 190
17. Rosello, *Littérature et identité créole*., pp. 42-43.
18. For Rosello, and here she is referring is to the cult of 'Schoelcherism', the self-effacing, Antillean 'worship' of Schoelcher as liberator: 'le héros mort et statufié est une autre version du libérateur devenu dictateur' (ibid., p. 53).
19. Bernadette Cailler, 'Edouard Glissant: A Creative Critic', *World Literature Today*, 63 (1989), 589-92 (p. 589).
20. Chamoiseau does not make exactly the same point as Vilma, but objects rather to the word 'traversée' because he feels that the more creolized expression 'tracée dans la mangrove' would have evoked not merely the impossibility of crossing a mangrove, but 'the path of the runaway slave' *in* the mangrove. This comment is in keeping with his general objection that Condé's text, while incorporating more creole expressions than her previous texts, remains largely aimed, with its explanatory footnotes, at a Francophone readership (Chamoiseau, 'Reflections on Maryse Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove*', *Callaloo*, 14 (1991), 389-95 (p. 390)).
21. Rosello, *Littérature et identité créole*, p.148.
22. Françoise Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 6.
23. Ibid., p. 14.

24. Ibid., p. 14.
25. Rosello, *Littérature et identité créole*, p. 144.
26. On the significance of the wake as the Antillean communal space *par excellence*, see Patrick Chamoiseau, 'Reflections on Maryse Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove*', p. 391 and Mohamed B. Taleb-Khyer, 'An Interview with Maryse Condé and Rita Dove', *Callaloo*, 14 (1991), 347-66 (p. 357).
27. See, for example, the essays on *Traversée de la mangrove* in Maryse Condé, ed., *L'Héritage de Caliban*, and Françoise Lionnet, '*Traversée de la mangrove* de Maryse Condé: vers un nouvel humanisme antillais?', *The French Review*, 66 (1993), 475-86.
28. Cailler, 'Edouard Glissant: A Creative Critic', p. 592.
29. Zimra, 'Righting the Calabash', p. 155.
30. Jab-Herma's position as 'figure métis' is also one of *bricoleur*, for he takes the beliefs of the (pre-colonial) past, of Africa, and uses them to new effect in a new situation. He thus forms a link not only between the sections of a community, but also between past, present, and future (on *métissage* as *bricolage*, see Lionnet, *Autobiographical voices*, p. 8).
31. Cailler, 'Edouard Glissant: A Creative Critic', p. 589. Emphasis mine.
32. Cailler, ibid., p. 592.
33. This is a theoretical concept articulated throughout Glissant's *oeuvre*, but which has found its fullest expression first in the section of *Le Discours antillais* entitled 'Poétique de la Relation' (pp. 246-54), and then in a later work *Poétique de la Relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990). As he himself states, the latter should in fact be seen as 'l'écho récomposé, ou la redite en spirale' of his previous work, and especially of *Le Discours antillais* and *L'Intention poétique* (*Poétique de la Relation*, p. 28).
34. Ibid., pp. 46-7; p. 23.
35. Barbara Webb, *Myth and History in Caribbean Fiction* (Amherst: Massachusetts University Press, 1992), p. 22.
36. Glissant, 'La Caraïbe, les Amériques et la Poétique de la Relation', *CELACEF Bulletin*, 3:1-2 (1989), 2-14 (p. 6).
37. Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation*, p. 219.
38. Ibid., p. 40.
39. Condé herself has set up a similar distinction between the writing of 'History' and that of 'the memory of so many communities' (Taleb-Khyer, 'An Interview with Maryse Condé and Rita Dove', p. 357).
40. In *Poétique de la Relation*, Glissant cites Faulkner as an example of a writer in whose *oeuvre* 'le jeu de... la Relation' is at work. In terms which could equally be applied to *Traversée de la mangrove*, he describes how Faulkner's novels are the antithesis of those traditional 'founding texts' — like *Ti Jean L'Horizon* or the *Cahiers de Djéré* — which seek proof of a single origin, and of 'enracinement'. Instead, like Condé's novel, they reveal the existence only of 'rhizomes', of insoluble enigmas and uncertain origins (p. 34).
41. Ibid., p. 87.
42. Ibid., p. 89.
43. Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 28.
44. Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, *Eloge de la créolité*, p. 26. The work of these 'post-Glissant' theorists of Antillean identity and history will be examined in greater detail in the following chapter.
45. Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 190.

46. Ibid., pp. 11-12. It is important to note that, for Glissant, the move from the individual to the communal is by no means one which must occur at the expense of the Antillean heroic figure, for he recognizes the importance, within the Antillean context, of moves to develop 'une poétique du "sujet", pour cela même qu'on nous a trop longtemps "objectivés" ou plutôt "objectés"' (*Discours antillais*, p. 257). At the same time, however, he feels that this move must be accompanied by an effort of 'démythification', 'parce qu'il doit être intégré à une décision commune', a 'we' rather than an 'I' (*Discours antillais*, p. 258). This double focus on the part of Glissant is one also which informs his attitude towards, and use of, 'Western' theory: '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. Par exemple, touchant la mise en question du texte et de son "auteur"' (*Discours antillais*, p. 257).
47. Webb, *Myth and History in Caribbean Fiction*, p. 25.
48. Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 18.
49. Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices*, pp. 9-11.
50. Ibid., p. 12.
51. As Lionnet points out, the term 'metis', in Greek, 'is also a proper name: that of the wife of Zeus, who swallowed her when she was about to give birth to Athena. Metis is subjugated by Zeus, who appropriates her power of transformation, "thereby guaranteeing his paternal authority for eternity"' (Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices*, p. 15). Lionnet herself is here citing from Marcel Détienne and Jean Pierre Vernant, *Les Ruses de l'intelligence: La Metis des grecs*, Paris: Flammarion, 1974). This is the same move of appropriation and effacement as that of Wademba over Awa, and as that of Sancher over Dinah, as well as of that of History over communal memories.
52. Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices*, p. 11.
53. It is interesting to note that Cailler associates Glissant's own radicality, in his novels, not only with the figure of 'the Negator' and with the poetics of *métissage*, but also with his inclusion of 'the woman's text', side by side with male efforts at remembering (Cailler, 'Edouard Glissant: A Creative Critic', p. 591).
54. The only exception is the child Joby who, significantly, is the brother of Mira and the uncle of Quentin.
55. Within and alongside the larger 'heroic' plot about the search for Delgrès, *Jab-Herma* is also made up of multiple, and muted, *sub*plots which turn around the position of various classes of women. As well as that of the *békée* Joëlle, we see the plight, for example, of the black, uneducated Clarine, taken in as a maid by Sougès after having been thrown out of her father's house, pregnant, aged fourteen and a half. We see also the plight of Pilou, Philippe's mulatto secretary and lover who admits that she is interested in Philippe simply because he is white (*Jab-Herma*, p. 79). At the same time, however, Pilou is aware of what Philippe's whiteness in fact represents: 'C'est pour ce jeune homme qu'elle a été déportée et vendue; l'exposition, la vente sur les marchés, les siècles d'oppression, c'était pour qu'il ait à sa convenance du sucre et des bénéfices. Elle ressent cela de façon brutale' (*Jab-Herma*, p. 79). Lacrosil, in her usual manner, ensures that it is Pilou, and not Cragget, who is shown to be most conscious of what her actions imply, thus ensuring that Pilou is not read, like Capécia's Mayotte, as an empty-headed *arriviste*. In an even more positive manner, when the village hears, from Jab-Herma, that the factory is under threat because of Philippe's decision, it is specifically the women who decide to go to Philippe in order to point out to him that the factory is the village's only means of survival. Here, though women remain clearly in the background throughout, they do move the text forward in a way that prefigures the position of women in Condé's text.

56. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, eds, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), pp. 271-313.
57. Ibid., p. 302.
58. Ibid., p. 297.
59. Ibid., p. 306.
60. Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices*, p. 9.

# FIVE

## NARRATIVES OF ENSLAVEMENT AND LIBERATION: FINDING A 'MOTHERTONGUE'

The texts to be explored in this chapter are, like those examined in the previous two chapters, concerned with the (re)writing of history. Both texts, much more overtly than any of those hitherto examined, are narratives of resistance: to what Glissant terms 'History' and, more specifically, to histories of slavery, both dominant and marginal. Condé's *Moi, Tituba, sorcière... Noire de Salem,*[1] for example, seeks both to rewrite dominant historical narratives on the Salem witch trials of seventeenth-century New England and to explore various historical portrayals of slavery. Dany Bébel-Gisler's *Léonora, l'histoire enfouie de la Guadeloupe,*[2] meanwhile, deals like Condé's *Heremakhonon* and *Une Saison à Rihata*, with the contemporary Antillean experience of the legacy of slavery. Indeed, *Léonora* describes a period in Guadeloupean history which begins with the movement towards mechanization and increased productivity already documented in Lacrosil's *Demain Jab-Herma*, but it is at the same time a history of much stronger and more organized forms of resistance to contemporary exploitation.

As is the case in several of the novels examined in previous chapters, both *Tituba* and *Léonora* are concerned with the dual project of personal and collective history-writing. Like the project of *Traversée de la mangrove*'s Man Sonson, that of both of these first-person narratives is to rewrite the history of a period and of a people at the same time as writing a specifically female subject into that history — a history from which she would normally be erased. It is this simultaneous attempt to rewrite history and to write oneself into that history which is the key to yet another project of *Tituba* and *Léonora*. Like most of the texts so far studied, *Tituba* and *Léonora* can be seen to be evoking, and reworking, an already established tradition of writing. This time, however, the search for new ways in which to explore Antillean history and identity has gone much further than the Antillean tradition itself, towards a mode of writing which

has never existed in the Antilles, but which may be seen to be the tradition *par excellence* of 'marginal' history-writing: that of slave narrative.

Predominantly an African-American tradition, slave narrative was popular throughout North America during the nineteenth century, though published as early as 1703 and as late as 1930.[3] The narratives typically took the form of a first-person account of the horrors of slavery by an ex-slave who had fled the South in search of freedom in the North, and they were usually written down after having been narrated by the ex-slave at meetings arranged by white abolitionists. These same abolitionists, in a bid to expose the system of slavery and to further the abolitionist cause, subsequently sponsored the publication of the narratives, often also editing them and frequently acting as ghostwriters for those ex-slaves who had remained illiterate. The narratives were not conceived as a mode of charting the life of a specific slave, but as valuable documents about a particular historical period, the personal dimension existing only to authenticate the exposé of slavery itself. Indeed, in order to guarantee that they were truthful accounts of slavery, the narratives were bound by thematic conventions and a formulaic structure which ensured that each narrative was simply 'a personal variation on the general theme'.[4]

Conventions which for an abolitionist audience guaranteed the authenticity of the narrative as historical document, however, were for the slave narrator a fundamental aspect of a much more personal project. The medium of slave narrative can be seen to have represented for the narrator both a means of recording and reliving a life-saving personal history of physical self-liberation from slavery and as a way of reaffirming the significance of the physical attainment of freedom by writing about it.[5] The rigid, chronological order of slave narrative, its conventions and formulae, as well as the necessity of examining the wider context of the system of slavery, became a crucial element in what Donald Wesling describes as the therapeutic importance of the impulse to 'claim and to order experience in personal narrative' through writing.[6] The act of writing slave narrative, however, can be seen to represent a form of liberation — both personal and collective — in a much more fundamental manner: writing, it must be remembered, was an activity from which slaves were entirely

excluded. Indeed, learning to read and to write was an activity violently punishable by law.[7] As 'un gouverneur de la Martinique', quoted by Bébel-Gisler, is reported to have insisted: 'la sûreté des Blancs exige qu'on tienne les nègres dans la plus profonde ignorance'.[8]

As has been well documented, it was intrinsic to the colonial enterprise that colonized peoples were constructed as 'naturally' inferior, as a 'sub-human species' whose exploitation could be justified as a civilising mission. As Davies and Gates point out, and as we have seen in chapter three above, it is precisely the ability to write, to leave recorded marks of history, which has been associated, by the West, with 'civilization' and 'humanity': 'without writing there could exist no repeatable sign of the workings of reason, of mind; without memory or mind there could exist no history; without history there could exist no 'humanity', as was defined consistently from Vico to Hegel.'[9] The continued denial of access to writing for slaves was thus necessary if 'the Negro race' was to continue to be consigned to the realm of the non-human and, more specifically, to the realm of the body rather than the intellect. As Bébel-Gisler explains:

A l'intérieur du rapport esclavagiste, seul compte le corps de l'esclave... Les Nègres, les Indiens, n'ont pas le statut d'homme..., L'esclave va être la 'source d'énergie', la 'force mécanique', 'condition inorganique et naturelle de la production' (Karl Marx), n'ayant de valeur que son corps, corps productif, assujetti'.[10]

According to Bébel-Gisler, the slave is stripped of any identity except that which is inscribed upon his or her body: 'la marque au fer rouge incrustée dans leur chair' which takes the place of a name and which marks the slave as the master's property.[11] At the same time as representing nothing but body, the slave is him or herself dispossessed of his or her own body, a body from which s/he is violently and physically alienated '[un] corps... déchiré à coups de verge jusqu'à ce que le sang coule de toutes parts'.[12] For Smith, the slave is therefore not only without physical freedom, s/he is dispossessed both of body and of what she calls 'mind' — of 'selfhood' or subjectivity; of the possibility of saying 'I'; of 'humanity'. To flee slavery is therefore to take possession, for the first time, of a body which has

never belonged to the slave. What is more, according to this argument — and it is one which will be problematized later — to write the story of that flight, to say 'I', is to claim an identity beyond that which has been marked upon the body by the master, to assert one's identity as a human subject. The writing of slave narrative therefore represents nothing less than 'freedom from non-being',[13] 'self-writing' in a quite literal way, a mode of 'healing the breach between... mind and... body created by slavery'.[14] More even than this, it serves, as Davies and Gates go on to point out, at once to confer a 'historical consciousness' upon an entire race — to counter accusations that 'the Negro race' lacked humanity because it lacked history — and to discover and explore how one's own identity has been constituted by that history. It is thus a mode of writing oneself into history as subject of that history, rather than as subject to it.

Such are the projects of *Tituba* and *Léonora*, and in the former in particular it is clear that the motivation for the narrative is precisely the narrator's problematic position in relation to dominant historical discourses. As Condé points out in the 'Note Historique' which follows Tituba's narrative, Tituba has been a victim of 'le racisme... des historiens' (*Tituba*, p. 278), and as Tituba comments:

> Je sentais que dans ces procès des sorcières de Salem qui feraient couler tant d'encre... mon nom ne figurerait que comme celui d'une comparse sans intérêt. On mentionnerait ça et là 'une esclave originaire des Antilles pratiquant vraisemblablement le "hodoo"'. On ne soucierait ni de mon âge ni de ma personnalité. On m'ignorerait... Condamnée à jamais, Tituba! (*Tituba*, p. 173)

This formulation of her absence from History is repeated several times throughout the text, each time accompanied by the realization that it is her blackness which prevents her from being recorded along with the other 'witches' of Salem. Tituba is entirely aware that her colour has ensured that she, like all slaves, has systematically been '[rayée] de la carte des humains... un non-être. Un invisible' (*Tituba*, p. 44).

The rehabilitation of Tituba into the History of the Salem witch trials is, however, only part of the project of the narrative. Perhaps more important, in

terms of Antillean history, are those elements of Tituba's narrative which describe her experience of slavery in Barbados before her journey to Salem, and her part in organized slave resistance upon her return after the trials. Indeed, it is this aspect of her story which perhaps explains the similarities between Tituba's narrative and those of nineteenth-century slaves. For example, like many of the nineteenth-century narratives — and we shall return to this aspect of the text in due course — *Tituba* is presented as having been narrated by an illiterate ex-slave to a 'ghostwriter', Condé, who is capable of writing her story for her.

From the title and frontispiece of the text, which bear both the narrator's name and image, to the content of the text itself, *Tituba* makes use of the conventions and formulae of slave narrative. Prologues and epilogues, written by the narrator's abolitionist sponsor and patron were an important part of the texts: in *Tituba*, Condé provides a short explanatory note, prior to the text, which details her relationship with Tituba, as well as the 'Note Historique' in support of Tituba's narrative after it. Similarly in line with convention, there is a poetic epigraph, by 17th century Puritan poet John Harrington, followed by the traditional opening lines of the narrative itself which, like Man Sonson's 'Moi, petite négresse noire née à Rivière au Sel', outline the place and conditions, though not date, of the narrator's birth. As the text then proceeds, conventional episodes are similarly described: hangings, escapes, incidents of violence, of bravery and of resistance.

*Léonora*, too — the story of a Guadeloupean peasant-woman 'née avec le siècle' — is laden with the formulae and conventions of slave narrative. Like *Tituba* — and, again, we shall return to this aspect of the text later — *Léonora* is narrated by an illiterate peasant-woman to a literate 'ghostwriter', Bébel-Gisler. Similarly, the narrative is clearly motivated by a desire to redefine a hitherto partial version of Guadeloupean 'history' as Léonora claims that her story represents 'la première fois qu'un événement avait lieu ici et qu'on le donnait tel qu'il s'était passé' (*Leonora*, p. 281). Like *Tituba*, *Léonora* bears the conventional title and frontispiece of a slave narrative, while Bébel-Gisler provides an epilogue in which she discusses the life of Léonora and the writing of her story, and Anmann, another Guadeloupean peasant woman, provides a

'prologue' in which she discusses slavery and resistance to it. There is a poetic epigraph, this time in the form of an extract from the Guadeloupean poet Sonny Rupaire's 'Moi, Guadeloupéen' and, when the narrative itself begins, we are presented once more with an account of the narrator's birth.

Though the legal institution of slavery has been abolished half a century before Léonora's birth, her narrative tells of how plantation workers until at least the 1970s worked in conditions which had hardly improved since the period in which Tituba experienced similar poverty and exploitation. However, if Léonora has thus inherited the legacy of slavery so, too, has she inherited the legacy of resistance, for it is through her personal involvement in the burgeoning trade union and pro-independence movements, and then her recounting of it here, that we learn, as did the readers of nineteenth century slave narrative, of contemporary modes of 'escape' from colonial exploitation.

Neither *Léonora* nor *Tituba*, however, represents simply a latter-day replication of the nineteenth-century slave narrative. Rather, both are attempts to expand and to disrupt the tradition of history-writing which they evoke. As we shall examine during the course of this chapter, this expansion and disruption takes many forms, but it takes the form most obviously, and by now perhaps unsurprisingly, of an interrogation of the basic tenets of slave narrative from the perspective of gender. Slave narrative, it transpires, is one more form of marginal history-writing which is premised not simply upon a quest for selfhood, but upon a quest for male selfhood. That is, it is a narrative of liberation based upon the healing of a breach between a mind and a body which are both imagined to be masculine.

## 'IMPOLITE' STORIES

As several critics have pointed out, slave narrative can be seen to represent not simply the accession to 'subjecthood' but, more specifically, the accession to manhood or masculinity: an escape from slavery-as-emasculation.[15] What is more, like those similarly gendered narratives examined in previous chapters, slave narrative — perhaps inevitably — works not only to exclude, but actually

builds itself upon the exclusion of, women. As Joanne Braxton has pointed out, in perhaps the best-known slave narrative of all, that of Frederick Douglass, woman occupies the exemplary place of the 'outraged mother' who 'sacrifices herself and improvises for the survival of flesh and spirit and, as mother of the race... is muse to black poets.' As she also points out, however: 'when I surveyed the literature of the critical wilderness... I found her absent. I imagined our ancestor mothers lost forever'.[16] Travis similarly points to the position of Frederick's Aunt Hester, who is mentioned in order to fulfil the narrative convention that the slave's first observed whipping should be described. Hester's experience, Travis feels, is used primarily as an example of the emasculation and powerlessness felt by the male slave narrator. She herself is erased as a subject in her own right and, like so many victims of acts of violence suffered specifically by female slaves, her story is written out.

While slave narratives routinely described — even sensationalized — acts of physical violence suffered by the slave, cases involving 'females', as one slave narrator cited by Travis himself remarked, were usually seen as 'too disgusting to appear in the narrative'.[17] What is more, when women themselves were permitted to occupy the position of narrator they fared, it seems, little better. Less numerous and less well-publicized than those written by men, slave narratives like Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* were frequently written under a pseudonym and necessarily subjected to self-censorship. For example, in order that her audience — largely made up of middle-class white women — should not be offended by her specifically female experience of the violence of slavery, Jacobs situates her narrative within the tradition of the domestic or sentimental novel, which constrains the narrator in a way that male slave narrators were not constrained. This is not the search for selfhood of the male narratives, but the search for the 'respectability' of marriage and motherhood. Sexual harassment and rape become 'polite stories of impolite "seductions"', and sexual desire is written out.[18] For the female slave narrator, as much had to be 'disremembered' as remembered, so that the 'breach between mind and body' was simply deepened further as the particular bondage of the female body was obliged to undergo further erasure.

It is this erasure which both *Tituba* and *Léonora*, in their attempts to write into history the stories of female subjects, actively work towards countering. Both are stories of women — not simply of the narrator, but of women in general and of relations between women — and both discuss frankly the specifically female experience of slavery and its violence, as well as issues of sexuality and sexual desire. *Léonora*, first, is a story of female traditions and female resistance: from the beginning, it is her mother's side which Léonora evokes, and to which she connects herself. She recounts how, in her family, her mother was the most important figure, 'le "poto-mitan" du foyer', despite the fact that her father lived with them (*Léonora*, p. 12). She recounts also how, as children — and this differs radically, for example, from the way in which Spéro and his family were brought up in *Les Derniers Rois Mages* — 'nous avons toutes été élevées à nous méfier des hommes. La famille côté maman compte beaucoup plus... on peut compter sur une soeur "côté maman", alors qu'avec une soeur "côté papa" on n'est jamais sûr' (*Léonora*, p. 78). Thus, 'abandonnée, à la dérive, tu peux toujours te réfugier chez ta soeur' (*Léonora*, p. 201) and, throughout her own life, it is upon the women of the family — strong and dependable — that Léonora relies.

Léonora is not, however, idealistic about the strength or power of women. She recounts also the injustices of a social system in which the mother is at once the most important member of the family, even of a community, but is never acknowledged as such, or given the rights which she both needs and deserves.[19] When Léonora begins to become politicized, and to become involved in movements for workers' rights and independence, she remarks that it is women who are most numerous among the activists. For Léonora, it is obvious that these women have the most to learn, and to gain, from these actions of self-empowerment but that for them, becoming involved in such action is dependent upon, even as it enables, gaining freedom from restrictive and suffocating marital and familial situations. This is the case for Léonora herself, and she comes to realize that marriage represents for her, as for countless other women, little more than a second mode of enslavement. Indeed, in direct contrast to female slave narrators such as Jacobs, for whom marriage was a signifier of 'respectabilty', it

is in these terms that she describes the sense of freedom that her eventual separation from Joseph affords her:

Depuis cette séparation, je me sens autre, je fais ce que je veux, je suis bien, je sais diriger ma vie... je me sens bien dans mon corps, je suis d'accord avec moi-même, d'accord avec la vie que j'ai maintenant choisie... je ne me voyais pas, comme avant, lui porter son café... je m'étais débarrassée de toutes ces moeurs d'esclave. (*Léonora*, p. 291)

Importantly, as she also makes clear, leaving Joseph also allows Léonora to tell her story, to articulate her felt sense of liberation. In a move which again echoes slave narrative, Léonora, after having discovered this new sense of freedom, undergoes a name-change. In the slave narrative tradition, the ex-slave conventionally describes how, after his escape, he exchanged his slave-name for for a new name both to prevent recapture and as a marker of freedom. Léonora, asked to sign a petition during a strike, signs with her unmarried name, and when she is asked if she is divorced, she replies simply: 'non, je ne suis pas divorcée, mais je préfère mettre ce nom-là' (*Léonora*, p. 285). This has everything to do, it would seem, with her new self-definition as: 'une femme libre, chérissant sa liberté..., personne ne m'empêchera d'être libre. C'est une question d'honneur pour moi' (*Léonora*, pp. 191-2). Though, as we shall see, Léonora's sense of freedom has come also from a renewed sense of herself as a Guadeloupean, it is obvious that her change of name signifies her attainment of freedom as a Guadeloupean woman — and in a way that the female slave narrators of the nineteenth century could never have articulated.

*Tituba*, too, reworks slave narrative from the perspective of gender, with the opening scene itself at once recalling and reworking one of the most fundamental formal conventions of the slave narrative tradition. Not only does Tituba's narrative begin with a description of the place of the narrator's birth, but it tells also of the specific details of the all too common, but most usually unacknowledged, conditions of her birth: 'Abena, ma mère, un marin anglais la viola sur le pont du *Christ the King*, un jour de 16** alors que le navire faisait voile vers la Barbade. C'est de cette agression que je suis née. De cet acte de haine et de mépris' (*Tituba*, p. 13). Here, Tituba's mother, far from being erased

as 'silent ground' of the narrator's coming into being, is herself written into the text and, as we shall see, continues to be written into the story of Tituba's life — as, more generally, does the reality of the female experience of slavery. When Tituba describes how, as a child, she witnessed the slaveowner's attempted rape of her mother, it is neither an image of the emasculation felt by a male slave on seeing the victimage of his female relatives, nor is it a scene rewritten as 'a polite tale of "impolite seduction"'. Neither, importantly, is it a scene of female powerlessness, for Tituba passes a knife to her mother and Abena stabs Darnell. Though she is hanged for the crime, it remains an image of resistance credited usually to an 'outstanding' male slave — as Olney comments, often, like Abena, 'pure African'.[20]

Rape is described elsewhere in *Tituba*: this time that of Tituba herself at the hands of the Churchmen of Salem as they attempt to force her to 'confess'. So, too, however, are bodily pleasure and female sexual desire, subjects equally erased from nineteenth century slave narratives. But is upon her return to Barbados, that the most radical and positive aspect of Tituba's representation of her experience of slavery unfolds. It is here that we see, once more, the place of women within those marginalized histories of slave resistance, as she joins a maroon community and attempts to become involved in their revolutionary activities. Unfortunately, she rapidly discovers that the maroon community is highly gendered and patriarchal. Indeed, when she is first taken to their encampment in the hills, she is confronted by 'les Marrons... avec leurs femmes et leurs enfants': the maroons are, by definition, men — and women, it seems, are not maroons (*Tituba*, p. 223). Tituba is anxious to act rather than be acted upon, however, and when her continued requests to be allowed to fight with the men are met only with hostility and derision, she leaves the maroons and returns to her own role as 'maroon' figure, living in the cabin that she had built in the years before she left Barbados for North America, as healer to slaves on nearby plantations.

She returns to cultivating plants and practising the art of healing until she meets and cures Iphigène, a slave who has been whipped and left for dead and with whom she eventually participates in a slave rebellion. Though Tituba,

together with Iphigène and the others who rebelled, is hanged for her part in the uprising, her story does not end there. After Tituba's death, Condé's text continues, and we learn how, although she may have been forgotten from the history of Salem, she has been remembered in the popular history of her island. While Christopher, the archetypal maroon-hero, had assured Tituba that he alone who would be immortalized in song for his heroic deeds, we learn after her death that she, too, has such a song of her own, that: 'elle existe, la chanson de Tituba! [On] l'entend d'un bout à l'autre de l'île' (*Tituba*, p. 267).

Tituba has, it transpires, become a heroine of the oral history of her people, 'une légende parmi les esclaves' (*Tituba*, p. 246) to stand beside those of Christopher and of other maroon heroes; the legendary figure in Barbados which, she realizes, she could have become in Salem. There, had she chosen to play the role asked of her by her accusers, and caused the hanging of thousands of people by denouncing them, '[elle] serai[t] entrée dans l'histoire sous l'étiquette "le Démon de Salem"' (*Tituba*, p. 230). She would have had a name beyond that of 'une esclave de la Barbade pratiquant vraisemblablement le hodoo'. Significantly, she becomes a legendary figure in Barbados by assuming the very role that she had always refused to assume in Salem: that of 'witch'. It is witchcraft which links both parts of her story, for the colonial authorities make clear that it is as a witch that she is hanged for her part in the rebellion, thereby meeting precisely the fate that she had escaped in Salem. However, her adoption of the role of 'witch' is radical also in another way, for it is via witchcraft that Tituba enters her people's history as a specifically female figure of resistance. Witchcraft, of course, is a disruptive role traditionally assigned to and associated with women — indeed, which can be seen as a 'feminine' force of disruption, as a threat to the prevailing order: in this case, patriarchal and colonial.

As Catherine Clément points out, as far back as Michelet's *La Sorcière* (1862), witchcraft was being analysed precisely as a 'feminine' force of disruption and rebellion, as 'la femme trouvant son autonomie dans la dépendance satanique d'une "contre-culture"', d'un contre-coup culturel'.[21] Xavière Gauthier, in an essay introducing a feminist literary review entitled *Sorcières*, similarly describes witches as 'femmes lunaires, lunatiques, atteintes

— disent-ils — de folie périodique. Gonflées de révolte fulgurante, de colère bouillonnante... sauvages. Sauvages comme l'homme blanc le dit des autres ethnies'.[22] As Gauthier also points out: 'si la figure de la sorcière apparaît comme méchante, c'est qu'elle est, de fait, un danger pour la société phallocratique'.[23] If witchcraft is 'wicked', it is because it disrupts from the inside: it exists alongside and within dominant and repressive cultural forms. This Tituba discovers when the knowledge which she had used to heal and to cure on the plantations of Barbados is interpreted quite differently within the narrow, religious community of Salem. There, it is interpreted precisely as 'counter-cultural', and specifically as anti-Church. Indeed, it is when she uses her knowledge of herbal remedies and, above all, of the female body, that she is denounced as a witch, for she succeeds in curing Elizabeth Parris' indefinable illness where countless doctors had failed. Since Elizabeth suffers, it would seem, from a 'dis-ease' in patriarchy — brought on by the fear and revulsion inspired in her by her husband, and by the desires which she is forced to repress — it is because Tituba's knowledge is too powerful, too threatening, and too 'feminine', that is cannot go unpunished.

## 'Speaking in Tongues'[24]

The knowledge possessed by the witch is both 'feminine' and revolutionary also, and perhaps primarily, because it is a knowledge which has been handed down through generations of women. Witchcraft is subversive because — like madness for Irigaray — it is a tangible sign of that most subversive of relationships, that link most threatening for patriarchy: the link between mother and daughter. Even more than this, witchcraft can be seen not simply as an emblem of that submerged link but, more specifically, as a mode of communication between mothers and daughters and, as we shall see, between women in general. As Gauthier points out,

> [Les sorcières] chantent... L'écoute d'une autre parole. On a voulu nous faire croire que les femmes ne savaient pas parler, écrire, qu'elles étaient bègues, qu'elles étaient muettes. C'est seulement qu'on voulaient les forcer à parler droit, avec des mots carrés, avec des phrases rectilignes, dans l'orthodoxie. En réalité, elles chantent des berceuses,

elles hurlent, elles spasmodient, elles murmurent, elles crient, elles gémissent; elles se taisent et même leur silence s'entend.[25]

In other words, witchcraft can be seen as a disruptive 'mothertongue', a 'language' which has linked generations of women and, at the same time, provided them with a means of sustenance and support through generations of repression and oppression.

This is precisely the role imagined by Irigaray for female madness: not simply as an emblem of the suppressed link between mother and daughter, but as a mode of speaking the alienation of which it is a symptom, as one of the few ways in which women are, at present, able to speak as women within patriarchal-phallogocentric structures. As she explains: 'l'hystérie, *ça parle* sur le mode d'une gestualité paralysée, d'une parole impossible et aussi interdite'.[26] For Irigaray, such a mode of communication is a vital necessity for women in patriarchal culture, for if mothers and daughters — and therefore women in general — are radically exiled from each other, the relationship from which they are exiled is, primarily, a 'relationship of communication'.[27] That is, positioned simply as commodities upon whose exchange the functioning of patriarchy depends, women not only have no access to the position of subject but, crucially, they have no access to the position of speaking subject.

Inevitably part of the social order of 'between men', language is one of the many 'commodities' exchanged between men to maintain the smooth functioning of the hom(m)osexual economy.[28] And in order to represent itself as rational, reasonable, clear, logical (and so on), phallogocentric language must repress those opposing terms within a prevailing binary structure — irrationality, madness, obscurity, emotion — which have come to be associated with 'the feminine'. Women, traditionally associated with femininity, have represented the repressed foundation of male subjectivity, its negative, its waste or excess, in the same way that 'the feminine' has been the repressed foundation of rational phallogocentric discourse.[29] It is for this reason that when a woman does speak, she is obliged — like the nineteenth-century female slave narrator — always to speak in ways which maintain her position of exile, in ways which endlessly restage the masquerade of universal language: 'à défaut d'un langage sexué

féminin, [les femmes] sont utilisées pour l'élaboration d'une langue soi-disant neutre mais où elles sont privées de parole'.[30]

It is only with the articulation of 'un langage sexué féminin' that women will be able to speak as women, and it is such an articulation which is thus, for Irigaray, urgent. Only this will enable women to speak as female subjects, will provide a means of exchange between women, a 'parler femme' with which women can begin to relate to each other in a mode other than that of rivalry. Thus for Irigaray, as Margaret Whitford explains: 'woman as subject in language and in the symbolic is the condition of the coming-to-be of woman-as-subject in the social'.[31] What is more, of course, the creation of this new, 'feminine plural gender'[32] must begin with the relationship between mother and daughter. The 'parler femme' must first, in fact, be a 'mothertongue', a mode of exchange like madness or witchcraft, which will allow the crucial maternal connection to be thought.

Thus Tituba's knowledge and powers have been handed down to her by her mothers — by Abena her biological mother and by Man Yaya who took care of her after her mother's death and initiated her into the art of 'witchcraft'.[33] It is the power to contact 'les invisibles' which is most enabling for Tituba, for it means that she is able to remain in contact with both Abena and Man Yaya long after their deaths. Even in Salem, she is still able to feel their presence around her and when she is at her most desperate she uses these inherited powers to call upon her mothers to appear before her. The question that she most needs to ask is: 'est-ce que je retournerai à la Barbade?' (*Tituba*, p. 126). Throughout her life in Salem, Tituba has dreamt not only of her mothers, but of her motherland, of 'les mornes de ma Barbade... Pays, pays perdu' (*Tituba*, p. 126). Like that of Véronica, of Marie-Hélène or of Mira, though in a much more positive way, Tituba's relationship with her mothers is indissociable from her relationship with her land. What is more, her power to remain connected with her maternal ancestry allows her to remain connected also with her motherland. She takes a bowl of water, for example, and transforms it — 'j'y enfermais la Barbade' (*Tituba*, p. 101) — into a 'crystal ball' in which she is able to see her motherland and derive strength from it.

When she finally returns to her island, Abena and Man Yaya are awaiting her and, most importantly, it is her island itself who, like a *griotte*, recites her connection with her mothers as she returns: 'L'île bruit d'un doux murmure: "Elle est revenue. Elle est là, la fille d'Abena, la fille de Man Yaya. Elle ne nous quittera plus"' (*Tituba*, p. 227). Tituba not only returns, literally, to her mother(s')land, in a manner which never proved possible for Véronica or for Marie-Hélène but, importantly, she never needs to make what might be termed a 'spiritual' *re*connection either to her land or to her maternal ancestry: she had never become disconnected from either. Furthermore, the chain of maternal relationships which so enabled Tituba herself is continued even after her death, for the knowledge passed down to her by her mothers is passed down once more to Tituba's own female descendant Samantha. A chosen, rather than biological daughter, Samantha is the daughter of Délices, whom the 'dead' Tituba saves from a difficult labour. Importantly, because Tituba saves Délices as well as Samantha, the latter is not, like Mira in Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove*, a motherless child: rather, like Tituba herself, she has two mothers from which to derive support. It is through her relationship with Samantha that Tituba ensures that her story is never finished, that it continues by way of a chain of female descendants — a chain of excluded, marginalized and disruptive women which goes far beyond that of Tituba's own immediate maternal family.

As Clément points out, the disruptive power of the witch not only resembles that of the hysteric — whom both Irigaray and Clément consider to be the example *par excellence* of the contemporary 'disruptive woman' — but the two figures are themselves related. The witch is, in fact, the foremother of the hysteric, she can be seen to have inherited 'le passé refoulé... [les] réminiscence[s]' of resisting and marginalized women, like the witch, who have come before her.[34] All these women belong to what Clément calls '[la] zone imaginaire', in which all that is feared and thus rejected or marginalized by 'culture' is contained — 'mythes... fantasmes... fragments de témoignages, ces bouts de l'histoire'.[35] They belong to what Tituba herself refers to as 'the hidden side of things', 'faite de mots de passe, de conseils chuchotés et de conspirations de silence' (*Tituba*, p. 241).

In other words, these women form part of an 'alternative' history. Like 'la chanson de Tituba', this is 'une histoire prise dans ce qui est perdu de la tradition orale'.[36] It is a history 'agencée selon les procédés des *conteuses*', a history arranged in the form of stories, themselves handed down from generation to generation — of women.[37] As we have seen, it is a history which has been absent from History. What is more, this oral tradition of history, as both Clément and Gauthier point out, has frequently been the recourse of women — women who, otherwise, 'n'avaient pas de fonction culturelle dans la transmission du savoir'.[38] The *conteuse*, the 'tale-telling woman', is herself part of the chain of disruptive and marginal women to which the witch and the madwoman belong. As both Clément and Gauthier, as well as Trinh Minh-ha point out, the witch herself is a storyteller: her powers are themselves handed down, from generation to generation, in stories and myths and in legends — like 'la chanson de Tituba'.[39] Stories and storytelling, and certainly in *Tituba*, become yet another mode of exchange between women, a 'feminine language' which links them together in a form of alliance wider than that between mothers and daughters. In many ways, *Tituba* becomes, as does Toni Morrison's *Beloved* for Linda Anderson, 'a series of stories that characters tell themselves and each other about their lives'.[40]

In *Tituba*, many of the alliances built through storytelling are alliances between black and white women. The wives of plantation owners, for example, are repeatedly depicted as victims of the patriarchal-colonial social structures of which the female slaves themselves are victims, and they become friends with both Tituba and with her mother before her. In both cases, the relationships are cemented and sustained by the stories — African in the case of Abena and Caribbean in the case of Tituba — that the black women tell to their mistresses. Much later, in the maroon camp, Tituba finally succeeds in establishing a relationship with the other women who live there — women who have treated her with hostility since her arrival — by joining in their sessions of storytelling, in which they make up women-centred myths of origin (*Tituba*, p. 237). Perhaps the most important relationship between women, however, and certainly between black and white women, is that between Tituba and Hester, a white woman imprisoned for adultery (like Nathaniel Hawthorne's Hester Prynne) at the same

time as is Tituba for witchcraft. Hester has, like Tituba, rebelled against the strictures of a patriarchal culture. As she tells Tituba, who refers to the dominant, white society of New England as that to which Hester belongs: 'ce n'est pas ma société. N'en suis-je pas bannie comme toi? Enfermée dans ces murs?' (*Tituba*, p. 152).

Hester is apparently much more aware than Tituba of her own position, as a woman, within patriarchal culture, though she initially — and perhaps predictably — displays a lack of awareness about the differences which separate her from Tituba.[41] For example, Hester tells Tituba of how she has always dreamt of writing a novel, to tell of a society inhabited and governed entirely by women: 'mais hélas! Les femmes n'écrivent pas! Ce sont seulement les hommes qui nous assomment de leur prose' (*Tituba*, p. 159). While she is unable to write because of a cultural taboo, Tituba, she forgets, is literally unable to write because her condition of slavery has guaranteed that she remains illiterate. Despite these initial misunderstandings, however, the two women do discover common ground. Neither woman, for different reasons, may be able to write, but both women, it transpires, are skilful *conteuses*. Thus Hester helps Tituba to 'invent' her statement for the coming trial by familiarising her with the Western concept of 'the witch' and encouraging her to use her skills as a storyteller to her advantage.

When not preparing for Tituba's trial, the two women tell their own stories to each other, as a substitute for not being able to write them down, and they discover a common past of betrayal, exile, imprisonment and aborted pregnancies. In stark contrast to the black-white female relationships experienced by Cajou and Sapotille, the relationship between Hester and Tituba eventually comes to be based upon mutual understanding as well as difference. It is Hester, when they first meet, who asks Tituba: 'ne m'appelle pas maîtresse' (*Tituba*, p. 151), and if Tituba finds her unthreatening it is because her eyes, unlike those of most white characters to be found within the texts so far examined — are not blue, but 'noirs comme l'ombre bienfaisante de la nuit' (*Tituba*, p. 150). Hester's gaze, for Tituba, is one that is positive and enabling in a way that those of Stéphanie or Marjolaine never were for Lacrosil's Cajou. Later, in an ultimate

gesture of solidarity, Hester hangs herself, thus imposing upon herself — and connecting herself with — the punishment usually reserved for witches like Tituba. What is more, after her death, when Tituba has been driven into temporary madness and silence by her grief, Hester visits her and comforts her. Significantly, it is only after this manifestation of support and solidarity that the relationship between the two women becomes overtly sexualized and, once again in stark contrast to the experience of Cajou, the sexual aspect of their relationship is initiated by the white woman Hester.

Hester continues to visit and to give support to her friend throughout Tituba's life and after her death, thus joining Man Yaya and Abena. Indeed, it would seem that the positive connections with white women, made by both Tituba and by her mother, are strengthened by those connections which were never lost with a black female heritage to which neither Cajou, nor Sapotille, nor any of the women so far examined, had access. It is apparently because of the sustained, 'vertical' connection with her mothers, that Tituba is able to resist being absorbed into 'horizontal' connections with other women, even when those other women are white. We are presented, here, with the possibility of female relationships which neither exploit nor ignore difference, as Hester becomes part of those forgotten stories of women to which Tituba and her mothers belong. Hester becomes one more forgotten 'heroine' of those occulted, 'alternative histories' which have never 'counted' because they have never been written down — histories of witches, adulteresses, lesbians, of women resisting the dominant social order in different, but related ways — but which have been handed from generation to generation of *conteuses* like Tituba or Hester. As Tituba herself remarks in relation to her own oral notoriety: 'je n'appartiens pas à la civilisation du Livre... C'est dans leurs cœurs que les miens garderont mon souvenir... C'est dans leurs têtes. Dans leurs cœurs et dans leurs têtes' (*Tituba*, p. 269).

Of course, Tituba does, eventually, become part also of 'la civilisation du livre' as, via Condé's text, her story enters the realm of written history — both dominant and marginal. Significantly, however, it is via the twin, and enabling, 'mothertongues' of witchcraft and storytelling themselves that this takes place.

As Condé explains in a brief statement before the text of *Tituba*: 'Tituba et moi, nous avons vécu en étroite intimité pendant un an. C'est au cours de nos interminables conversations qu'elle m'a dit ces choses qu'elle n'avait jamais confieés à personne'. It is by 'appearing' to Condé as her mothers have always appeared to her, that Tituba tells her story and that Condé herself then becomes a part of the matrilinear chain of resisting women whose history she and Tituba are engaged in recalling and recording. What is more, not only is story a vital element of Tituba's life and survival, and of her entrance into the realm of written history, but also to the very form which that written history takes. A form which, once more, simultaneously evokes and disrupts the tradition of history-writing within which it positions itself.

Slave narrative, like those other attempts at counter-history which have been examined in previous chapters, is inevitably a part of that Western tradition of History-as-Truth, a tradition based, equally inevitably, upon a separation between 'oral' and 'written', between 'fiction' and 'fact'. In order to escape the realm of the 'primitive', to remove from itself all trace of what could be interpreted as a tradition of oral-(hi)storytelling, slave narrative was constrained, as we have seen, to represent itself as excessively true. As Olney points out, it was demanded of the ex-slave narrator that s/he give 'a true picture of slavery as it really [was]', and to do so s/he must claim that 'he [sic] is not emplotting, he is not fictionalising, and he is not performing any act of *poiesis* (= shaping, making)'. For the narrator's memory to be 'creative' is for it to be 'faulty', for '"creative" would be understood by skeptical readers as a synonym for "lying"'.[42] Fictionalising, storytelling are therefore associated with 'untruth', in order that History alone may represent itself as true and authoritative.

It is via an incident which takes place as Tituba and Hester tell each other stories that Condé's rather different investment in 'story' and 'truth' is signalled. When Hester asks Tituba to tell her and her unborn child a new story, Tituba replies as would a traditional Antillean *conteuse*: 'Tim tim, bois sèche! La cour dort?' (*Tituba*, p. 156). However, as the *conte* continues, Hester begins to suspect that Tituba is recounting her own story — beginning with her birth — in fictionalized form. When Hester asks her for confirmation of these suspicions,

Tituba refuses either to confirm or to refute them, and it is in so doing that she draws attention to the way in which her story is told also by Condé herself. As *Tituba* develops, it becomes apparent that it is precisely part-history, part-story: that it has sprung from a memory which is both 'creative' and 'emplotted'. *Tituba* is a text which, despite its similarities with the tradition of slave narrative, refuses to remove vestiges of the oral tradition, or to choose between fact and fiction, the oral and the written. Rather than emphasising, as does the writer of slave narrative, her attempts to remain faithful to Tituba's story, Condé instead readily admits that her text is at least part invention. She foregrounds this throughout and, appropriately, it is at the points in her text when her role as 'ghostwriter' apparently replays most closely the conventions of slave narrative, that her fictionalization becomes most evident.

Such is the case during Tituba's trial, when Condé inserts what we are informed is part of Tituba's actual statement, taken from archives. The insertion of legal documentation is familiar from slave narrative, where it was used as further 'authentification' of the story's veracity. In Condé's text, however, it serves to draw attention to those parts of Tituba's story which are 'inauthentic', for the archival material is clearly marked off from the rest of the text. In her 'Note Historique', Condé makes this point much more clearly. It is, in fact a 'Note non-Historique', for she discusses how, at the point of Tituba's liberation from prison, all historical record of her disappears: 'A qui [fut-elle vendue?] Le racisme, conscient ou inconscient, des historiens est tel qu'aucun ne s'en soucie' (*Tituba*, p. 278). She refers to other versions of Tituba's story,[43] but declares that for her own part: 'je lui ai offert... une fin de mon choix' (*Tituba*, p. 278). We therefore learn that at least the second half of Tituba's story, which deals with her status as maroon heroine, is not based in 'fact'. Tituba is located, it would seem — as Linda Anderson feels is so often the case with 'the missing woman in History' — in 'the cracks, the slippage, between fact and fiction'.[44]

Tituba can, in fact, be seen to be emblematic of 'the missing woman in History', for if she herself did not live the events recounted in her story, then countless women like her certainly did. These are women who, like the maternal ancestors of Tituba and Condé, have themselves been forgotten by History:

Condé's text is concerned not with putting one exemplary figure or individual 'heroine' into history. Rather, it is concerned with finding ways in which best to disrupt the very tenets of a historical tradition while simultaneously rewriting it — while restoring to it the many aspects of that which has been consistently excluded and written out. What is more, Condé's chosen mode of disruption, storytelling, is one which, especially in the Antilles, is by no means associated solely with women. Rather, it is associated with — even as — the Antillean tradition itself.

As we saw in both chapters three and four, the oral tradition in the Antilles — 'contes, proverbes, "titim", comptines, chansons...'[45] — has always been an important part of Antillean culture and of the collective Antillean imagination. Indeed, in *Lettres Créoles*, Chamoiseau and Confiant claim 'le conteur', not the maroon, as the Antillean ancestor — literary and otherwise — *par excellence*.[46] Unfortunately, of course, as A. James Arnold has pointed out, this reclaimed ancestor — as well as his descendant, 'le marqueur de paroles' (the Creolophone writer who records the words of 'le conteur') — is yet another male ancestor who this time effaces generations of tale-telling women. As Arnold declares:

> On reading Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, not to mention Glissant, we would be hard pressed to account for all those grandmothers or elderly aunts, those repositories of oral history, folk medecine, and stories of all sorts who have been credited by nearly all women writers in the Caribbean with stimulating their writing careers. None of these female figures of cultural transmission find their way into the history of *oraliture* that Chamoiseau and Confiant have constructed.[47]

Once more, women are thus marginalized members of an already marginalized tradition — for, 'masculine' or not, the oral tradition has always, as we have seen, been viewed from the outside as inconsequential and insignificant. Consistently decoded as mere diversion, for example or, at best, as a precursor to 'real' (written) history, it has never been viewed as an important mode of history-making itself. It is for this reason, of course, that the ex-slave narrators were constrained to erase the oral tradition from their narratives in order to enter the realm of written history. Similarly, it may be suggested that it is for this reason that both *Tituba* and *Léonora* are constrained to borrow from the tradition of

slave narrative in order to attempt a project of personal and communal history-writing. What Condé reminds us is that like the story of Delgrès told endlessly by the workers in *Demain Jab-Herma*, or like the story of Ti Jean, or those recounted at Sancher's wake in *Traversée de la mangrove*, *contes* are precisely a form of both personal and communal history-making. All of these *contes* represent the attempts of communities and individuals to put themselves into a history of their own making, to 'storytell' themselves into existence as did Tituba in her story to Hester, or Man Sonson in her reinventions of the *contes* that she knew as a child.

## *CRÉOLITÉ* AND *CRÉOLE*

For the writers of *Eloge de la créolité*, the devaluation of the oral tradition represents one of the most significant dimensions of Antillean alienation.[48] Not only because *contes* vitally represent a suppressed and devalued mode of history-making, but because the oral tradition is emblematic both of Antillean history and of Antillean identity. As they point out, the oral tradition is extremely diverse, containing within it remnants of Carib mythology, African *contes,* European and Indian oral and written traditions, as well as elements, more recently, of Chinese, Syrian and Libyan cultural forms. The coexistence of such cultural multiplicity attests to the complexity — the *créolité* — of Antillean culture, of the Antillean past, and of the Antillean people. For Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, it is this *créolité* which must urgently be claimed — which must be reinvented rather than rediscovered — for it is this alone which forms the basis of Antillean identity, of 'antillanité'.[49] It is this, alone, which will provide a viable alternative to the Antillean obsession with single origins — historical, cultural and personal. As they explain: 'du fait de sa mosaïque constitutive, la Créolité est une spécificité ouverte... L'exprimer c'est exprimer non une synthèse, pas simplement un métissage... C'est exprimer une totalité kaléidoscopique'.[50] What is more, once the complex, Creole character of 'antillanité' has been accepted, it will become possible for the Antillean people to move towards a wider sense of *créolité*, towards a sense of solidarity with other

peoples of the 'diaspora' community. These 'new solidarities', in turn, will expand the notion of *créolité* itself, and will enable the Antillean people to position themselves at once as Antillean and as Creole, as part of a wider community of colonized and transplanted peoples — the peoples of the rest of the Caribbean, those of South America, and African-Americans, for example.[51]

For the writers of *Eloge de la créolité* — as for Glissant — cultural forms such as literature have a vital role in the reinvention and assertion of *créolité*. They point explicitly to the failure of negritude's characteristic obsession with singularity (though they acknowledge its historical necessity),[52] and advocate instead the creation of a new, creole literature for the Antilles, 'une littérature qui ne déroge en rien aux exigences modernes de l'écrit tout en s'enracinant dans les configurations traditionnelles de notre oralité'.[53] Within the context of *Eloge de la créolité* — whose authors, writing three years after the publication of *Tituba*, position themselves quite self-consciously as the latest in a line of (male) Antillean thinkers and writers — Condé's project in *Tituba* can be seen to be radical indeed.

The interaction of storytelling and history-writing, the *rapprochement* (or rather '*rerapprochement*') between slave narrative and *conte* in *Tituba* makes it part of the 'literary *créolité*' which Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant urge must be invented. At the same time, the very scope of Condé's text — which takes place between the Caribbean and North America, and in which positive links are forged also with other communities — with the Jewish Benjamin; with African-American women like Judah White; with the Native Americans who work with John Indien and even with white women such as Hester — Condé's text would appear to be looking forward precisely to the 'new solidarities' envisaged in *Eloge de la créolité*. That is, it may be seen to be a text which, in its search to redefine both Antillean history and Antillean, female identity, moves towards an increasingly wide and enabling form of 'créolité acceptée'.

The idea of *créolité*, and of the relationship between the oral and the written, the fictional and the historical, is vital, too, in the narrative of Léonora, and in Léonora's own search for a mode of history-writing appropriate both to the Antilles and to Antillean women. Like *Tituba*, as we have seen, *Léonora* both

mirrors quite closely, and endeavours to interrogate, the tradition of slave narrative — and especially from a gendered perspective. *Leonora* is concerned also, and perhaps more overtly than *Tituba*, with interrogating that tradition from a specifically Antillean perspective. As in *Tituba*, story is an important element of Léonora's narrative and, throughout, reference is made to the stories — often about exemplary women, or else cautionary tales to girls — which circulate in Léonora's village: tales of Persillette (*Léonora*, p. 33); of Dioudji, (p. 60); of 'la Diablesse' (p. 156); even of the women with Delgrès at Matouba (p. 60). Later, the importance of storytelling is made all the more evident, for it is via story that the members of the trade union and independence group pass the time and derive strength when they are held under siege in the church (*Léonora*, p. 272).

The oral tradition, too, is frequently the way in which the advice and support given to Léonora by her mother, sisters, aunts and cousins is transmitted. Leonora recalls a song, in particular, which was sung to her by her mother and grandmother before her, and which she now sings to her own children. This is a song which is at once part of a vital maternal inheritance — it tells of 'papa [qui] n'est pas là' and of 'maman toute seule [qui] reste dans la misère' — and, more generally, part of her Guadeloupean inheritance, part of 'le dire, le faire des Anciens, leur vision du monde [qui] sont enracinés en nous, le bon comme le mauvais' (*Léonora*, p. 79). For Léonora, as for Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, 'c'est tout ça qui nous a fabriqués, nous, Guadeloupéens' (*Léonora*, p. 79). It is this oral tradition — 'le dire, le faire des anciens' — which, like witchcraft or storytelling in *Tituba*, comes to facilitate Léonora's entrance into the realm of written history via her relationship with Bébel-Gisler. This we discover in both *Le Défi culturel* and in Bébel-Gisler's 'Postface' to *Léonora* in which, in much greater detail than Condé, she discusses her relationship with the narrator of the story she has written down. For Bébel-Gisler, her relationship with Léonora is one which is based upon, and made possible by, their shared background as Guadeloupean women, a shared background so strong that it overrides any separation occasioned by education. Léonora's is, she feels, '[l']histoire... aussi, que j'ai en partie vécue enfant' (*Léonora*, p. 297).

Through this shared background, as Bébel-Gisler points out, 'a pu naître cette complicité entre Léonora et moi' (*Léonora*, p. 298). It is this complicity which, in turn, enabled the writing of the text of Léonora's narrative and the entrance of Bébel-Gisler into the text as part of the chain of Antillean women whose story she is recording. Like the entrance of Condé into the chain of Tituba's maternal ancestors and descendants, this aspect of Léonora's and Bébel-Gisler's text can be seen as an important enactment of that influence, cited by Arnold, of women storytellers on their writing daughters; a timely and vital acknowledgement of the ancestral *conteuse* missing from male-authored accounts of Antillean literary history. However, what is equally important about the relationship between Léonora and Bébel-Gisler in particular, is that crucial element of the Guadeloupean inheritance which they share with each other and with their tale-telling *aïeules*: Creole. The story told by Léonora to Bébel-Gisler, like all of the stories told throughout *Leonora*, is one told entirely in Creole: rather than the oral tradition in general, it is Creole in particular which mediates their relationship.

This is perhaps one of the most important aspects of *Léonora*, and certainly of its reworking of the slave narrative tradition — for there, too, language is of key importance. As we have seen, one of the most liberatory effects of slave narrative is typically imagined to be the way in which the ex-slave gains access to subjectivity — to 'humanity' — when s/he gain access to language, to the possibility of saying 'I'. However, what the majority of commentators on slave narrative fail to address is the question of which language the ex-slave gains access to and, moreover, of what may in turn be repressed in order that this access is gained. What Bébel-Gisler points out in *Le Défi culturel* is that it is only the dominant language which is conceptualized 'comme symbole d'accès à l'humain'.[54] What must be remembered is that while literacy in the dominant language was forbidden during slavery, that language was otherwise, at every level and in very specific ways, an imposed language. Thus when Bébel-Gisler, in a manner which evokes the inextricability rather than mere simultaneity of the slave's bodily and linguistic dispossession, writes of: 'paroles entravées par la muselière de fer qu'on appliquait aux esclaves, interdites, étouffées',[55] she is

evoking not the bodily punishment imposed upon slaves for speaking French, but that for speaking, first, African languages and, later, Creole.

It is this legacy of linguistic self-repression which, for Fanon, has been at the root of the 'Antillean neurosis' which he examines throughout *Peau noire, masques blancs*. In 1957, over a century after the abolition of slavery as a legal institution, Fanon describes how Creole, in the Antilles, continued to be seen as nothing more than 'un moyen terme entre le petit-nègre et le français',[56] while French continued to represent access to 'humanity': 'le Noir Antillais sera d'autant plus blanc, c'est-à-dire se rapprochera d'autant plus du véritable homme, qu'il aura fait sienne la langue française'.[57] Some thirty years after Fanon was writing, Bébel-Gisler examines how the social meaning attached to speaking Creole — 'la langue des pauvres' — added to its routine prohibition in schools, remains so strongly entrenched that the use of French continues to be seen, and especially by workers and peasants, as the only valid mode of communication. For Bébel-Gisler, this is a mode of linguistic dispossession equally as violent and as bodily as that suffered during slavery, a dispossession '[qui] pénètre par tous les pores de l'individu (je pense aux coups que reçoivent les enfants quand ils parlent créole), elle gangrène les relations sociales'.[58] For her, as for Fanon, language is at the root of contemporary Antillean 'neuroses', of what she calls 'cette aliénation..., cette zombification' (*Léonora*, p. 299).

This, too, is the thesis of Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant. For them and for Bébel-Gisler, to posit oneself as a subject in French is therefore to continue to allow oneself to be duped by the colonial doctrine of assimilation; it is to continue to believe that 'seule la Francité (adoption conjointe de la langue française et de ses valeurs) nommait l'Homme'.[59] For Bébel-Gisler as for the writers of *Eloge de la créolité*, it is Creole — learning to write it and learning to use it in situations hitherto reserved for French — which represents 'le devenir' of the Guadeloupean people. It is Creole which represents the means of access to 'ce nous-mêmes enfoui sous la francisation'[60] — the manifestation *par excellence* of *créolité*. For Bébel-Gisler, quite simply, it is Creole, and not French, which represents 'la possibilité d'*être*'.[61]

That Creole is not a formal, institutionalized language can be seen to be part of its radicality as a language of resistance. Césaire, as Bébel-Gisler herself points out in *Le Défi culturel*, found Creole's lack of formal grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation to be the primary reason for what he has described as its inadequacy as an alternative national language for the Antilles. Unable, he said, to imagine giving a speech, or of writing, in Creole instead of in French, Césaire explained his reasons thus: '"tout discours est une oeuvre de réflexion, c'est une oeuvre conceptuelle alors il faut que je le fasse en français. Voyez-vous, le créole, c'est la langue de l'immédiateté, la langue du folklore, des sentiments, de l'intensité"'.[62] For Césaire, Creole is 'la langue de l'affectivité', incapable of being associated with 'rationalité, rigueur, cohérence, pureté'.[63] It is, rather, 'langage de la "folie"... Langage de la déraison, de l'illogisme, de l'irrationalité'.[64]

For Glissant, the very 'madness' of Creole, its lack of clarity and logic, are the inevitable results of a history of repression: they are the 'inevitable reactions against the numbed silence of the past'.[65] For Bébel-Gisler, it is through reversing the process of linguistic dispossession that 'Antillean neurosis' — the dispossession of Antillean identity in all its forms — may be cured. First, for example, gaining access to Creole becomes also the fundamental method of restoring the lost relation to the Antillean body; 'de récupérer ce corps volé par le maître, agressé par la France assimilatrice' (*Léonora*, p. 298). The men and women interviewed in *Le Défi culturel* describe the liberating effects of learning Creole in terms, primarily, of the sense of liberation from a bodily discomfort that they have always felt at being unable to participate meaningfully in public life. For Léone, 'ouvrière agricole', the sense of bodily liberation which comes from speaking Creole in formal situations is straightforward: 'farfouiller dans le langage fait bander le corps, nous fait agir. Il faut que la langue se dilue pour que le corps marche... Lorsque tu ne comprends pas une parole, ton corps est gêné. Tu te sens chaud, chaud'. For another woman, learning to read and write Creole has meant that she now dares to speak at meetings because, quite simply, she is 'plus à l'aise dans [s]on corps'.[66]

According to Bébel-Gisler herself, 'pour un adulte analphabète, apprendre à lire et à écrire c'est en quelque sorte, même s'il ne le sait pas, prendre le risque d'exister, faire un pari qui engage l'être tout entier, c'est-à-dire son corps'.[67] What is more, this equation of 'l'être tout entier' and 'le corps' is one which, as Bébel-Gisler explains, is made in Creole itself, for: 'le lexème *ko*, en créole, correspondant de *corps* en français, véhicule une philosophie tout à fait différente de celle qui est liée à ce concept en Occident'.[68] *Ko* means 'la personne entière'; in Creole there is no conceptual split between mind and body, *ko* is both 'âme et corps':

Lorsqu'on dit '*ko*', on évoque en même temps l'ensemble des rapports qui lient l'individu à sa famille, aux vivants comme aux morts, en une chaîne symbolique qui intègre les rapports à la maladie, à la vie, à la mort, aux ancêtres, aux esprits, à la nature. Rapports noués au sein de la violence esclavagiste, porteurs de cette histoire inscrite dans les corps et dans le langage où gît la mémoire d'un monde imposé et subi mais combattu et subverti par l'imaginaire et le symbolique.[69]

For those interviewed by Bébel-Gisler, Creole, in a manner not true of French, would seem to represent a mode of healing the 'breach between mind and body' identified by Smith as the result of slavery. For Bébel-Gisler, this is primarily because French does not contain within it the Antillean history that Creole does: 'cette langue... nous est mémoire, archive matérielle et symbolique'.[70] (Re)learning to use this language is thus not only to discover one's denied Guadeloupean identity, but it is to posit oneself as subject not of the French history to which Guadelopeans have been subjected, but of hitherto marginalized Guadeloupean histories. It thus represents: 'le chemin qui le mènera à devenir soi-même, à se poser comme sujet de cette histoire nouvelle'.[71]

It soon becomes clear that *Léonora*, too, despite its evident similarities with the tradition of slave narrative, and despite the fact that it is written in French — a point to which we shall return later — is a text which refuses to accept the basic tenet of that tradition: that it is access to the dominant language which holds the key to self-liberation through self-expression. Narrated in Creole, *Léonora* charts not the revelatory moment of coming to the dominant language, of the gaining of access to literacy in French, but it deals rather with the process of gaining access

to Creole, as both a spoken and a written language. *Léonora* is a text which is concerned not only with communal and self-liberation from contemporary forms of 'slavery' but, more widely, with self-liberation from a debilitating relationship to France — and to French. Apparently paradoxically, it is at church — the one-time instrument of colonial repression, and a place which traditionally demands the use of French — that Léonora begins to become aware of the crucial issue of language. When 'le père Céleste' arrives at her local church, he makes a decision which proves crucial in Léonora's personal development and liberation: he decides to conduct all of his services in Creole, and to encourage dialogue as an alternative to the sermon. Céleste is, above all, aware that members of his congregation are unwilling to speak both because they find it difficult to express what they feel in French, and because they are ashamed of the way that they speak it, of the mistakes that they may make. As Léonora goes on to explain, the experience of using Creole at church changes the relations of, and access to, power within the church:

> L'emploi du créole a beaucoup changé notre façon de vivre entre nous, changé, par exemple, les rapports entre un instituteur et un ouvrier agricole de la communauté. Les petits gens ont tellement de choses à dire, et ne s'exprimaient pas. Grâce au créole, ils osent prendre la parole. (*Léonora*, p. 250)

It is through this process that Léonora herself begins to dare to speak, both in meetings organized at the church and at meetings organized by Céleste outside of the church. Like Léone in *Le Défi culturel*, Léonora discovers, because the discussions are held in a language which she understands, 'en quel sens nous sommes français' (*Léonora*, p. 283). She discovers the importance 'de savoir "qui on est", "d'où nous venons"' (*Leonora*, p. 251) and, crucially, that 'la France a commencé... au moment de la départementalisation, à nous voler notre histoire de peuple, histoire que je découvre à peine, à soixante ans passés' (*Léonora*, p. 258). Creole thus becomes the instrument of access to an identity which Léonora had never imagined even to exist — to her identity as a Guadeloupean. Towards the end of her narrative, Léonora is finally able to proclaim: 'je sais ce que je suis, j'ai du respect pour ce que je fais' (*Léonora*, p.

227). She gains control of her own life — and, interestingly, the years charted in Léonora are also years spent gaining bodily control over long-term illness — by putting her own dispossession into the context of a history of dispossession shared by an entire people and mediated by linguistic repression.

It is the sense of self-empowerment derived from being able to articulate herself at these meetings which motivates Léonora — and the other members of the congregation — to become involved in the trade union and independence movements. The church, historically one of the few places — like the wake — where slaves were allowed to gather, thus comes to serve here as it often did during slavery, as a place at which resistance and rebellion is plotted. The difference is that in *Léonora*, it is by no means the slave who is the first to read and write in the dominant language who is the first to 'think their freedom' and therefore run away.[72] Rather, it is the 'slave' who is the first to accept Creole as a valid and useful language of resistance who is the first to conceptualize rebellion and escape from a language and identity experienced as alienating and as 'inauthentic'. What is more, Creole, for Léonora, represents a mode of resistance to, and escape from, 'slavery' of two sorts — both as a Guadeloupean and as a Guadeloupean woman. As we saw earlier, Léonora's narrative is also, and fundamentally, the story of her coming-to-freedom as a woman, of her accession to a sense of herself as 'une femme libre' (*Léonora*, p. 191). Léonora's final proclamation — 'je sais ce que je suis' (*Léonora*, p. 227) — and her final decision to change her name, are therefore indicative of this dual sense of liberation from enslavement. Just as, for Tituba, the connection with her native land and with her maternal ancestry was inextricable so, too, for Léonora, is her sense of freedom as a woman and as Guadeloupean: the means of access to both are contained, it would seem, within Creole.

## CREOLE AS 'MOTHERTONGUE'

It thus becomes obvious that for Léonora, Creole — a 'feminine' language in that it is associated, as we have seen, with 'irrationality', 'emotion', 'madness', 'obscurity' — functions, as do witchcraft and storytelling for Tituba, as a

'mothertongue'. This is because, as Léonora explains, Creole is an ancestral language, handed down from generation to generation so that, on a figurative level: 'déjà, dans le ventre de notre mère, nous baignons dedans' (*Léonora*, p, 247).[73] On a more concrete level, however, for both Léonora and Bébel-Gisler, Creole is a 'mothertongue' because it is associated with the mother: because it is the language of 'home', of non-official situations, a mode of communication between mothers and children (*Léonora*, pp. 248-9). Either way, it is language which, like the song sung to her in Creole by her mother and grandmother, links her to a past which is at once female and Antillean. It is, as Bébel-Gisler herself explains, 'une relation à la terre... [et] donc par conséquent une relation à la mère, un cordon ombilical qui nous singularize'.[74]

Given the obvious investment of both Léonora and Bébel-Gisler in the liberatory potential of Creole as 'mothertongue', it is apparently paradoxical that Bébel-Gisler chooses to translate Léonora's narrative into French. Such a move could even be seen as a somewhat pernicious repetition, rather than disruption, of the tradition of slave narrative — and specifically of the practices of the white patron-ghostwriter who felt obliged to reorganize, selectively delete or 'translate' into standard English the slave's narrative as s/he wrote it down, thus concealing the power-relationship in operation, in a guise of benevolence.[75] At the same time, and within a more Antillean context, she would seem to be joining Césaire — 'référence obligée et père spirituel'[76] — in his assertion that Creole, as a spoken language, is inadequate as an alternative national language to French. However, throughout *Le Défi culturel*, Bébel-Gisler offers a different explanation for her decision, as she evokes the fundamental problem that Creole is not, as yet, a standardized written language, and that consequently those Guadeloupeans who are predominantly Creolophone are also predominantly illiterate in their own language. As she explains, because of the way in which the majority of Guadeloupeans have continued to be educated solely via the medium of French, '*Léonora* paru en créole n'aurait pas été lu par ces milliers d'Antillais'.[77]

It is here that the similarities between the attitude of Bébel-Gisler towards language-use in the Antilles and that of Glissant begins to become apparent and illuminating.[78] For Glissant, as for Césaire, Creole is inadequate as a national

language. For him, however, this is because Creole has not been able to evolve, as it has for example in Haiti, into a fully-fledged 'language of production'. As the language of the plantations, Creole evolved in relation to production, but when that system disappeared its evolution was arrested and Creole became the threatened language that it is today. Given that it is impossible, as Glissant remarks, for it to become the language of the service industries which have replaced the plantation system, such as tourism, Creole has never managed to become '[une] langue de fonction'.[79] Instead, it has remained at the level of the 'trickster strategy' which marked its development during slavery, as a form of 'ruse', 'détour', 'camouflage' — '[un] usage "déréglé" de la langue' intended to confuse the slaveowners even though they too spoke Creole.[80] It is because of this continued 'non-fonctionnalité qui évide le creole', that the language has remained for Glissant, as for Césaire, 'une langue de la névrose'; 'une forme de délire verbal'.[81]

Unlike Césaire, however, Glissant does not find French to be the obvious alternative: if Creole is characterized by 'verbal excess' so too, in the Antilles, is French. Like Fanon and like Bébel-Gisler, Glissant points to the alienated manner in which many Antilleans — especially the élite — speak French, of the obsession with mastering French that leads inevitably to an excessively elaborate and ornate French — a French which merely better demonstrates 'l'impuissance de notre situation'.[82] According to Glissant, neither language, in the Antilles, is spoken 'responsibly'. The problem which is fundamental to the debate about which of the two languages is best suited to the Antillean situation is, for Glissant, that of persistent binary thinking itself, of the persistent posing of the problem as a choice between two irreconcilable opposites. While Glissant is obviously aware that Antilleans are not 'French', he refuses to see in Creole a more 'authentic' connection to, or expression of, 'Antillean identity'. If for Bébel-Gisler, Creole is the expression of 'quelque chose de fondamental que le colonialisme n'a pas encore trouvé' (*Léonora*, p. 299), Glissant points out how Creole was, like the oral tradition, or like Antillean history and Antillean identity themselves, born out of the colonial encounter and therefore remains, indelibly, everywhere marked by French.[83]

For Glissant, moves like those of Bébel-Gisler to make Creole into a national language by standardising it, making it into a written language by imposing a single orthography and grammar, are both artificial and harmful. First, he feels that the choice of spelling and grammar is motivated primarily by a desire to distance Creole as much as possible from the French spelling and grammar by which it has been influenced: standardization thus represents one more move to claim Creole as a 'pure', repressed alternative to French.[84] Perhaps more dangerous, this practice of what Glissant terms 'le poétique forcé' — the practice of forcing a language to evolve more rapidly than it would ordinarily do — risks removing that language from the popular context within which it began to evolve. To force Creole to become 'une langue de fonction', by the operations of an élite out of touch with the people, is to risk repeating the oppressive moves of colonialism in reverse: to impose, once again, an alienated and alienating language, from above, upon a people who have ceased to have anything whatsoever to do with its evolution.

Glissant does acknowledge the importance of work by linguists like Bébel-Gisler, as well as of the use of Creole in independence movements as a weapon against the domination of French. He is aware both of the immediate, and very real, debilitating effects of that domination upon many Antilleans, and of the immediate need — of people like Léonora — for an alternative language with which to assert themselves against that same domination.[85] Ultimately, however, such projects should not represent an end in themselves, but rather 'une préparation aux floraisons futures'.[86] For Glissant, as for the authors of the *Eloge* after him, the real answer to the current impasse is the evolution of a 'new language', which would take the form of a hybrid of French and Creole, a movement beyond the binary logic which has always coded Creole as the inferior opposite of French.[87]

Glissant recognizes however, the difficulty, if not impossibility, of undertaking such a move without simply reversing and repeating existing hierarchical and binary structures, and is similarly sceptical about the possibility of achieving, at the present moment, '[le] bouleversement de structures' necessary.[88] For now, he finds the most useful strategy to be one of endlessly

juxtaposing the two languages, in order to undertake from within a constant practice of disruption — both of the dominance of French itself, and of the structure which has maintained French in that position of dominance. Indeed, Creole especially, in its intimate relationship with French, demonstrates that there is no 'outside' from which to attempt this disruption.

This, too, is the thesis of Irigaray in her discussion of the necessity for women of articulating a 'feminine language'. Just as it is impossible for women simply to claim the right to speak without simply speaking 'as men', so is it equally impossible, at the present time, to step outside of existing structures, to overturn them completely and to create a new language, without simply repeating, in reverse, the existing order. For Irigaray, too, the strategy of the present moment should be one of disruption, of working on the dominant (linguistic) order from within.[89] Female madness, for example, becomes for Irigaray a temporary recourse, even strategy, for women to articulate themselves in a 'feminine language'. While it is pointless to see women as irretrievably confined to the realm of hysteria, it is far more radical, instead, to imagine something like madness as 'un excès, dérangeant': 'mimant-reproduisant un langage qui n'est pas le sien, le langage masculin, elle [l'hystérie] le caricature, le déforme: elle "ment", elle "trompe", ce qui est toujours attribué aux femmes'.[90]

To return to the Antilles once more, the 'feminine excess' which characterizes Creole — its 'madness', 'delirium', 'irrationality' — may similarly be put to use. As Glissant explains, Creole as a 'trickster strategy' functioned during slavery in precisely such an 'excessive' way:

> Puisqu'il est interdit de parler, on camouflera la parole sous la provocation paroxystique du cri. Nul irait traduire ce que ce cri si évident puisse signifier. On n'y supposera que l'appel de la bête. C'est ainsi que l'homme dépossédé organisera sa parole en la tramant dans l'apparent insignifié du bruit extrême.[91]

It is such a strategy which, for theorists like Glissant, may continue to be deployed until such a time when it will prove no longer to be necessary. Rather than rush to standardize Creole, and risk eradicating too prematurely these characteristics before they have ceased to be useful, it is possible to make Creole

function, instead, as 'noise' in situations where French is demanded. What is more, it is the project of the Antillean writer to continue to be make this 'meaningless noise' signify in the contemporary situation, 'de "provoquer" un langage-choc': 'le vacarme' can come to function as 'le discours'; 'le bruit' as 'la parole'.[92] This, too, is the proposition of Françoise Lionnet: that Creole may function as disruptive 'noise', especially within the literary text which is written, at least ostensibly, in the dominant language.[93] This is a 'noise' which will function as 'message' for the Creole speaker, but which will function as 'interruption' for the non-Creole speaker, preventing the 'message' from getting through, clear and untroubled. In Glissant's terms, it is a 'noise' which will oblige the Western reader to respect the 'opacité' of the Caribbean text, and which will prevent the objectification and reduction of difference entailed when the West 'understands' ('com – prend') the other.[94]

It is in the light of these observations that the language of *Léonora* may perhaps best be examined, for while Bébel-Gisler feels unable to write the narrative in Creole, she remains well aware of the potential difficulties that her decision to write in French entails — and this is made apparent throughout the text. In her 'Postface' she describes the key difficulty as one of avoiding the 'betrayal' of both Léonora and her story (*Léonora*, p. 298), and it is this, it would seem, which motivates her attitude towards language in *Léonora*, as she attempts to fulfil her role as 'ghostwriter' in a quite different manner than did the abolitionist ghostwriters of nineteenth-century slave narratives. For example, though the events recounted follow a roughly chronological order, this is by no means strictly observed: inconsistencies and repetitions — those elements which may be seen to be part of the 'oral' character of the narrative — are neither erased nor reordered, but are retained. Thus we learn several times, and at different stages, of Léonora's disgust at Joseph's infidelity (*Léonora*, p. 198; p. 202; p. 288), while elsewhere the narrative jumps backwards and forwards without warning. Chapter five, for example, which begins when Leonora is fourteen, proceeds backwards and forwards in time by association, as Léonora recounts various episodes of her life in no apparent order. As elsewhere, this in no way resembles the ordered, linear narrative of the nineteenth-century slave.

At the level of language itself, the oral character of the narrative is similarly retained: the tone is usually informal or conversational and registers are frequently mixed, as she moves from offering advice about housekeeping and childcare to 'serious' discussions of independence and working conditions. More obviously, idioms, proverbs, songs, and even chapter titles are written both in Creole and in French, while Creole words may be retained in the middle of an otherwise French sentence.[95] However, Bébel-Gisler explains how, more than simply integrating actual Creole into her written text, she attempted to allow Creole to be everywhere present. That is, faced with the impossible choice between French and Creole, she decided to write in a specific sort of French, in order that, 'pour ceux ou celles qui maîtrisent peu ou mal le français, *Léonora* est écrit en créole. Pour d'autres, derrière les mots français chante le créole'.[96] Thus it is, indeed, with several of the proverbs or traditional sayings, for while some remain in Creole ('pawol a Nèg pa ni bout') with translation provided ('paroles de nègres, paroles sans fin', *Léonora*, p. 207), others ('il faut savoir faire glisser sa barque sur les eaux de la vie', *Léonora*, p. 189) are written solely in 'French'.

For Bébel-Gisler, Creole therefore operates, in *Léonora*, precisely as 'un excès dérangeant', as 'noise'. That is, as Léonora herself comments at one stage, 'le Créole dérange' (*Léonora*, p. 180): either simply because the appended translations interrupt the Francophone reader's attention in a way which they do not for the Creole speaker, or because of the Creole syntax and grammatical structures which subtend the French throughout. As Lionnet points out, when used in this way, the vernacular represents 'a continual play of resistance', undermining 'the binary relation between center and periphery, message and noise..., language and "dialect"'.[97] The presence of Creole, for the non-Creole speaker, therefore in fact comes to function as 'message' in a different way. It begins to show up the way in which the dominant language has hitherto operated to maintain the 'clarity' and 'rationality' by which it is apparently characterized — that is, by repressing from it all that is 'unclear', 'irrational', and so on. Used in such a way, Creole surfaces to threaten the apparent stability of that mode of functioning, thus resisting once more absorption and neutralization as oppositional language.[98]

Bébel-Gisler therefore succeeds in creating not simply a kind of 'hybrid' language but — and here the connection between *Léonora* and *Tituba* once again becomes apparent — a kind of 'hybrid' text, a form of literature based, like that recommended several years later by the writers of *Eloge de la créolité*, upon 'l'insémination de la parole créole dans l'écrit neuf'.[99] Publishing in 'French', rather than in Creole, not only allows a wider (Antillean) audience access to the text, but it enables Bébel-Gisler and Léonora to demonstrate the disruptive power of 'la parole créole' in a way that the use of Creole alone would have rendered impossible, and in a way which is vital to the functioning of the text as a narrative of resistance. In *Léonora*, as in *Tituba*, it is not simply the disruptive power of 'la parole créole' itself which is important. Rather, it is the disruptive power of what 'la parole créole' — whether the Creole language or creole traditions such as the *conte* — may be seen to represent: the linguistic, cultural and historical *créolité* of the Antilles.

Like Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, both Condé and Bébel-Gisler may be seen to be engaged in demonstrating the acceptance and promotion of *créolité* as a potentially powerful mode of imagining liberation from the unitary and monologic structures and discourses which have been imposed upon the Antilles. As Arnold points out, Bébel-Gisler, like Condé and other Guadeloupean women writers, has resisted 'theorising' her work (as 'creole' or otherwise) in the same way that male writers have done. As he also points out, however, *Léonora* 'may well be a more successfully creolized text — at the level of language and style — than anything yet produced by the male *créolistes*'.[100] Unfortunately, such contributions by women to the new 'créole' literature envisaged by the *créolistes*, is something which they themselves have refused to acknowledge. As Arnold explains, when he asked 'one of the guiding lights of the *créoliste* movement' to comment on *Léonora*, he was told that it was 'insignificant and unworthy of critical attention'. He finds in this attitude a 'generalized disdain for the women writers of the region' — one which he suggests may be fuelled by the fact that novels by women like Condé and Schwarz-Bart, if not Bébel-Gisler, have sold much better than those by their more famous male counterparts.[101]

What is therefore certainly true, is that it is by no means simply the similarities between texts like *Tituba* and *Léonora* and those of the *créolistes*, which make them radical and important. Rather, it is the differences between them — the way, for example, that Bébel-Gisler and Condé are engaged also in demonstrating the power of 'la parole créole' as a 'feminine' mode of disruption. Despite the attitudes of some of their male contemporaries, it would seem that, at last — and as perspectives are generally extended beyond the Antilles towards new and wider 'solidarities' — women writers are beginning to find their own ways in which to represent the inclusion of women within, rather than their exclusion by, current attempts to redefine notions of what it may mean to be Antillean.

NOTES

1. Maryse Condé, *Moi, Tituba, sorcière... Noire de Salem* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1986).
2. Dany Bébel-Gisler, *Léonora, L'histoire enfouie de la Guadeloupe* (Paris: Seghers, 1985).
3. See Molly Abel Travis, 'Speaking from the Silence of the Slave Narrative: *Beloved* and African-American Women's History', *The Texas Review*, 13 (1992), 69-81 (pp. 71-72).
4. Smith, *Where I'm Bound: Patterns of Slavery and Freedom in Black American Autobiography* (London: Greenwood Press, 1974), p. 13. See also John Sekora, 'Is the Slave Narrative a Species of Autobiography?', in James Olney, ed., *Studies in Autobiography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 99-111, and James Olney, '"I was born": Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature', in Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. eds, *The Slave's Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 148-75, as well as Davies and Gates' introduction to the same volume.
5. Smith, *Where I'm Bound*, p. 10.
6. Donald Wesling, 'Writing as Power in the Slave Narrative of the Early Republic', *Michigan Quarterly Review*, 26 (1987), 459-72 (p. 462).
7. See Davis and Gates, *The Slave's Narrative*, pp. xxiv-xxv on the penalties incurred for teaching a slave to read and write.
8. Quoted in Dany Bébel-Gisler, *Le Défi culturel guadeloupéen: devenir ce que nous sommes* (Paris: Editions Caribéennes, 1989), p. 73.
9. Davies and Gates, *The Slave's Narrative*, p. xxviii.
10. Bébel-Gisler, *Le Défi culturel*, p. 156.
11. Ibid., p. 191.
12. Ibid., p. 72.
13. Olney, '"I was born"', p. 157.
14. Smith, *Where I'm Bound*, p. 109.
15. Smith, *Where I'm Bound*, p. 68. See also James Gray, 'Culture, Gender and the Slave Narrative', *Proteus: A Journal of Ideas*, 7 (1990), 37-42 (p. 40).
16. Joanne Braxton, 'Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*: The Redefinition of the Slave Narrative Genre', *Massachusetts Review: A Quarterly of Literature*, 27 (1986), 379-87 (p. 380).
17. Moses Roper, cited by Travis in 'Speaking from the Silence of the Slave Narrative', p. 73.

18. Travis, ibid., p. 73.
19. Léonora points out that the only time that a mother receives social acknowledgment of her place in the community is when she is dead: 'pour une mère, on porte le deuil pendant trois ans, deux ans de gros deuil, tout en noir, un an de demi-deuil; pour un père un an de gros deuil, un an de demi-deuil...' (*Léonora*, p. 77). It is of course the *dead* mother who is worshipped and revered.
20. Olney, '"I was Born"', p. 153.
21. Catherine Clément and Hélène Cixous, *La Jeune née*, p. 12.
22. Xavière Gauthier, 'Pourquoi Sorcières?', *Sorcières*, 1 (1976), 2-5 (p. 2).
23. Ibid., p. 5.
24. I borrow this expression from Mae Gwendolyn Henderson's essay 'Speaking in Tongues: Dialogics, Dialectics, and the Black Woman's Literary Tradition', in Cheryl A. Wall, *Changing Our Own Words: Essays on Criticism, Theory and Writing by Black Women* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 16-37.
25. Gauthier, 'Pourquoi Sorcières?', p. 2.
26. Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, pp. 134-35.
27. Interview with Luce Irigaray in Raoul Mortley, *French Philosophers in Conversation* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 63-78 (p. 74).
28. See, for example, *Ce sexe*, pp. 68-9.
29. Irigaray, *Ce Sexe*, p. 81. Such an apparently ready slippage between 'women' and 'the feminine' has frequently led Irigaray to be charged with 'essentialism' by a series of commentators (see, for example, Monique Plaza, '"Phallomorphic Power" and the Psychology of "Woman"', *Ideology and Consciousness*, 4 (1978), 4-6; Mary Jacobus, *Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1986); Janet Sayers, *Biological Politics: Feminist and Anti-Feminist Perspectives* (London: Pluto, 1982). For a (more helpful) reading of Irigaray's 'strategic' essentialism, see Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989).
30. Irigaray, *Ethique de la différence sexuelle*, p. 105.
31. Margaret Whitford, *Philosophy in the Feminine*, p. 43.
32. Mortley, *French Philosophers*, p. 73.
33. Another classic - and much written about - Guadeloupean woman's text, and one written in a form similarly reminiscent of slave narrative, is of course Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* (1972) which, like *Tituba*, tells the story of a lineage of resisting women who are also characterized and linked by their role as 'witches', or healers.
34. Clément and Cixous, *La Jeune née*, p. 13.
35. Ibid., p. 15.
36. Ibid., pp. 15-16.
37. Ibid., p. 16.
38. Ibid., p. 13.
39. See Trinh Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: 1989), p. 121. Man Sonson, too, the self-confessed storyteller of *Traversée de la mangrove* is herself a 'witch' – a healer respected both for her age and wisdom, as the name 'Man' signifies.
40. Linda Anderson, 'The Re-Imagining of History in Contemporary Women's Fiction', in Linda Anderson, ed., *Plotting Change: Contemporary Women's Fiction* (Edward Arnold: London, 1990), pp. 129-44 (p. 138).
41. It is clear that Hester, in many ways, is a caricature of what Condé apparently considers to be a white feminist with white feminist concerns. At one point, for example, she tells Tituba, who had been speaking of her relationship with John Indien: 'tu aimes trop l'amour, Tituba! Je ferai jamais de toi une féministe!' (*Tituba*, p. 160). Indeed, Condé is not known for her sympathy with what she frequently characterizes as the extreme views of 'staunch', 'hardened' or 'radical' feminists

(see, for example, Mohamed B. Taleb-Khyar, 'An Interview with Maryse Condé and Rita Dove', p. 359).

42. Olney, '"I was born"', p. 150.
43. See, for example, Ann Petry, *Tituba of Salem Village* (New York: HarperTrophy, 1964). We might also be reminded here of Arthur Miller's 1953 play, *The Crucible* in which, as Tituba predicts at the beginning of Condé's version, she remains a shadowy and somewhat stereotypical figure.
44. Anderson, 'The Re-Imagining of History', p. 129.
45. Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, *Eloge de la créolité*, p. 33.
46. Chamoiseau and Confiant, *Lettres Créoles*, pp. 35-64.
47. A. James Arnold, 'The gendering of *créolité*', in Maryse Condé and Madeleine Cottenet-Hage, eds, *Penser la Créolité* (Paris: Karthala, 1995), pp. 21-40 (p. 30). As Ina Césaire and Joëlle Laurent similarly point out in the introduction to their collection *Contes de vie et de mort aux Antilles* (Paris: Nubia, 1976, p. 11), while public *conteurs* are traditionally men, women have always told stories too, at night, to their children and grandchildren.
48. Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, *Eloge de la créolité*, p. 35.
49. Ibid., pp. 32-33.
50. Ibid., p. 28.
51. Ibid., p. 33.
52. Ibid., p. 20.
53. Ibid., p. 36.
54. Bébel-Gisler, *Le Défi culturel*, p. 151.
55. Ibid., p. 107.
56. Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, p. 15.
57. Ibid., p. 14.
58. Bébel-Gisler, *Le Défi culturel*, pp. 150-51.
59. Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, *Eloge de la créolité*, p. 34.
60. Ibid., p. 22.
61. Bébel-Gisler, *Le Défi culturel*, p. 121.
62. Ibid., p. 29.
63. Ibid., p. 54.
64. Ibid., p. 91. Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant also discuss Césaire's aversion to Creole, though they prefer to see him not as 'un anti-créole', but as '*un anté-créole*' (*Eloge*, p. 18).
65. J. Michael Dash, 'Writing the Body: Edouard Glissant's Poetics of Re-membering', in Condé, ed., *L'Héritage de Caliban*, pp. 75-84 (p. 79).
66. Bébel-Gisler, *Le Défi culturel*, p. 148; p. 154.
67. Ibid., p. 151.
68. Ibid., p. 158.
69. Ibid., p. 159.
70. Ibid., p. 105.
71. Ibid., p. 132.
72. See Wesling, 'Writing as Power', p. 462.
73. For Trinh, too, the vernacular - decoded, like Creole, as more 'bodily', more 'vulgar' - has traditionally been associated with women who, in the very binary mind/body, have similarly been positioned as body, as unable to separate themselves 'adequately' from the body (Trinh, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 19).
74. Bébel-Gisler, *Le Défi culturel*, p. 56. Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant also, in a much less positive way, associate Creole with the mother: 'chaque fois qu'une mère, croyant favoriser l'acquisition de la langue française, a refoulé le créole dans la gorge d'un enfant, cela n'a été en

fait qu'un coup porté à l'imagination de ce dernier, qu'un envoi en déportation de sa créativité' (*Eloge*, p. 43). If we recall the connection of the maternal with 'illegitimacy', Creole can further be seen to be associated with the maternal side, for it has typically been decoded as a bastardized version of French for a bastardized society and culture (see, for example, Beatrice Stith Clark, 'IME Revisited: Lectures by Edouard Glissant on Sociocultural Realities in the Francophone Antilles', *World Literature Today*, 63 (1989), 599-605 (p. 603)). Indeed, in similar terms, Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant describe how Césaire's desire to write and to speak in French can be seen to have sprung from 'une instinctive méfiance de la bâtardise' (*Eloge*, p. 49).

75. See Miriam DeCosta-Willis, 'Self and Society in the Afro-Cuban Slave Narrative', *Latin American Literary Review*, 16 (1988), 6-15; p. 11.
76. Bébel-Gisler, *Le Défi culturel*, p. 54.
77. Ibid., p. 32.
78. In *Le Défi culturel*, Bébel-Gisler describes her attitude towards the problem of language as one which risks leading her 'sur un terrain glissant' (p. 31). Given the footnote which follows this comment, advising the reader to refer to Glissant's *Le Discours antillais* on the question of language and literary creation, it would seem that Bébel-Gisler's pun is intended precisely to signal the similarity between her ideas about language-use on the Antilles and those of Glissant.
79. Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 353.
80. The term 'trickster strategy' is used by J. Michael Dash in his translation of Glissant's *Le Discours antillais*, to translate Glissant's use of the terms 'ruse' and 'détour' (see Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash, p. 21). See also *Le Discours antillais*, pp. 32-33; p. 238.
81. Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 242.
82. Ibid., p. 279.
83. Ibid., p. 240; p. 282; p. 344.
84. Ibid., p. 280.
85. Ibid., p. 283.
86. Ibid., p. 353.
87. Ibid., p. 282. See also *Eloge de la créolité*, p. 43.
88. Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 282.
89. Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, p. 75.
90. Ibid., pp. 134-35.
91. Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, pp. 239.
92. Ibid., p. 347; p. 238.
93. Françoise Lionnet, 'Of Mangoes and Maroons: Language, History, and the Multicultural Subject of Michelle Cliff's *Abeng*', in Smith and Watson, eds,. *De/Colonising the Subject*, pp. 321-45 (pp. 331-32).
94. See Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation*, pp. 203-9.
95. For example: 'il fallait *grager* (= 'râper') et presser pour faire sortir tout le jus empoisonné' (*Léonora*, p. 21); 'la vieille femme plonge une énorme louche dans un *canari* (= 'faitout')... elle sert à Persillette un plein *coui* (= 'demi-calebasse servant de plat')' (*Léonora*, p. 27).
96. Bébel-Gisler, *Le Défi culturel*, p. 32. Bébel-Gisler also describes her decision to write *Le Défi culturel* in French, evoking the advice of those she interviewed: 'si vous écrivez en français, que ce soit celui de *Léonora*. Dans ce livre, on a tout compris sans avoir à ouvrir un dictionnaire' (*Le Défi*, p. 27).
97. Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices*, p. 333.
98. It would obviously be useful and appropriate if examples of the use of Creole syntax and grammatical structures were provided here. However, as a non-Creole speaker for whom French is itself a second language, I am, of course, able to discern little more than an imprecise sense that the French of *Léonora* is not always 'le français de France'. Indeed this, presumably, is the point:

that Creole should act as 'noise' for those Western readers unaccustomed to having their own 'literacy' interrogated. This is an issue to which I shall return in the afterword which follows.

99. Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, *Eloge de la créolité*, p. 36.
100. Arnold, 'The gendering of *créolité*', p. 36.
101. Ibid., p. 36.

# AFTERWORD

As I hope to have shown, recent Francophone writing by Guadeloupean women has been vital to the development of the very literary and theoretical tradition from which it has been excluded. Not least, because it has provided an important mode of intervention in, and disruption of, the basic tenets of that tradition; a constant commentary upon the difference that gender and sexuality make to what might be termed 'sexually indifferent' narratives of resistance.[1] More even than this, Guadeloupean women's writing of the last thirty years may be seen to constitute a 'tradition' of its own — at once within and outside of the 'mainstream' tradition — replete with its own influences and inheritances. However, as will also have become clear, this 'tradition', this line of influence, is not one of descent: though apparently neatly chronological at the outset — from the obsession with whiteness dealt with in the 1960s and early 1970s by Manicom and Lacrosil, to the obsession with Africa of Condé's first two novels, one from the mid-1970s and the other from 1981 — it by no means represents a 'progression' or 'development' of ideas. Rather, it is one of interconnections and crossovers, of chosen links and affiliations: from the continued obsession with Africa displayed in Schwarz-Bart's 1979 text and Condé's surprisingly recent *Les Derniers Rois Mages*; to the desire to return to the Antilles which is evident, this time, in Lacrosil's surprisingly early 1967 text and Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove* of the late 1980s; and, finally, to the *créolité* of Condé's *Moi, Tituba, sorcière... noire de Salem* and Bébel-Gisler's *Léonora, L'histoire enfouie de la Guadeloupe* of the mid-1980s.

This lack of a sense of progression and development is perhaps especially relevant in the case of Condé's own expanding corpus, for after her quite obviously negritude-inspired first novels, the specific points of reference for her work become less and less clear, and her own agenda more and more complex. Her desire to extend her points of reference beyond the Antilles in *Tituba*, for example, is apparently hampered by her still-urgent need to 'return' to Guadeloupe in *Traversée de la mangrove*, and this impulse itself is apparently frustrated by her continuing preoccupation with Africa in *Les Derniers Rois*

*Mages* of 1992. Her more recent texts, however, while continuing to share many of the concerns of her previous novels, have begun also to move beyond and consolidate those concerns in a manner which suggests the idea of progression and development once again. Thus her 1993 novel, *La Colonie du nouveau monde*, is set neither in Africa nor the Caribbean, but tells of a community which travels from Guadeloupe to South America. Her most recent novel *Desirada*, meanwhile, is set between the Guadeloupean island of Désirade and the immigrant communities of both France (a setting rarely explored in Condé's work) and the United States.[2]

It is the 1995 novel *La Migration des cœurs,*[3] however, which is particularly instructive here, for it brings together both the concerns of Condé's own *oeuvre*, and those of Guadeloupean women's writing generally — such as they have been examined here. For this reason, it is via a brief examination of this novel that I should like to draw this study to a close. More wide-ranging than previous novels, *La Migration des cœurs* — like *Desirada* after it — may be seen as a 'creole' text. In a manner which recalls Condé's rewriting of the Salem witch trials in *Tituba*, or even her evocation of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, this novel is a rewriting, in a Caribbean context, of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. Indeed, *Wuthering Heights* — a story of illegitimacy and orphaning, of class and family rivalry, of confused and convoluted lines of descent — proves itself to be particularly appropriate to the Caribbean setting. Rivalries of class become rivalries of colour, the dispossessed Heathcliff becomes the 'tragic mulatto' Razyé, and Cathy's internal struggle for self-control becomes the archetypal Antillean story of split allegiances between an African and a European racial inheritance.

*Wuthering Heights* is not, however, Condé's only intertext: reference is made to another famous story of orphaning, Dickens' *David Copperfield*, as well as to other texts especially relevant to the colonial context, such as Flaubert's *Salammbô* and Hugo's *Bug Jargal*. In addition, Condé takes as intertexts several of her own works: the novel begins, for example, with the figure of Melchior during 'la procession du jour des rois' (*La Migration des cœurs*, p. 11). Throughout the rest of the novel references are then made to a series of her prior

texts: to the ancient African city of Ségou, for example, from Condé's epic novel of the same name; to the rape of a slave woman, like Abena, on a slaveship bound for the Caribbean; to *mabo* Julie, Véronica's nurse who, here, becomes that of Razyé's *békée* wife Irmine; or to maroon figures and *quimboiseurs* like Xantippe. Indeed, it is *Traversée de la mangrove* as a whole which represents the most evident intertext, for the central and mysterious figure of Razyé bears striking resemblance to that of Sancher. In fact, Razyé is an heroic figure who recalls many of those examined in the preceding chapters: like Delgrès himself he is presented as a free man of colour recruited into the army, this time Spanish, in order to fight on the side of the colonial powers. At the same time he is likened to a 'neg mawon', or to 'un volcan, un cyclone, un tremblement de terre' (*La Migration des cœurs*, p. 78), an archetypal Antillean hero who assures his wife: 'mon histoire passera dans celle de ce pays' (*La Migration des cœurs*, p. 110).

*La Migration des cœurs* also resembles *Traversée de la mangrove* in its structure, for it takes the form, for the most part, of a series of narratives told by the different characters whose complex network of relationships make up the novel's plot. Like those of Condé's previous novel, the characters of *La Migration des cœurs* come from diverse class and colour backgrounds: *békés*, mulattoes, black Antilleans of African descent, and 'Zindiens'. Although set in the early nineteenth century, this is a novel which depicts a society that is already *métisse* and whose *métissage* represents the very future of the island. As Cathy's brother Justin Gagneur asks: 'est-ce que la Guadeloupe allait devenir un vaste *manjé-kochon* où on ne distinguerait plus ni les couleurs ni les origines' (*La Migration des cœurs*, p. 56). More than this, *La Migration des cœurs* — as its title perhaps suggests — is set in a variety of geographical locations, moving between Cuba, the hispanophone island which has for many become a model of Caribbean independence; Guadeloupe, including the islands of Marie-Galante and Désirade; and neighbouring Dominica, the anglophone island to which the last Caribs of Guadeloupe escaped in the seventeenth century. At the same time, ineluctable yet always in the background, are the traces both of France and of Africa. What is clearly at work throughout this text, as throughout *La Colonie du nouveau monde* and *Désirada,* is yet another — and even stronger — effort to

expand the notion of what may constitute Antillean identity. That is, to move towards the *créolité*, the new and wider 'solidarities' which, as we have seen, are characteristic of contemporary theories of 'Antilleanness'.

As might be expected, this Guadeloupean woman's text is also concerned with examining the role that women may play within these new definitions of Antillean identity — with new and wider 'solidarities' not only of race but also of gender. First, for example, questions of lost origins, of confused and interrupted lines of descent, are once again paramount. This time, however, and as in *Tituba*, it is the maternal line which proves to be the most significant, and whose loss proves to be the most painful. For several of the characters, the constant preoccupation is with the figure of the lost mother. This is true for Razyé and for both Cathys, for example, as well as for servants like Sanjita, whose family has inherited a story of illustrious male ancestry which recalls that of *Les Derniers Rois Mages*. Everywhere, the sense of illegitimacy and non-belonging is one which no longer necessarily manifests itself in a preoccupation with the legitimate *paternal* ancestor.

What is perhaps most striking, however, and what is equally reminiscent of *Tituba*, is the importance of 'horizontal' relationships and solidarities between women — especially, as between Tituba and Hester, between women of different colours, of different classes and of different social milieux. Indeed, this is made evident quite early in the text as Cathy, having rejected Razyé for the *béké* Aymeric de Linsseuil (the Edgar Linton figure of Condé's text), arrives at her new home, and is struck immediately by her situation in the following terms:

> Le domaine de Belles-Feuilles était rempli de soupirs et de peines de femmes noires, mulâtresses, blanches, unies dans la... sujétion. Esclaves violées par des planteurs sadiques. Maîtresses empoisonnées pour des rivales... vierges vendues pour de l'argent et des morceaux de terre à des vieux corps... des négresses mandingues [qui] s'étaient elles-mêmes serré le cou avec les garrots plutôt que de reprendre les fers. (La Migration des cœurs, p. 56)

These are the maternal ancestors of the women whose narratives, as in *Traversée de la mangrove*, make up the majority of *La Migration des cœurs* — women who, here as in many of the novels so far examined, repeatedly find ways in

which to form links with each other in spite of the different forms that their oppression may take.

Perhaps more than any of the texts examined in this study, *La Migration des cœurs* would seem to be pointing towards the possibility of building meaningful solidarities between disparate women — solidarities reminiscent of those discussed earlier, in my introduction. Indeed in this, Condé's very choice of main intertext is surely informative: *Wuthering Heights* is at once a classic, nineteenth-century novel written by an English woman, and a novel which has been adopted as a classic 'feminist' text in the West. However, this movement towards wider solidarities is concomitant with another radical impulse, one especially evident in the case of Condé's own *oeuvre*, and one which — apparently paradoxically — ensures that those solidarities themselves are much more difficult to achieve.

This impulse, though perhaps not as strong as in Bébel-Gisler's *Léonora*, is linguistic; a movement towards the use of Creole as the paradigmatic expression of *créolité*. *La Migration des cœurs* makes use of Creole in at least two important ways. On one level, Creole is repeatedly referred to as that which enables a sense of *créolité*, as that which links the peoples of the disparate islands of the Caribbean. On a different level, it is itself frequently used throughout the novel and, unlike *Traversée de la mangrove* or even *Léonora*, no explanatory footnotes are provided for the Francophone reader. As I pointed out in chapter five, the use of Creole words and Creole syntax quite obviously adds an unaccustomed level of difficulty for the solely Francophone reader, and it is this level of difficulty which apparently belies the movement towards wider solidarities discussed above.

What I should like to suggest here, however, is that this level of difficulty itself, far from presenting an insurmountable obstacle, may actually be vitally important to the project of building solidarities. It is becoming less and less straightforward for Western feminists simply to bring their own agendas to bear upon the texts of Antillean women. Instead, it is more and more imperative that the Western feminist who wishes to read and to comment upon such work should undertake an effort of understanding which, while it may have appeared unnecessary at the beginning of my own project, for example, is now proving

itself to be crucial. Crucial, that is, if both the content of Antillean novels, and their increasingly radical projects, are to be appreciated fully. Such an effort of understanding may, even if in a very small way, be seen to constitute the sort of 'unlearning of one's privilege as a woman' advocated by Spivak. In other words, the recognition that one's own position is not necessarily a privileged one and that a position of disadvantage may, in fact, be the most useful when approaching the work of women from other cultures. At the same time, it is a process of 'unlearning' which may eventually entail the admission that if differences are to be bridged, rather than eradicated, they must be recognised from all sides.

Importantly, this effort of understanding is one which Condé herself, like Spivak, admits to having been obliged to undertake. *La Migration des cœurs* may undoubtedly be seen to represent Condé's final, literary, 'retour au pays natal', a return which is mirrored by the many similar returns portrayed within the text, and which is effected at last in full awareness of the wider context of Antillean identity. However, the difficulty of this return, evident as we have seen in the somewhat halting progression of her novels, is itself mirrored by the difficulty of Condé's personal return to Guadeloupe, a return which is well-documented in her numerous, published interviews. Upon her 'retour au pays natal' in 1986, after more than thirty years spent in France, in Africa and in North America, Condé was indeed obliged to reassess her relationship with her native land. Unable to speak Creole with any proficiency, she was forced to win the trust of her own people, people about whom she writes in her novels but from whom she discovered she was separated by an overwhelming difference of class and education. As she explains:

> Je devais renaître, je devais... réévaluer... l'image négative de la culture antillaise, image héritée de la génération de mes parents... j'ai dû d'abord oublier beaucoup de choses, considérer mon rôle d'écrivain avec un peu plus de modestie. Etre écrivain n'a aucun sens pour la majeure partie de notre peuple.[4]

This was a process which Condé describes as both difficult and humbling — as an effort, precisely, of 'unlearning one's privilege'.

It is perhaps the very public nature of Condé's own attempt to come to terms with her identity as a black, Guadeloupean woman, as well as her exhaustive literary thematization of similar attempts, that has rendered her an emblematic figure both within the field of Antillean women's writing and within this study itself. This suggestion, however, and my use of *La Migration des cœurs* as a means of bringing together the disparate concerns of this study, by no means represents an attempt to privilege Condé's work above that of the other writers examined here. Rather, it is an acknowledgment of the continuing influence of a writer much more prolific than the majority of Antillean writers in general, male or female. Nonetheless, though Manicom died in 1976 and Lacrosil has published nothing since *Demain Jab-Herma*, both Bébel-Gisler and Schwarz-Bart have, albeit less profusely than Condé, continued to write. Bébel-Gisler continues to work as a linguist, and writes on Creole and on linguistics as well as developing her literacy programmes in Guadeloupe. Schwarz-Bart, meanwhile, with her play *Ton beau capitaine*,[5] has switched her attention to theatre — a still-emerging, and radical, genre in the Antilles.[6]

*Ton beau capitaine* is a play which at once thematises the problems of actual migration within the Caribbean — it tells the story of Wilnor, a Haitian forced to go to Guadeloupe as a migrant worker — as well as examining issues of language, orality and literacy. Not only does Wilnor, who is illiterate, send cassettes to his wife in Guadeloupe instead of letters but, throughout the play itself, much use is made of Haitian music, of songs and of dance. Indeed, it is the tendency of contemporary Antillean theatre to draw upon these elements of the oral tradition and of popular culture which has given rise to its radical reputation — and which has rescued it from its earlier reputation as elitist and imitative, as entirely invested in Western theatrical forms. Often performed at least partly in Creole, plays such as Schwarz-Bart's provide the perfect medium for the imagining and representation of 'hybrid', creole forms — forms which, like *Léonora*, have often proved extremely accessible to the general, Antillean public.

This radical mixing of traditional, especially oral, forms with 'Western' ones is not, however, confined either to theatre or to the work of those writers examined in this volume. There are numerous Antillean women writers, from

Guadeloupe and Martinique, whose work has been beyond the scope of this study, but which is equally important and innovative. Sylviane Telchid and Michelle Gargar de Fortfalaise, for example, who are both from Guadeloupe, similarly mix elements from oral and written traditions in order to produce creole texts for the contemporary Antilles. Other writers, too, such as Gisèle Pineau and Lucie Julia from Guadeloupe, or Ina Césaire (a 'founding mother' too frequently ignored), Michèle Maillet and Suzanne Dracius-Pinalie, from Martinique, may be included within the still-emergent 'maternal genealogy' of Antillean women writers. Further studies of all of them would be beneficial, though in the light of my introductory comments this is perhaps especially true of those from Martinique. While the revaluation of work from Guadeloupe is certainly important, it is equally vital that the colonial gesture of reinforcing differences between the islands should not be repeated, and that it should instead be replaced by an effort to promote 'creole' solidarities between them.

All of these women, like those whose work has been explored here, are engaged in creating ever-more creole forms of Antillean literature — forms in which the radicality of *créolité* once more depends as much upon building solidarities of gender as it does upon building those of race or culture. If Antillean discourses of liberation, literary or otherwise, have typically been erected upon woman as 'founding exclusion', contemporary Antillean women writers are now imagining discourses in which women are able to play much more active roles. And they are doing so, as Arnold points out, with 'a far greater freedom' than their male counterparts, whom he feels are often constrained by their own theories — theories in which, for example:

> A certain locale is required, whereas others are no longer legitimate; a certain use of Creole is mandated, whereas the creolization of the text by writers who do not belong to their orthodoxy is explained away as insignificant; and, finally, a certain gendering of characters, narrators, and even the symbolic geography of their fiction are rigorously imposed — and then theorized — in such a way that those who envisage their creative project differently can be dismissed as somehow not truly serious.[7]

What is is becoming abundantly clear, is that women writers are no longer prepared to see themselves thus excluded from the Antillean tradition.

Importantly, however, neither are they prepared simply to be 'included' within it and therefore risk censure or erasure once more. Though Arnold goes so far as to suggest that two, distinct 'literary cultures' — male and female — are emerging in the Antilles, I would prefer to emphasise the importance of similarities and crossovers, as well as of differences. The *créolistes* are not the only Antillean men gaining critical attention, and the approach of others, like the Guadeloupean Daniel Maximin for example, frequently bears striking resemblance to that of female compatriots. Rather than setting up gendered oppositions, therefore, it may be more helpful at this point simply to acknowledge that women writers from Guadeloupe are coming to occupy a position at the very forefront of contemporary efforts to expand and to redefine a literary and theoretical tradition whose future, it is clear, is full of potential and promise.

NOTES

1. I borrow this term from Naomi Schor's 'Dreaming Dissymmetry: Barthes, Foucault and Sexual Difference', in Alice Jardine and Paul Smith, eds., *Men in Feminism* (New York: Methuen, 1987), pp. 98-110 (p. 100).
2. Maryse Condé, *Desirada* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1997). This novel as a whole, and especially the enforced journey of the protagonist Marie-Noëlle to France to join the mother who had abandoned her in the Caribbean, forms an interesting, cross-Caribbean parallel with the novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, by the Haitian-American Edwige Danticat (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).
3. Maryse Condé, *La Migration des cœurs* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1995).
4. Vèvè Clark, 'Je me suis réconciliée avec mon île: une interview de Maryse Condé', pp. 110-12.
5. Simone Schwarz-Bart, *Ton beau capitaine* (Paris: Seuil, 1987).
6. Though the novel has always been the dominant literary genre, there is nonetheless a tradition of dramatic writing and performance in the Antilles. After the early plays of Césaire, Daniel Boukman and Vincent Placoly in the 1960s, the importance of theatre began to grow during the 1970s and 1980s. Since this was also the period, especially in Guadeloupe, of the most militant pro-independence action, theatre has continued to represent for many the most radical of genres in the Antilles. For further details, see: Ghislaine Gadjard, 'Aspects du théâtre en Guadeloupe', *Bulletin d'information du CENNADOM*, 73 (1984), 22-24; Juris Silenieks, '*Marronnage* and the Canon: Theater to the Negritude Era' and 'Toward *créolité*: Postnegritude Developments', in A. James Arnold, ed., *A History of Literature in the Caribbean: Hispanic and Francophone Regions*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1995); Bridget Jones, 'Theatre and Resistance? An Introduction to some French Caribbean Plays', in Sam Haigh, ed., *An Introduction to Caribbean Francophone Writing: Guadeloupe and Martinique*, pp. 83-100.
7. Arnold, 'The gendering of *créolité*', pp. 40-41.

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IN RECENT YEARS, critical interest in francophone literature has become increasingly pronounced. In the case of the French Caribbean, the work of several writers (Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Edouard Glissant and Patrick Chamoiseau, for example) has gained international recognition, and has formed a vital part of more general debates on history, culture, language and identity in the postcolonial world. The majority of such writers, however, have been male and, perhaps recalling the preference that France has always shown for the island, have come in large part from Martinique.

*Mapping a Tradition: Francophone Women's Writing from Guadeloupe* aims to explore a different side of francophone Caribbean writing through the examination of selected novels by Jacqueline Manicom, Michèle Lacrosil, Maryse Condé, Simone Schwarz-Bart and Dany Bébel-Gisler. Placing the work of these writers in the context of that of their better-known, male counterparts, this study argues that it has provided an important mode of intervention in, and disruption of, a literary tradition which has failed to address questions of sexual difference and has often excluded issues relating to French Caribbean women. At the same time, this study suggests that Guadeloupean women's writing of the last thirty years may be seen to constitute a 'tradition' in itself, replete with its own influences and inheritances. At once within and outside the 'dominant' tradition, women's writing from Guadeloupe — and Martinique — has come to occupy a position at the forefront of contemporary efforts to expand and redefine a still-burgeoning corpus of literary and theoretical work.