

**Mapping a Tradition:
Francophone Women's Writing from Guadeloupe**

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**Speak, you! Are you struck dumb? You are the
link between nations and generations. Speak,
woman, sacred lifegiver!**

James Joyce, Ulysses

Abstract

This thesis is an attempt to contribute to the growing body of work on literature from the French départements d'outre-mer of Guadeloupe and Martinique. More particularly, it represents an attempt to contribute to the growing body of work on women writers from these islands - referred to here as the Antilles - and to situate recent women's writing in relation to the Antillean literary tradition as a whole.

The development of this tradition is traced in the introduction to the thesis: from the French colonial writing of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to writing by white, Antillean-born 'creoles' (or békés), and the early 'assimilationist' writing of mulattoes and black Antilleans; from the radical philosophical and poetic texts of négritude, to more sophisticated, recent attempts to find ways in which to imagine Antillean identity and history.

It is in relation to the more recent, black Antillean literary tradition, a tradition which has typically excluded Antillean women and Antillean women's writing, that selected novels by Guadeloupean women are examined here. This thesis traces the ways in which these writers position themselves - explicitly and implicitly - vis-à-vis the androcentric tradition which they have inherited. With reference to various feminist theoretical frameworks, it explores also the ways in which women writers disrupt the very tradition which they evoke, bringing questions of gender and sexuality to bear upon those of race.

Chapter one examines three early examples of the way in which Antillean women writers interrogate the presuppositions of seminal Antillean texts, as Michèle Lacrosil's Sapotille ou le serein d'argile (1960), her Cajou (1961), and Jacqueline Manicom's Mon Examen de blanc (1972) are set against Fanon's Peau noire, masques blancs. Similarly, the second chapter examines the first two novels of the most prolific Guadeloupean woman writer, Maryse Condé: Heremakhonon (1976) and Une Saison à Rihata (1981). Here, Condé's interrogation of négritude is explored, as are her efforts to imagine a role for women within a discourse which can be seen to be premised upon the exclusion of 'woman'.

Chapter three - in which Simone Schwarz-Bart's Ti Jean L'horizon (1979) and Condé's Les Derniers rois mages (1992) are explored - deals with the way in which the Antillean quest for self-definition centres upon issues of legitimacy and paternity. In this chapter, as in chapter four, the importance of rewriting colonial history via the medium of fiction is examined. In chapter four, aspects of Edouard Glissant's Le Discours antillais are set in relation to Lacrosil's Demain Jab-Herma (1967) and Condé's Traversée de la mangrove (1989). Finally, Condé's Moi, Tituba, sorcière... noire de Salem (1986) and Dany Bébel-Gisler's Léonora, L'histoire enfouie de la Guadeloupe (1985) are examined as examples of the Antillean movement towards the créolité recently theorised by Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, as well as towards the Creole language. What emerges throughout these chapters is a sense both of the way in which the Antillean literary tradition is developing and, more importantly, of the way in which Antillean women writers have come to play a crucial role in that development. What also emerges - and this is perfectly exemplified by Condé's very recent La Migration des coeurs (1995), which is discussed briefly in the afterword to this thesis - is the way in which the work of Antillean women writers has come to provide a vital mode of intervention into a tradition from which it had hitherto been excluded.

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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.¹ 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' (Hollier, p. xxi). In the context of French literature itself, 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 rather than French, this writing throws into crisis Hollier's very definitions both of literature and of borders. For example, in the case of the Antilles - those islands of the francophone Caribbean² which have never possessed a notion of 'national borders' but which nonetheless possess a rich and diverse literature - the idea of a 'national literature' is fraught with difficulty. While writing in French from the Antilles would no longer wish

¹ Denis Hollier, A New History of French Literature (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. xii and p. xxv.

² Throughout this thesis my use of the term 'Antilles' will refer solely to the islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe, though both neighbouring French Guiana ('la Guyane'), situated on the South American coast, and Haiti, independent from France since 1804, are in many studies referred to as 'Antillean'. This is particularly true of French Guiana, because of its geographical proximity to Guadeloupe and Martinique and because of its shared colonial history. It was colonised at the same time as the Caribbean islands, for example, and has always been administered in the same way, first by the 'Compagnie des Iles d'Amérique' and then by the 'Compagnie des Indes Occidentales', before being reattached directly to the French Crown in 1674. Similarly, along with Reunion island in the Pacific, it was made a département d'outre-mer (DOM) at the same time as were Guadeloupe and Martinique - in 1946.

to define itself exclusively as 'French', it is equally unable to define itself as a national literature in the way described by Hollier. Rather, as we shall see in the course of this thesis, Antillean literature continues to be intimately and vitally 'anchored' to place, to time, to local history and to geography.

The Caribbean islands of Karukéra and Madinina, though 'discovered' and renamed as Guadeloupe and Martinique by Christopher Columbus in 1492 and 1502 respectively, were not colonised by the French until 1635.³ Up until this time, both islands were attacked continually by the Spanish until all resistance by the native Carib Indians was put down, and those who were not exterminated fled to neighbouring Dominica. From this point, the history of the Antilles is one of continued 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';⁴ from slavery's first, and temporary, abolition in 1794 to its reinstatement in 1802;⁵ 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.⁶

³ Guadeloupe is, in fact, an archipelago of nine islands: Basse-Terre and Grande-Terre make up the main 'double island' ('Le Papillon', as it is often called) around which La Désirade, Les Iles de la Petite Terre, Marie Galante, and Les Saintes are grouped. Two hundred kilometres further north are two more small dependencies, Saint-Barthélemy, and the French half of Saint-Martin.

⁴ The introduction of 'le Code Noir' by Louis XIV was intended to provide guidelines for plantation owners about the appropriate treatment of slaves. As Lucien-René Abenon explains: '[les esclaves] furent assimilés à des biens mobiliers dont le maître pouvait disposer à sa guise... Cependant, un maître responsable n'avait guère intérêt à maltraiter ou à estropier des esclaves qui coûtaient cher... Les cruels châtimens établis par le Code Noir n'était pas appliqués en toutes occasions à la lettre. Mais on y avait quelquefois recours, ne serait-ce pour effrayer les esclaves désormais numériquement supérieurs aux colons d'origine européenne et pour les dissuader de révolter' (Lucien-René Abenon, Petite histoire de la Guadeloupe, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992, p. 51). On this, and other aspects of Guadeloupean history, see also Jacques Ziller, Les DOM-TOM (Paris: Librairie Générale de Droit, 1991).

⁵ This period of Guadeloupean history will be dealt with in detail in chapter four.

⁶ With the decline of the sugar-cane industry, the rate of unemployment in Guadeloupe is high: in 1988 it was 30%, as opposed to 11% in France. Of this 30%, 60-70% are under twenty-five years old and/or are first-time job-seekers. Despite the growth of the tourist industry, the absence of adequate French government funding for the development of other industries means that unemployment in Guadeloupe and Martinique, and mass emigration to

It is against this historical background - a background which will be examined in more detail throughout this thesis - that a tradition of literary and theoretical writing has developed in the Antilles. This is 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 of the geography of the islands and of the newly-established and still developing planter society by temporary residents of the islands.⁷ It was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that the Creoles, or békés⁸ - the Antillean-born white population - began also to write.

The white Guadeloupean Nicholas-Germain Léonard, who published three texts - La Nouvelle Clémentine (1744), Idylles morales (1766) and Lettre sur un voyage aux Antilles (1787) - became the first Antillean-born writer, though he, like the earlier French writers spent most of his life in France and based his texts on observations he made as a visitor to the islands. Other béké

France - emigration which began on a large scale in the 1960s with the establishment BUMIDOM, 'Le Bureau pour le Développement des Migrations intéressant les départements d'outre-mer' - will continue. Those 'new' industries which have been attempted - based around the production of fruit and vegetables for exportation - have failed because the goods could not be produced at prices sufficiently low to enable competition with those neighbouring countries producing similar products (on these, and related, issues see Jean-Luc Mathieu, Les DOM-TOM, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988; Auguste Armet, 'Guadeloupe et Martinique: des sociétés "krazé"?', Présence Africaine, 121-122, 1982, pp. 11-19; Robert Lambotte, 'Les DOM: le sous-développement français', Options, 77, 1979, pp. 38-42; Emile Maurice, 'La décentralisation, pour le meilleur ou le pire', Bulletin d'information du CENNADOM, 76, 1984, pp. 95-97).

⁷ For further details on these texts, see Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphael Confiant, Lettres créoles: Tracées antillaises et continentales de la littérature 1635-1975 (Paris: Hatier, 1991), pp. 21-9 and 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), p. 852. Subsequent references to pre- and early twentieth-century Antillean texts have been taken both from Burton's article and from the 'petite chronologie' to be found at the end of Chamoiseau's and Confiant's Lettres créoles.

⁸ Béké is a Creole term for 'blanc-pays': those white inhabitants of the Antilles who have been born there and whose ancestors, for the most part, are of the colonial class. Although it is a term usually related more specifically to the white inhabitants of Martinique - whose numbers are greater than those of Guadeloupe - it is nevertheless, as we shall see, a term also used in Guadeloupe and in Guadeloupean literature.

texts followed: notably Louis Maynard de Queilhe's Outre-Mer (1835), Poiré de Saint-Aurèle's Les Veillées françaises (1826) and Jules Levilloux's Les Créoles, où la vie aux Antilles (1835). Although the latter may have been a mulatto, and despite the acquisition by mulattoes of the right to full French citizenship in 1833, the mulatto population, and still less the black population, produced hardly any writing until the late nineteenth century. Instead, perceiving their power to be under threat, white Creole writers began to publish ever more bitterly racist texts, such as Rosemond de Beauvallon's Hier! Aujourd'hui! Demain!, ou les Agonies créoles (1885). As Richard Burton points out, however, the most outstanding text of the late nineteenth century is, in fact, a novel by a Guyanese, and 'evidently non-white' writer. Atipa, roman guyanais, published in Creole in 1885 under the pseudonym of Alfred Parépou is a text which, according to Burton, 'offers a vivid and mordant picture of colonial society'.⁹

The early twentieth century saw the publication of several volumes of poetry by white Creole writers, most notably Daniel Thaly's Lucioles et cantharides (1900) and Le Jardin des tropiques (1911) and Saint-John Perse's Anabase (1924). At the same time, mulatto poets such as Victor Duquesnay (Les Martiniquaises, 1903) and Oruno Lara (Sous le ciel bleu de Guadeloupe, 1912) also began to write though, unsurprisingly, in a noticeably 'assimilated' style. That is, they wrote in a 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,

⁹ Richard Burton, *ibid.*, p. 852.

Pigments (1937), that a racially aware, Antillean form of writing began finally to develop among the mulatto and black populations of the colonies.¹⁰

It was with the work of Damas, and particularly his association with the Martinican Aimé Césaire, that the black Antillean literary tradition continued to emerge in the form of négritude. This political, literary and philosophical movement, as we shall examine in more detail in a subsequent chapter, is usually seen to mark the birth of black Antillean resistance to colonialism and to the alienation - both collective and personal - which it entailed. On what might be termed the 'theoretical' side, this is a tradition, as we shall see, which extends from négritude in the 1930s and 1940s to the work of Frantz Fanon in the 1950s and 1960s, to the more recent theories of Edouard Glissant or of Eloge de la créolité by Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant.¹¹ On the side of literature, the tradition extends also from négritude - this time from its poetry - to the 1950s and 1960s and the growth of the novel, with the work of figures such as Glissant (La Lézarde¹² and Le Quatrième siècle¹³) and Joseph Zobel (La Rue cases-nègres¹⁴). From there it expands, first, to include the genre of theatre, which proliferated most especially during the 1970s, and then to the continued growth of the novel, which remains the dominant genre in the Antilles. From what Burton calls the 'pessimism' of Vincent Placoly's La Vie et la mort de Marcel

¹⁰ It must be noted that both Maran and Damas are of Guyanese parentage, just as 'Alfred Parépou', too, was Guyanese. Though therefore not strictly 'Antillean' in the sense in which I shall subsequently use the term, their enormous influence upon the development of the Antillean literary tradition has made their inclusion both conventional and vital.

¹¹ Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphael Confiant, Eloge de la créolité (Paris: Gallimard, 1993, originally published in 1989).

¹² Edouard Glissant, La Lézarde (Paris: Seuil, 1958).

¹³ Edouard Glissant, Le Quatrième siècle (Paris: Seuil, 1964).

¹⁴ Joseph Zobel, La Rue cases-nègres (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1950).

Gonstran¹⁵ and Glissant's Malemort¹⁶ to the experimentation of Daniel Maximin's L'Isolé soleil,¹⁷ Glissant's Mahogany¹⁸ and Confiant's Le Nègre et l'Amiral,¹⁹ recent Antillean fiction, like recent Antillean theory, has continued in its attempts to find ways in which to imagine an identity and a history for a people which has never managed to emerge, even nominally, from the colonial era.

In this thesis, however, it is not the literary output of these authors with which we shall primarily be concerned, nor with the influence of Antillean theories of identity and history upon it. Rather, we shall be examining that part of the Antillean tradition which, while exploring broadly similar themes, has until quite recently occupied a somewhat marginal position in relation to the literary and theoretical writing outlined above. Women's writing has, of course, always existed in the Antilles - from the work of békées like Rosemond de Beauvallon to that of pathbreakers like Suzanne Lacascade or 'assimilated' writers like Mayotte Capécia, whose work we shall study later. 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 Eloge de la créolité.²⁰ 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'.²¹ It is the

¹⁵ Vincent Placoly, La Vie et la mort de Marcel Gonstran (Paris: Denoël, 1971).

¹⁶ Edouard Glissant, Malemort (Paris: Seuil, 1975).

¹⁷ Daniel Maximin, L'Isolé soleil (Paris: Seuil, 1981).

¹⁸ Edouard Glissant, Mahogany (Paris: Seuil, 1987).

¹⁹ Raphaël Confiant, Le Nègre et l'Amiral (Paris: Grasset, 1988).

²⁰ In Eloge de la créolité, 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', Eloge, p. 18) to Fanon, to Glissant.

²¹ A.J. Arnold, 'Poétique forcée et identité dans la littérature des Antilles francophones', in Maryse Condé, ed., L'Héritage de Caliban (Paris: Editions Jator, 1992), pp. 19-28 (p. 21).

novels of several of these writers - all of whom are, in fact, Guadeloupean²² - which will be examined in the course of this thesis: from that 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.

This 'eruption' of Guadeloupean women writers onto the Antillean literary scene has been accompanied by an ever-increasing amount of critical and theoretical interest, largely from North America, in women's writing from the francophone Caribbean. Indeed, though only very scattered articles exist on Manicom, Lacrosil and Bébel-Gisler, quite a corpus of material exists about the work of Schwarz-Bart and, even more, about that of Condé, the most prolific of Antillean women writers in general. Unfortunately, however - and as I shall point out at various stages throughout this thesis - 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 generalisation 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.²³

Like much of the critical work which already exists, this thesis 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 with examining the way in which this

²² Although early black women writers like Lacascade and Capécia were from Martinique, and though the best-known Antillean 'theorists' are also from Martinique, most of the recent women's writing from the Antilles has come - for reasons which, as Burton points out, 'remain obscure' - from Guadeloupe (Burton, in France, ed., *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*, p. 854). It is thus quite by accident, rather than design, that the writers examined in this thesis are all themselves from Guadeloupe and not Martinique.

²³ Full and detailed reference to the specific works of these critics will be made throughout the chapters which follow.

exclusion may, in fact, be seen to represent the 'founding' exclusion of the Antillean tradition - that which has allowed and enabled its very functioning. During the course of this thesis, I shall trace the way in which contemporary Guadeloupean women writers position themselves - explicitly and implicitly - in relation to the Antillean tradition which they have inherited. Through a close examination of selected texts from this tradition, I shall 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.

With reference to various feminist theoretical frameworks, I shall also investigate the forms which this interrogation and disruption may take, 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 male, and more 'mainstream' counterparts have not. Indeed, it is this use of feminist theories which prompts important questions about the approach of this thesis 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 theory in the reading of texts by 'non-Western' writers, questions which must be addressed here for reasons which will become obvious: while the approaches utilised come from a variety of national and theoretical backgrounds, one of the most prominent figures, throughout this thesis, is the French feminist theorist Luce Irigaray.

Many writers and theorists have pointed out that 'Western feminist'²⁴ approaches to what is alternately termed 'black', 'third world' or 'postcolonial' women's writing are most often characterised 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

²⁴ Of course, the term 'Western feminism' is an inadequate homogenisation of the disparate types of feminism which exist in the West. However, as many critiques of imperialist feminism make clear, and as my own use of the term 'Western feminism' shows, it is necessary to make use of some term - even if it is an inadequate homogenisation - if the obvious exclusions which do exist within feminist discourses are to be meaningfully discussed.

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 colonised status of woman [under patriarchy]... have simultaneously marginalised the third world woman'.²⁵ 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 Irigaray herself. 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.²⁶ This critique is certainly borne out in her essay 'Women's Exile',²⁷ 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' ('Women's Exile', p. 67). 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.,

²⁵ Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido, eds., Out of the Kumbia: Caribbean Women and Literature (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1990), p. 2.

²⁶ Lemuel Johnson, 'A-beng: (Re)Calling the Body In(to) Question', in Davies and Fido, eds., Out of the Kumbia, pp. 111-142 (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.

²⁷ Luce Irigaray, 'Women's Exile', trans. Couze Venn, in Ideology and Consciousness, 1 (1977), pp. 62-76. This article was originally published in English and has never subsequently been published in French.

depending on her country, her occupation, her class and her sexual estate - i.e. the most immediately unbearable of her mode of oppression. ('Women's Exile', p. 69)

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' ('Women's Exile', p. 67).

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 diversités culturelles, religieuses, économiques et politiques. La différence sexuelle représente probablement la question la plus universelle que nous puissions aborder.²⁸

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 which she had feared 'The Women's Movement' itself may risk falling into. 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.²⁹

Spelman points out how, in more recent years, as Western feminists have begun to realise 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

²⁸ Irigaray, *J'aime à toi: Esquisse d'une félicité dans l'histoire* (Paris: Grasset, 1992), pp. 84-5.

²⁹ Elizabeth Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of exclusion in feminist thought* (London: The Women's Press, 1990).

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)' (Spelman, p. 122). What this type of analysis ignores is the specificity of black woman's oppression: 'she is oppressed by racism in a sexist context and sexism in a racist context' (Spelman, p. 124). 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'³⁰ on the part of many white, Western feminists, a 'benevolence' epitomised 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.³¹

This 'benevolence' is perfectly summarised by Maryse Condé herself who, in her essay on women's writing in Guadeloupe, 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.³²

As Spivak, like Spelman, explains, such benevolence, in its emphasis on oppression by gender only, has ignored the way in which third world women have, historically, been caught between indigenous, patriarchal oppression and Western, imperialist oppression. In concentrating only on third world women's oppression by an apparently unified group, 'men', such analysis ignores how

³⁰ 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. 241-268 (p. 253).

³¹ See Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism', Critical Inquiry, 12 (1985), pp. 243-261 (p. 262) and Spivak, 'Imperialism and Sexual Difference', Oxford Literary Review, 8 (1986), pp. 225-240 (p. 229).

³² Maryse Condé, La Parole des femmes: essai sur des romancières des Antilles de langue française (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1979), p. 3.

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 third world women themselves.³³

For Chandra Mohanty, the sole interests served by such first-world feminist 'benevolence' are not those of third world women but, rather, of women from the first world itself. She points, for example, to the implicit distinction which is typically made between 'Western feminist representation of women in the third world, and Western feminist self-presentation'.³⁴ For Mohanty, representations of women in the third world - as tradition-bound, uneducated, family-oriented, victimised - serves merely to guarantee Western women's self-presentation as educated, liberated, in control of their bodies and sexualities. Once again, 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 Spivak's work 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 characterise the 'information-retrieval' approach, is the

³³ Much black and third world feminist work has been to emphasise these traditions of struggle in an attempt to dissociate themselves from first world imperialist feminism. For example, Davies and Fido 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 (Out of the Kumbia, p. xii). 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' (ibid., p. xii). 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' (ibid., p. xii). 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 - 'colonised' - in order for Western feminists to represent third world women as victims waiting for outside liberation.

³⁴ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', Boundary 2, 12-13 (1984), pp. 333-358 (p. 337).

equally benevolent gesture entailed in the 'self-conscious' employment of 'a deliberately "non-theoretical" methodology' by first world feminists studying third world literature.³⁵ 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'.³⁶ 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 more 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'.³⁷ 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', 'coloniser' and 'colonised' cannot exist as entirely opposite and exclusive terms.³⁸ Rather, as we shall see in

³⁵ 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, and ultimately unsatisfying, critical work on women's writing from Guadeloupe which I mentioned earlier.

³⁶ Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 162.

³⁷ Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography', in Spivak, *In Other Worlds*, pp. 197-221 (p. 205).

³⁸ 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 elite. The group attempts to challenge Western historiography by retrieving another history, a

subsequent chapters, 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 utilise 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, a situation in which only black women are deemed able to theorise black female experience and only white women are deemed able to theorise white female experience.³⁹ As Hazel Carby points out, such theorising implies that questions of race are relevant only to black women, and are in danger of allowing white women to continue to ignore their own

'subaltern' history which has been covered over and denied by imperialist (and neo-colonial) versions of History. Although Spivak agrees with the political necessities of such a project, she remains suspicious of any attempts to retrieve a 'subaltern consciousness' or a 'native history' in its 'pure' form. For her, a nostalgic search for a repressed, subaltern history and literary tradition, or for lost, indigenous voices cannot succeed, for the colonised subject has only been constituted as such through the 'epistemic violence' of imperialism (Spivak, 'The Rani of Sirmur', in Francis Barker et al., eds., Europe and its Others, 2 vols., Colchester: University of Essex, 1985, (vol. I, pp. 128-151), p. 130). To attempt such a recovery is simply to cover over what Spivak terms the 'worlding' of the third world, to efface the history of imperialist violence ('Three Women's Texts', p. 262). See also, for example, Homi Bhabha, 'Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817', in Frances Barker et al., ed., Europe and its Others, I, pp. 89-106; Homi Bhabha, 'Foreword: Remembering Fanon. Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition' in Frantz Fanon, trans., Charles Lam Markmann, Black Skin, White Masks (London: Pluto Press, 1986), pp. vii-xxvi; Edward W. Said's introduction to Orientalism (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978).

³⁹ This position, in which knowledge is possible only through experience, is summed up by Spivak thus: 'resisting "elite" methodology for "subaltern" material involves an epistemological/ontological confusion. The confusion is held in an unacknowledged analogy: just as the subaltern is not elite (ontology), so must the historian not know by elite method (epistemology)... This is part of a much larger confusion: can men theorise feminism, can whites theorise racism and so on' ('A Literary Representation of the Subaltern', p. 253). In a later interview, Spivak discusses this problem with a much more helpful example. She imagines a situation in which a white, bourgeois, male student adopts the position that, because the material under discussion is made up of third world women's texts, he cannot speak. Spivak's reply is that such a position is based on essentialism - on what she calls chromatism and genitalism - and that, in fact, it merely serves to allow this student to continue failing to take account of 'the Other woman'. Instead of refusing to speak, he should 'develop a certain degree of rage against the history that has written such an abject script for [him] that [he is] silenced' (Spivak, 'Questions of Multiculturalism', in Sarah Harasym, ed., The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues, London: Routledge, 1990 (pp. 59-68), p. 62). She asks him not to remain silenced because of an 'accident of birth', but instead to take the risk of not only learning about third world women, but of undertaking a historical critique of his own position - as white and male - as investigator.

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 categorisation'.⁴⁰

Such work must, of course, be undertaken with what Spivak calls 'constant vigilance', to the point of attempting to 'unlearn' one's privilege.⁴¹ 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 solution⁴² - entails not benevolence, but 'a persistent critique of what one is up to, so that it doesn't get bogged down in... homogenisation; constructing the Other as simply an object of knowledge'.⁴³ 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',⁴⁴ 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 set themselves up as already liberated, and as therefore in a position to liberate other women.

⁴⁰ Hazel Carby, Reconstructing Womanhood (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 18.

⁴¹ Spivak, 'Criticism, Feminism and the Institution', in Harasym, ed., The Post-Colonial Critic, pp. 1-16 (p. 9).

⁴² Young, White Mythologies, p. 170.

⁴³ Spivak, 'Questions of Multiculturalism', p. 63.

⁴⁴ Spivak, 'French Feminism In an International Frame', in Spivak, In Other Worlds, pp. 134-153 (p. 136).

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'.⁴⁵ 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 the emphasis on reproductive freedom - perceived as characteristic of much Western feminism - 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 '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'.⁴⁶ 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

⁴⁵ Spivak, 'Criticism, Feminism and the Institution', p. 10.

⁴⁶ Spivak, 'French Feminism in an International Frame', p. 151.

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'⁴⁷ 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 decolonised nations. This time, she looks at the work of a writer and political activist from Algeria, Marie-Aimée Hélié-Lucas. What she finds to be of interest, amongst other things, is the discourse employed by Hélié-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.⁴⁸

This, as Spivak points out and as we shall see in more detail later in this thesis, 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, Hélié-Lucas uses her observation in order to distance herself from 'the project of national identity when it interferes with the production of female individualities'.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Spivak, *ibid.*, p. 153.

⁴⁸ Spivak, 'French Feminism Revisited: Ethics and Politics', in Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, eds., Feminists Theorize the Political (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 54-84 (p. 73).

⁴⁹ Spivak, *ibid.*, p. 73.

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 colonised by France must necessarily 'negotiate actively with the trace of the French'.⁵⁰ This, of course, is extremely relevant also in the case of those women's texts to be examined in this thesis, for as Glissant points out, the Antilles - more even than former colonies such as Algeria, given their status both as départements d'outre-mer and as members of the European Community - are indelibly marked by the 'trace' of France and of French.⁵¹

The scope of this thesis 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, this thesis does concern itself 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 colonised and postcolonial and which, though Antillean, has been largely excluded from the Antillean 'tradition'. As Spivak recommends, my approach here will be to attempt to remain informed throughout by a 'constant

⁵⁰ Spivak, 'French Feminism Revisited', p. 68.

⁵¹ See Edouard Glissant, Le Discours antillais (Paris: Seuil, 1981), p. 137.

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 will be 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 the first chapter of this thesis, two texts from the 1960s and one from the early 1970s will be 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. 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 Hélié-Lucas. Here, I shall 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, will examine the Antillean desire for Africa and, once more, will examine what is at stake for women in the forms which 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-négritude 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. It is in chapter five that parameters - indeed borders - begin to widen beyond the Antilles, and in which 'solidarities' both of race and of gender begin to emerge.

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 Martiniquaise¹ and La Négrresse blanche², 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 racialised 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

¹ Mayotte Capécia, Je suis Martiniquaise (Paris: Corr a, 1948).

² Mayotte Capécia, La n grresse blanche (Paris: Corr a, 1950).

³ See Clarisse Zimra, 'Patterns of Liberation in Contemporary Women Writers', L'esprit cr ateur XVII (1977), pp. 103-114 and Beatrice Stith Clark, 'The Works of Mayotte Cap cia', CLA Journal XVI (1973), pp. 415-425.

⁴ Frantz Fanon, Peau noire, masques blancs (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952). Fanon's study of Cap cia's work has, it would seem, been largely responsible for her status as the 'first' Antillean woman writer. In actual fact, at least two other women were published before her: Suzanne Lacascade published Claire-Solange,  me africaine as early as 1924 and Annie Desroy published Le Joug in 1934. Unlike Cap cia, however, their work was not singled out for attention by Fanon.

shall see later, Fanon's own analysis of Capécia's work is one which fiercely denies any such similarities, and which has succeeded, in fact, 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. Indeed, it is the work of two such writers which I wish to examine here: Michèle Lacrosil's Sapotille et le serin d'argile⁵ and Cajou,⁶ and Jacqueline Manicom's Mon Examen de Blanc.⁷ As Clarisse Zimra points out, Lacrosil's editor specifically requested that she capitalise on Capécia's success by utilising a similar plot structure and by examining similar themes.⁸ 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.

In Lacrosil's first novel, Sapotille, the eponymous heroine and narrator is travelling to France from Guadeloupe aboard the Nausicaa, in the hope of escaping an unhappy past marked by island racism. The narrative consists of a commentary on life aboard the ship and of flashbacks, via the diary of Sapotille, to her schooldays at the convent school of Saint-Denis. As a 'câpresse', Sapotille is the blackest girl at Saint-Denis, for it is a school originally established for the daughters

⁵ Michèle Lacrosil, Sapotille et le serin d'argile (Paris: Gallimard, 1960).

⁶ Michèle Lacrosil, Cajou (Paris: Gallimard, 1961).

⁷ Jacqueline Manicom, Mon Examen de Blanc (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1972).

⁸ Clarisse Zimra, 'Righting the Calabash: Writing History in the Female Francophone Narrative', in Boyce Davies and Savory Fido, eds., Out of the Kumbia, pp. 143-160 (p. 150).

of békés.⁹ It is while at Saint-Denis that Sapotille discovers her difference: surrounded mainly by white girls and white nuns, she begins to define herself as black - or, rather, as 'not-white'. Through her narrative we are shown not only how her blackness is (negatively) constructed, but how she internalises this construction and acts according to it - for the rest of her life.

This is made particularly evident on one, specific, occasion as Sapotille studies a map (significantly) of France in a geography lesson. Suddenly, she becomes aware of laughter around her and, on looking up, discovers 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). This is her first conscious encounter with 'le regard blanc', and it is one which marks the beginning of a series of realisations of what it means to be black in the 'white world' of the convent, and of Guadeloupe. Suddenly, she realises how others see her, how the gaze of white people around her constructs her blackness as ugliness: 'Je réalisais pour la première fois que Soeur Scholastique défendait un bastion et que je lui compliquais la besogne. "Elle a horreur de me voir" me disais-je en baissant le nez' (Sapotille, p. 40).

Her greatest humiliation is yet to come, however, for when she receives the dreaded 'bulletin jaune' for impoliteness, she is forced to stand in front of the entire school in order that everyone may look at her, 'afin que nous mesurions votre honte', as Soeur Scholastique explains (Sapotille, p. 43). That is, in order that she may be made to feel the shame of her blackness. As she

⁹ 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.

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)

The laughter is stopped by the Mother Superior - but despite her unexpected kindness, Sapotille is met once again by the full force of another white gaze, which she feels fixes her to the spot: 'un regard pâle, et déchiré, qui chavirait' (Sapotille, p. 45). 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 - in the school play for example - which had gripped her as she stood before the assembled white faces at Saint-Denis. It is this same desire which has led her to board the Nausicaa for France - 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).¹⁰

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, 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. (Peau noire, p. 124)

¹⁰ Sapotille has, in fact, always been tempted by France, looked towards it as a way of escape: it was a map of France that she was studying when the nun drew her picture on the board, a France which, for her 'était là, offerte, comme une main tendue. Apaisante comme un visage aimé' (Sapotille, p. 40).

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 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 chemistry 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. Also like Sapotille, Cajou is narrated in a series of analepses through which we are able to follow the emergence of Cajou's 'colour complex'.

We learn that her mother is a light-skinned mulatto, that her father is absent, but was black, and that she is obsessed with the fact that 'aucun de [s]es traits ne rappelle ceux de maman' (Cajou, p. 63). Her childhood is marked by the conviction that her mother must necessarily be ashamed of her - although there is only evidence to the contrary - and by a consequent fear of rejection by the very person she would most like to resemble. When very young, she is terrified that her mother will return from shopping trips as a completely different person. She is convinced that though she will look the same, she will have been 'magically' replaced by someone who no longer loves her, someone who is able only to wonder - like the people of the predominantly white area in which they live - how it is possible that she could have produced such an 'ugly', dark-skinned child (Cajou, pp. 35-9). However, this belief that identities are changeable, that they can metamorphosise

¹¹ Clarisse Zimra, 'Patterns of Liberation', p. 109.

themselves entirely, is also, while she is still young, a source of comfort to her, for she convinces herself that she may be able to grow whiter, whiter like her mother:

Je rageais et je rêvais le miracle. Je l'attendais, comme un dû. Je tâtais, le matin, mes cheveux emmêlés de sommeil pour savoir s'ils bouclaient enfin. Mais c'étaient les mêmes cheveux rebelles, et ce nez, et ma bouche. Je me cachais la tête sous l'oreiller, non pour prolonger ma torpeur, et m'oublier encore un instant, mais pour jouer à m'inventer une autre figure. (*Cajou*, pp. 29-30)

Like Sapotille, Cajou is filled with a need to hide herself and to disguise herself. But Cajou's neurosis in fact seems to go 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 has put 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 - again to a much greater extent than Sapotille - and she uses them, too, as a means of self-objectification, as a means of seeing herself as she believes others - that is 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

¹² Zimra, *ibid.*, p. 111.

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)

Indeed, as the narrative itself begins, in Paris, where Cajou is now working, it is as she stands in front of her mirror that we first see her. We learn that she does this every evening before going to bed, in order to stare at the way in which her black skin is accentuated by, and 'dirties', the white nightdress which she has deliberately chosen to wear. She has thus continued, from childhood, to undertake this form of self-punishment, in order to remind herself of her 'ugliness', of her shame at not resembling her mother (Cajou, p. 11). 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, 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. (Peau noire, p. 172)

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' (Peau noire, p. 152), 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' (Peau noire, p. 152). 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' (Peau noire, p. 120).

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' (Peau noire, p. 155). If the black Antillean feels 'la pureté de [sa] conscience et la blancheur de [son] âme' (Peau noire, p. 156), then he can convince himself that he is not a Negro, that external colour is nothing.¹³ 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' (Peau noire, pp. 171-2). 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 realisation comes, for Fanon, with the shock of an encounter, in France, with 'le regard blanc'.

It is in a personalised account which Fanon describes in detail the shock of such an encounter. In the chapter entitled 'L'Expérience vécue du Noir', he recalls the moment when a small white child had pointed him out in the street, remarking: 'Tiens, un nègre!... Maman regarde

¹³ The apparent split, here, between 'white mind' and 'black body' is one to which we shall return both later in this chapter and in the final chapter.

le nègre, j'ai peur!' (Peau noire, p. 90). Fanon goes on to explain how this is precisely the type of encounter through which the black Antillean discovers his 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' (Peau noire, pp. 88-9). 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. (Peau noire, pp. 90-1)

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, A 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. (Peau noire, pp. 93-4)¹⁴

¹⁴ It is worth noting, here, that Fanon's theorisation of 'le regard blanc' apparently derives, at least in part, from Jean-Paul Sartre's theorisation of 'le regard' in L'Être et le néant: Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), one of Fanon's major influences and pre-texts. In his section devoted to 'Le Regard', Sartre examines the importance of the look in the relation of the 'Pour-Soi' to 'L'Autre', and in the constitution of the Self. He describes the effect of the look on the Self thus: 'On me regarde. Qu'est-ce que cela veut dire? C'est que je suis soudain atteint dans mon être et que des modifications essentielles apparaissent dans mes structures... je me vois parce qu'on me voit... Je ne suis pour moi que comme pur renvoi à autrui' (Sartre, p. 318). Sartre describes how the Self discovers its own image in the look of the Other, and how this discovery elicits shame: 'Or, la honte... est honte de soi, elle est reconnaissance de ce que je suis bien cet objet qu'autrui regarde et juge' (Sartre, p. 319). For Sartre, as later for Fanon, 'dans la brusque secousse qui m'agite lorsque je saisis le regard d'autrui, il y a ceci que, soudain, je vis une aliénation subtile de toutes mes possibilités' (Sartre, p. 323). What is more, Sartre, metaphorically, actually associates 'being-seen' with a state of 'slavery': 'Je suis esclave dans la mesure où je suis dépendant dans mon être au sein d'une liberté qui n'est pas la mienne et qui est la condition même de mon être. En tant que je suis objet de valeurs qui viennent me qualifier sans que je puisse agir sur cette qualification, ni même la connaître, je suis en esclavage' (Sartre, p. 326). Fear, shame and slavery are the three relations to the Other's look which are outlined by Sartre and, prefiguring Fanon once more, it is 'par le regard d'autrui que je me vis comme figé au milieu du monde, comme en danger, comme irrémédiable' (Sartre, p. 327). Another important Sartrean pre-text, for Fanon, was Sartre's Réflexions sur la question juive, first published in 1947.

The black Antillean thus experiences what Fanon describes as 'un écroulement du Moi' (Peau noire, p. 125), 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' (Peau noire, p. 125). 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' (Peau noire, p. 51).

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 recognised 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.¹⁵ 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 theorise 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 epitomises the very character of the black/white, coloniser/colonised relationship itself.¹⁶ Peau noire, masques blancs thus contains two chapters devoted to interracial marriage and its significance as far as the Antillean colour neurosis is concerned. The first of these chapters, 'La femme de couleur et le Blanc', deals both with Capécia's Je suis Martiniquaise, and with a short story by Abdoulaye Sadjì, entitled 'Nini'. The second, 'L'homme de couleur et la blanche', deals with a text by René Maran, Un homme pareil aux autres. Fanon begins the first of these chapters by asking whether 'l'amour authentique demeurera impossible [entre la femme de couleur et l'Européen] tant que ne seront pas expulsés [les] sentiment[s] d'infériorité' (Peau noire, p. 33). It is apparently in order to illustrate his theories on this question that he then embarks upon an examination of Je suis Martiniquaise.

¹⁵ Zimra, 'Patterns of Liberation', p. 108.

¹⁶ Similarly, Albert Memmi, in the preface to the 1965 edition of his seminal study Portrait du Colonisé précédé du Portrait du Colonisateur (Paris: Corrêa, 1957), explains that his examination of the coloniser-colonised relationship sprang first from a desire to examine the problems of the mixed marriage, and then from a more general concern with 'the couple' (man/woman). He discovered, however, that it was necessary first to examine the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser, a relationship which formed the basis of that between the interracial couple (Memmi, p. 11).

Fanon begins his examination of Capécia's novel by describing how the heroine, an Antillean mulatto woman named Mayotte, has been driven by a single desire since discovering that her grandmother was white: to lighten the race still further by marrying a white man. He then describes how she meets André, a white, French soldier stranded in Martinique during the second World War, and becomes his mistress. Mayotte is in love with André's blue eyes and his blond hair, and is delighted when she gives birth to a light-skinned son. Once the war is over, however, André returns to France, leaving her instructions to bring up their son in admiration of him. Je suis Martiniquaise, 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. For him, it represents little more than a series of 'propositions les plus absurdes' - in sum: 'un ouvrage au rabais, prônant un comportement malsain' (Peau noire, p. 34).

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' (Peau noire, p. 48) - 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. He then ends his critique with the declaration: 'Qu'elle n'enfle plus le procès du poids de ses imbécillités. Partez en paix, ô éblouissante romancière... Mais sachez

que, au-delà de vos cinq cents pages anémiées, on saura toujours retrouver le chemin honnête qui mène au coeur. Ce, malgré vous' (Peau noire, p. 42).

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. In Maran's text, Jean Veneuse, an assimilated Antillean man who has lived in France since the age of four, wishes to complete his assimilation by marrying a white woman, Andrée Marielle. Fanon meticulously examines the events leading up to Veneuse's desire to marry a white woman, describing how Veneuse feels he must ask his friend Coulanges for permission to marry his white 'sister' Andrée, and how Coulange's approval is given only because he feels Veneuse to be so 'cultured', so assimilated that, despite his appearance, he cannot in any way be described as 'un nègre' (Peau noire, p. 55). For Coulanges, he is a Frenchman, 'white' to all intents and purposes, and therefore not only worthy of a white woman, but incapable of marrying anyone but a white woman, isolated as he is from other black Antilleans. Surprisingly, Fanon appears not to see in this attitude a 'betrayal', on the part of Veneuse, of his fellow Antilleans. Rather, he treats Veneuse as a tragic figure, and he portrays his feelings of inferiority and his desire to marry Andrée Marielle with sympathy and understanding.

Fanon's apparently inconsistent 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, for he displays the same attitude towards Abdoulaye Sadjji's Nini. Nini, 'une petite dactylographe toute bête' (Peau noire, p. 45), is a mulatto woman who rejects the advances of Mactar, a black man 'too black' for her to accept. According to Fanon, Mactar is, in any case, educated far beyond Nini's worth. While the mulatto Nini, like Mayotte, is guilty of betraying her

race when she positions herself as 'superior' to black men, Mactar, like Veneuse, is apparently quite right to position himself as worthy of 'more' than either a black or a mulatto woman. 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 have succeeded in educating themselves, in 'civilising' themselves, into a state of intellectual 'whiteness'.

For Fanon, it would seem that the external whiteness conferred by miscegenation is never, alone, enough. Literal miscegenation alone 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).¹⁷ It is therefore necessary that literal miscegenation be nothing more than a means of supplementing an already achieved degree of 'whiteness'. That is, it is necessary already to have 'grown whiter from within', to have attained a degree of 'inner', or intellectual whiteness which will both match, and prove that one is worthy of, external whiteness and all that it signifies. Men like Veneuse and Mactar have 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,

¹⁷ Fanon describes the way in which, within the European collective unconscious, the black man has come to signify (excessive) sexual potency: 'les nègres, eux, ont la puissance sexuelle. Pensez donc! Avec la liberté qu'ils ont, en pleine brousse! Il paraît qu'ils couchent partout, et à tout moment. Ce sont des génitiaux' (Peau noire, p. 128).

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, racialised binary of 'mind/body' (by showing black men to be equally capable of intellectual 'civilisation' as are their white counterparts), he succeeds merely in repeating the attending sexualised 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 four characters in the texts examined, but it seems to extend also to his treatment of their authors.

As we have seen, Fanon conflates Mayotte, the narrator of Je suis Martiniquaise, with Capécia, its author - an assumption of autobiography which he never makes with Maran's text, despite his acknowledged suspicion that it is a highly autobiographical text (Peau noire, p. 52). 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 embody the lactification complex in a way that Maran does not.¹⁸ At every level, Fanon's analysis of the two

¹⁸ 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, writing specifically about Western women's autobiography, 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

texts, and of the black-white postcolonial¹⁹ 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' throughout - Peau noire seems to exhibit an unconscious inability to consider the difference that sex makes within already complex racialised 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'.²⁰

Curiously, however, Fanon does not ignore women altogether in Peau noire: 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 Peau noire), in which Mannoni suggests that the existence of interracial sex, during the colonial period, can be seen as

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 we shall return in chapter five.

¹⁹ I am using the term 'postcolonial', both here and throughout this thesis, 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.

²⁰ Homi Bhabha, 'Foreword: Remembering Fanon. Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition', 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.

proof that there is no innate, or 'natural', racial conflict between the colonised and the colonisers.

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. (Peau noire, p. 37, emphasis mine)

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' (Peau noire, p. 37).

However, despite this fleeting insight 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. Having devoted an entire chapter to the 'psychosexuality' of white women, Fanon 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' (Peau noire, p. 145).²¹ Fanon, like Jean Veneuse

²¹ Fanon's chapter on the psychosexuality of white women, entitled 'Le Nègre et la psychopathologie' deals largely, as Bhabha points out, 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. According to Fanon, the black man represents simultaneously, in the imagination of the white woman, an object of desire - a desire to be raped and brutalised - and of fear, because he is believed to stand 'à la porte impalpable qui donne sur des Sabbats, des Bacchanales, des sensations sexuelles hallucinantes' (Peau noire, p. 143). Here, as elsewhere however, it becomes evident that amidst the stereotypes which pervade this chapter, Fanon succeeds in pointing towards still 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 utilised various constructions of black and white masculinity and femininity in order to make of sexuality a

(and for the same reasons?), feels distanced from black Antillean women in a way that he apparently does not from white women.²² It is thus 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, 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

form of social control. (For an 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).

²² 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.

relationship and conversations with a fellow doctor, a white Frenchman named Cyril Démian, 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 becomes evident as the narrative progresses that it is a desire of which she desperately wishes to rid herself by telling her story to Cyril. Consequently, it is a story which she tells to him largely in the third person, as she distances herself from her younger self, from 'Madévie qui enviait la peau de la sainte Vierge' (Examen, p. 53).

It is Madévie's relationship with Xavier 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 is a devout Catholic, and enters medical school having saved her virginity for the husband she hopes to meet there. When she meets Xavier, from a 'respectable', bourgeois family, she is confident that she will be forgiven for losing her virginity to the white man whom she had been brought up to admire, and whose culture she shares. What is more, her assumptions are more 'naïve' even 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)

Xavier, however, is unaware both of her investment in their relationship and, indeed, 'du prix que pouvait accorder à la virginité la tradition guadeloupéenne' (Examen, p. 39). For him, the very idea

of a mulatto virgin is anathema: Madévie simply represents 'la vulve interdite et désirée', a chance to sample 'sa part de magie, de vaudou, avant le mariage bourgeois' (Examen, p. 38).

Indeed, it is her exoticism which excites him, just as it is his whiteness which makes her ready to accept from him almost any treatment, 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. Xavier finally agrees to marry her because he feels responsible for 'his' child. In turn, she agrees to bear both his mother's racism and his 'inevitable' beatings and adultery. She accepts these conditions - conditions which she now sees were those of a relationship between white master and black slave - because, as she admits to Cyril, 'j'avais besoin de son corps, de ses yeux verts, de sa voix... parce que depuis plus de trois siècles on me répète qu'il faut que la "race des Antillais se blanchisse"' (Examen, p. 95). It is when Xavier and his family ask her to agree also to divorce him as soon as the child is born, however, that she decides to leave and to take

charge of the situation on her own. Thus, as she explains once again to Cyril:

Je me suis avortée. Moi-même. Je suis arrivée à me poser une sonde utérine. Cela s'est passé dans un hôtel de banlieue où je m'étais réfugiée. Quand je l'ai expulsé, il a bougé dans ma main. Ce n'était soudain plus un fœtus mais une petite fille bien formée déjà, pour ses quatre mois et demi de vie utérine. (Examen, p. 134)

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 undertake to lighten the race, a refusal to submit to the 'lactification complex' that Capécia has come to embody. What is

more, her action represents also 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, who is known as 'le Viking', serves for Cajou the same function as did St phanie: his gaze reflects back at her her 'ugliness', it produces the same sense of shame and humiliation as did that of the Mother Superior when she looked at Sapotille. However, the relationship between Germain and Cajou is slightly more complex, from the start, than the usual relationship of lactification. Initially the boyfriend of Marjolaine, Cajou's only friend in Paris, Germain openly despises Cajou when they first meet. Slowly, however, he realises that her apparent unwillingness to be sociable in Paris is occasioned not by arrogance or by indifference, but by a deep self-loathing which makes social contact impossible for her. Instead of Cajou falling in love with Germain, and desiring to marry him in order to produce light-skinned children, it is Germain who decides that he will 'cure' her. First, he decides that it is the burden of her virginity which is at the root of her lack of self-confidence, and he tells her: 'ces id es que tu fais, c'est parce que tu ne m enes pas une vie saine... la nature a ses droits... Quand je t'aurai content e, tu ne te feras plus d'id es 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'. Indeed, she finds Germain's apparent promises of transformation to be cruel, precisely because it is the kind of transformation of identity that she would have believed possible as a child. Now, she sees in such a course of action only shame for Germain and, most of all, for their child. 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 herself. For the first time she becomes angry and 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 Noël's de mes enfances. (*Cajou*, p. 21)

In a manner more radical than Capécia's Mayotte, Cajou realises 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. Like Madévie, she refuses to 'grow whiter from within': unlike Mayotte, she realises that such a mission is impossible. 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 can be read not only as a refusal of

lactification as dominance by race but also, like Madévie's decision to abort her child, as a refusal also to be dominated by sex. First, it may be seen to signify a refusal of marriage as institutionalised 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 institutionalised 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.²³ 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, her action 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

²³ 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).

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 characterised 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 final 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'.²⁴ 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 organisation of racism which Fanon otherwise describes and analyses so compellingly' (Dollimore, p. 346).²⁵ 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 recognised:

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. (Dollimore, p. 344)

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..."' (Peau noire, p. 163). It is this '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. Cajou describes how, at the age of ten, 'Stéphanie devint pour moi la mesure des choses et le miroir où je lisais, quand le rire éteignait et rallumait des étincelles dans ses prunelles, combien j'étais laide. Je me comparais à elle' (Cajou, p. 34). She 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:

²⁴ Fanon, quoted in Jonathan Dollimore, Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 345.

²⁵ 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.

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 démente d'un noyé qui saisit une épaule devenue bouée, radeau, et refuge. (Cajou, p. 38)²⁶

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 on to Marjolaine, Cajou's first friend in Paris and the lover of Germain, 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

²⁶ Cajou's desire for Stéphanie, her desire to become like Stéphanie can, in many ways, be read as a transferral of her childhood desire to resemble her mother. She longs, for example, for Stéphanie to address her with the terms of endearment - 'ma bestiole, mon lapin' (Cajou, p. 45) - used by her mother herself. Of course, this is not unproblematic as a reading of lesbian desire, for it belongs to the popularised, Freudian (mis)representations of 'female homosexuality' as simply an 'immature' form of sexuality, little more than a failure to transfer love to the father. (See Sigmund Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', in James Strachey, ed., The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. VII, pp. 125-244, London: Hogarth, 1953. See also Sigmund Freud, 'The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman' (1920), in Sigmund Freud, Collected Papers Vol. II, trans., Joan Rivière, London: Hogarth, 1933, pp. 202-231). However, in the specific case of Cajou, it is clear that her early, dysfunctional relationship with her mother is related directly to her subsequent inability to relate to others without simply wishing to resemble them. As we shall see in much greater detail throughout subsequent chapters, dysfunctional mother-daughter relationships as the root of dysfunctional relationships in general (and particularly between women), is a motif which recurs constantly in Antillean women's fiction.

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 'subtext' within the dominant, heterosexual lactification plot of both Cajou itself and, more importantly, of Fanon.²⁷ As 'subtext', however, the lesbian plot within Cajou may perhaps be seen to function in a much more radical manner than would have been possible were Cajou primarily and predominantly a lesbian text. As Marilyn Farwell has pointed out, overtly lesbian texts are by no means necessarily disruptive of the dominant heterosexual plots which have structured the Western literary tradition.²⁸ Rather, suggests Farwell, it is in those predominantly heterosexual texts in which a strong female friendship or a 'minor', allusive lesbian scene is present, that the heterosexual plot is most effectively disrupted. She examines the way in which many overtly 'feminist' and 'lesbian' texts, even as they attempt to imagine non-heterosexual female desire, have merely replicated - in a way that 'lesbian subtexts' do not - the dominant representation of desire as desire for difference, as inevitably polarised around 'masculine' and 'feminine' roles.

²⁷ 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, pp. 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, pp. 211-231), 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, pp. 136-146).

²⁸ Marilyn Farwell, 'Heterosexual Plots and Lesbian Subtexts: Toward a Theory of Lesbian Narrative Space', in Karla Jay and Joanne Glasgow, Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revisions (London: Onlywomen Press, 1992), pp. 91-103.

Farwell takes Radclyffe Hall's The Well of Loneliness, with its active, cross-dressing 'hero' Stephen and her passive, feminine lover Mary, as a prime example. Like Gillian Spraggs, she reads Hall's novel as one which succeeds in representing lesbian desire 'only at the expense of articulating a vision of all sexual relationships, whether lesbian or heterosexual, as trapped in the requirements of a given masculinity and femininity, conceived in nearly the most mutually oppressive terms'.²⁹ For both Spraggs and Farwell, texts such as The Well of Loneliness are trapped, specifically, within popularised Freudian discourses on sexuality and on homosexuality.³⁰ For them, and for other theorists like them, it is vital that lesbian texts and subtexts begin to offer a critique of this apparently inexorable 'heterosexualisation of desire'.³¹ That is, that they begin to undermine the dominant, heterosexual narrative plot by imagining a woman desiring a woman outside of 'male space'. Farwell, in particular, imagines this 'outside' space to be the 'disruptive space of sameness' of lesbian desire, in which a woman desires as a woman, rather than by 'masculinising' herself in order to desire 'as a man'. For her, as for Monique Wittig, the figure of 'the lesbian' when imagined in these terms, stands inevitably as a 'threat of sameness' for difference, a 'third gender'

²⁹ 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. 115-132 (p. 124).

³⁰ Freud's description of the love of one of his female patients for 'a Lady' is exemplary: 'in her behaviour towards her love-object she had throughout assumed the masculine part: that is to say, she displayed the humility and the sublime over-estimation of the sexual object so characteristic of the male lover, and the renunciation of all narcissistic satisfaction, and the preference for being lover rather than beloved. She had thus not only chosen a feminine love-object, but had also developed a masculine attitude towards this object' (Sigmund Freud, 'Psychogenesis of a case of Homosexuality in a Woman', p. 211).

³¹ Butler, *ibid.*, p. 17.

capable of transcending the fixed binaries of compulsory heterosexuality.³² Because of the inevitable shock of juxtaposition, the disruptive potential of the 'lesbian space of sameness' par excellence remains, for Farwell, the lesbian subtext found within an overtly and predominantly heterosexual narrative.

It would seem entirely plausible to position the lesbian plot like that contained in Cajou precisely as a 'disruptive space of sameness' within the heterosexual, not to mention homophobic, narrative of lactification as it is encoded by Fanon. There are, however, a number of problems inherent both in Farwell's analysis itself and, most especially, in attempting to apply it to the Antillean context of Cajou. Cajou's relationships with Stéphanie and with Marjolaine, it must be remembered, are structured not by 'sameness', but by difference. As Butler suggests, 'heterosexuality is not the only compulsory display of power that informs sexuality', and as Bonnie Zimmerman similarly points out, 'while sexual difference may not exist between or among lesbians, all other forms of difference do'.³³ For Cajou, the difference between Stéphanie or Marjolaine and herself is necessary in order for her desire to exist: it is their whiteness - that which marks her as not the same as them - which attracts her. Thus her desire becomes focused upon specific parts of Stéphanie's body, parts which, like her straight, European hair, become metonymic not only of

³² Farwell, 'Heterosexual Plots and Lesbian Subtexts', p. 98. For Wittig, as Butler explains, 'the lesbian is the only concept... which is beyond the categories of sex', (Monique Wittig, 'One is Not Born a Woman', quoted in Butler, *ibid.*, p. 19).

³³ See Butler, *ibid.*, pp. 121-2 and Bonnie Zimmerman, 'Lesbians Like This and That: Some Notes on Lesbian Criticism for the Nineties', in Munt, New Lesbian Criticism, pp. 1-16 (p. 12). For Butler, 'sexual sameness' itself is impossible within any relationship of desire. In Butler's reformulation of the (then radical) 'second-wave' feminist distinction between sex and gender, 'sex' is as constructed and artificial a category as 'gender' (Gender Trouble, p. 6). For Butler, sex itself is a 'gendered category', and the aim of her study is, through Foucauldian, genealogical analysis, to examine how sex has been constituted as a prediscursive 'fact'. 'Male' and 'female' bodies are no more natural as categories than are 'masculine' and 'feminine' bodies: no two 'female' bodies or 'female' modes of desire are thus ever the same, but they are instead always, inevitably, structured by difference.

Stéphanie herself, but of her difference, and of Cajou's desire for that difference - for her whiteness.

As she explains to Germain many years later:

Souvent, c'étaient ses cheveux qui m'excitaient. Eux, je les touchais, je les palpais. Les tresses de Stéphanie... Je les ai mordues, un soir, couchée dans l'herbe brûlée de soleil; je les retenais entre mes dents; leur parfum m'irritait la langue. (Cajou, p. 66)

Cajou similarly explains how she had invented games for her and Stéphanie, games which involved role-play and disguise and which, it is evident, provided her with another manner in which to foreground their difference: 'tu as lu le conte de la Fée enchantée, Stéphanie? Tu souriras comme la Fille aux cheveux de lin. Je serai le Crapaud et je baverai sur tes fleurs' (Cajou, p. 46). Stéphanie graciously attempts to insist that she take a different role: 'les crapauds ne font pas de visites. Et puis, c'est laid, un crapaud' (Cajou, p. 46), but she eventually accepts the roles chosen for her by Cajou for they work always to her advantage. Thus, as Cajou explains: 'dans notre salle de jeux, j'ai été clocharde, esclave, chouette, ou bien la vilaine fée qu'on n'invite pas. Il faut bien que le rêve prenne pour assise et pour tremplin le réel' (Cajou, p. 48). For Cajou, role-play heightens desire, for it heightens her awareness not of their putative (sexual) sameness, but of (racial) difference.³⁴ For Stéphanie, such roles serve merely to consolidate her already-burgeoning sense of superiority. Indeed, as Cajou herself realises, years later, to people like Stéphanie she has fulfilled the vital role of allowing them to construct their own sense of self as white and as superior:

Je sais aujourd'hui pourquoi les gens, qui me méprisent, me recherchent parfois: j'offre un aliment à leur orgueil. Ils se disent: 'Tout de même, je ne suis pas comme ça'. Cette vérité, quand j'étais petite, ne m'était pas nettement apparue. Je croyais que Stéphanie m'aimait bien, puisqu'elle venait le jeudi jouer avec moi. (Cajou, p. 42)

³⁴ Role-play as a means of foregrounding difference (this time sexual) is theorised also by Butler in relation to drag, cross-dressing and lesbian butch-femme. All, for Butler, are instances in which the 'naturalness' of sex and gender is questioned. In particular, and in opposition to Farwell and Spraggs, Butler explains how lesbian butch-femme role-play cannot simply be explained as a somewhat pernicious repetition of gender roles constructed within and by compulsory heterosexuality. Rather, 'the replication of heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual original' (Butler, p. 31).

If sex is not the only difference which may structure desire, nor is it the only relationship of power: 'same-sex' relationships are no more devoid of the play of power than are heterosexual relationships, and especially within an interracial context.³⁵

If the 'lesbian subtext' of Cajou thus does not represent the 'disruptive space of sameness' imagined by Farwell, this does not mean that it fails to unsettle the dominant, heterosexual plot with which it is juxtaposed. Indeed, the difference which structures Cajou's relationships throughout is one which Cajou herself - like Farwell - dreams of eradicating. It must be remembered that her aspiration, through her desire for Stéphanie and for Marjolaine, is to become white - to become the same as them in every way. She fantasises her relationships with women precisely as 'spaces of sameness', and she needs the difference of Stéphanie and Marjolaine only in so far as she strives to obliterate it. 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

³⁵ In the different, though roughly contemporaneous context of 1950s, (North American) lesbian bar culture, this is the function of difference within the relationships described by the African-American writer Audre Lorde in her novel Zami: A New Spelling of My Name (Trumansberg: Crossing Press, 1982). As Anna Wilson points out in her essay on Lorde, membership into the lesbian community of Greenwich Village in the 1950s was 'purchased at the price of non-recognition of Blackness... [one] is admitted only under the assumption of sameness' ('Audre Lorde and the African-American Tradition', in Munt, New Lesbian Criticism, (pp. 75-94), p. 81). As Katie King explains, however, difference is actually the key feature of the lesbian bar as a space of putative sameness: it is the narrator Audre's difference, like that of Cajou, which determines the possibilities of her relationships with other women. She describes the way in which the butch-femme roles of fifties bar culture were strictly racialised: black lesbians were almost always 'butch', and very rarely 'femme', for to be 'femme' it was necessary to be 'gorgeous', and "gorgeous" was defined by a white male world's standards' (Katie King, 'Audre Lorde's Laquered Layerings: The Lesbian Bar as a Site of Literary Production', in Munt, *ibid.* (pp. 51-74), p. 58). Like the role-play games played by Cajou and Stéphanie, the butch-femme role-play described by Audre foregrounds not only the differences between women, but also the differences of power which may structure desire.

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 'civilisation' 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' (Peau noire, p. 51). 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, unlike Mayotte, desires whiteness via recognition, not pregnancy.

Despite Cajou's interrogation of the (hetero)sexist logic of Fanon's lactification plot, it nonetheless becomes clear that, though a space of fantasised sameness, Cajou does not disrupt the dominant plot in the way that Farwell imagines the truly radical lesbian subtext might do. Indeed, Cajou actually repeats, even serves to consolidate, that dominant heterosexual plot. Though female and homosexual, Cajou's desire remains structured by, and trapped within, the logic of lactification - just as Farwell feels texts like The Well of Loneliness remain structured by, and trapped within, the 'heterosexualisation of desire' characteristic of Western, narrative forms. Unlike these lesbian texts, however, which in Farwell's analysis fail because they are unable to escape the pernicious, heterosexual obsession with difference, Cajou 'fails' because it is unable to escape the very

obsession with sameness which Farwell finds to be so radical but which, as we have seen, structures the dominant, heterosexual plot of lactification itself. The desire for sameness which structures Cajou cannot possibly disrupt a dominant plot which is itself premised upon a fantasy of sameness.

Instead, and perhaps more radically, the repetition of sameness in Cajou serves to demonstrate that sameness is not only impossible within any relationship of desire, but that it is itself a dangerous and reductive fantasy, whether heterosexual or homosexual. It is a fantasy which restricts the working of desire itself, which eradicates the possibility of active desire: the desire for sameness, as Fanon himself points out, is merely passive, or '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 libininal 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 characterises Madévie's relationship with Cyril as it had characterised her relationship with Xavier. Through the long evenings spent at the clinic in conversation with Cyril, 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 characterised 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 white, French doctor sent temporarily to Guadeloupe, he is better-paid and he is placed immediately in charge of the clinic where she works.³⁶ With all of his staff, Cyril emphasises his difference and the power conferred upon him by it. He constantly offers them gifts, primarily of 'culture', books and records which he expects them to appreciate as he does. This is particularly true in the case of Madévie, to whom he plays classical music and recommends books in an effort to educate her in a culture about which we know, from her accounts of her time in France with Xavier, she is already perfectly knowledgeable.

Throughout, Cyril 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

³⁶ It is still the case, in the Antilles, that higher managerial and civil service jobs are occupied largely by French immigrants who earn up to 50% more than they would in France and pay less tax. They represent 6.5% of the total population and earn 22% of all the money earned in Guadeloupe. In contrast, 50.5% of the Guadeloupean population, who earn less than the minimum statutory wage (SMIC) (and in Guadeloupe the SMIC is 18.24% lower than in 'metropolitan' France) earn only 20% of all money earned. The argument used to justify these high salaries, which is rather unconvincing given the low level of the SMIC, is that the cost of living is higher in the DOM (See Jean-Luc Mathieu, *Les DOM-TOM*), pp. 28-9.

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. (Examen, p. 47)

He takes bets on how heavy new-born babies will be, and in his haste to find out, 'il se précipite sur l'utérus de la femme, le presse brutalement afin d'en extraire le placenta... Il me jette un coup d'oeil complice. Pourtant, je le hais quand il meurtrit ainsi les ventres féminins' (Examen, p. 48).³⁷

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 women, her fear is always articulated as a fear of his 'ghostly' whiteness. The two, conjoined forms of power which he

³⁷ In typical moments of political comment, Manicom points out how 'les gynécologues mutilatrices de Cyril' (Examen, p. 145) are inextricably linked to the way in which all gynaecological problems in Guadeloupe are solved using the same methods as in France but adapted to the 'colonial' situation of Guadeloupe. Thus, hysterectomies are performed on very young women when it would be avoided in France, and Caesarian and forceps deliveries are commonplace.

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.

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. It is, as we may recall, the first encounter with the white gaze which produces the black Antillean's shock of recognition - like that experienced by Cajou or by Sapotille - that though s/he shares the white European's collective unconscious, s/he is not white and, moreover, that s/he has been negatively constructed as black within that same collective unconscious. Thus, the white gaze necessarily inspires fear, the fear of seeing oneself negatively reflected in the eyes of the white other. As Fanon points out, 'le nègre craint les yeux bleus' (Peau noire, p. 34). At the same time, however - and consequently - it is the white gaze which inspires desire in the black Antillean: the passive, 'reactional' desire for whiteness which, as we have seen, characterises the relationship with the white other. For Fanon, the black Antillean's desire for whiteness - that is, the lactification complex - is both precipitated by, and manifests itself primarily as, a desire for the white gaze. As we remarked in the case of Cajou, the desire for the white other is a desire for recognition; it is only by seeing desire in the eyes of the white other that the black Antillean is able to attain the vicarious whiteness s/he so craves.

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'.³⁸ 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. Indeed, it is here that the observations of feminist theorists such as Mulvey begin to intersect interestingly and helpfully with those of Fanon, and particularly in relation to a text such as Manicom's, a text so manifestly concerned with the intersections of racial and sexual power.

Luce Irigaray, whose work we shall examine 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'.³⁹ 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, and which controls and limits, woman. It is the expression of the active desire of the male subject, and it renders woman the passive object of that desire.

³⁸ Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16 (1975), pp. 6-18.

³⁹ Luce Irigaray, *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1977), p. 25.

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' (*Ce sexe*, p. 25). In a way which lends itself to comparison with Fanon's description of the black Antillean's necessarily 'reactional' desire, Irigaray describes how female desire does not exist, how woman is obliged to exist only in a state of 'la mascarade'.⁴⁰ That is, she is able to desire only in so far as she desires to be desired, 'ne sachant pas ce qu'elle veut, prête à n'importe quoi, en redemandant même, pourvu qu'il la "prenne" comme "objet"' (*Ce sexe*, p. 25). Like the black Antillean in Fanon's analysis, woman is not only desireless but, consequently, she is gazeless.

Such are the principal preoccupations of recent feminist explorations of the prevalence of the gaze in Western thought and culture, preoccupations which are certainly shared, for example, and applied specifically to the domain of literary narrative, by Dorothy Kelly. Using Freudian and post-Freudian theories of sexual difference, voyeurism and scopophilia, Kelly explores how the 'secret gaze' of male voyeurism has structured the plot of French novels from the seventeenth to the twentieth century.⁴¹ Kelly examines the way in which the majority of her chosen texts, all

⁴⁰ The glossary provided by Catherine Porter to her English translation of Irigaray's text is informative about Irigaray's use of the term 'la mascarade': 'an alienated or false version of femininity arising from the woman's awareness of the man's desire for her to be his other, the masquerade permits woman to experience desire not in her own right but as the man's desire situates her' (Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans., Catherine Porter, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985, p. 220).

⁴¹ Dorothy Kelly, *Telling Glances: Voyeurism in the French Novel* (Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991). Kelly examines texts such as Mme de Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves*, Diderot's *La Religieuse*, Robbe-Grillet's *Le Voyeur*, Balzac's *La Fille aux yeux d'or*, Stendahl's *La Chartreuse de Parme*, Gide's *L'Immoraliste* and Duras' *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein*. Within the domain of cinema theory - and much earlier than Kelly - the work of theorists such as Laura Mulvey, like much feminist work on the gaze, has focused upon the issue of (male) spectatorship. Using the Freudian theories of sexual difference, voyeurism and scopophilia against which Irigaray also works, Mulvey proposes that narrative cinema is structured according to the sexual inequality which structures the Western imagination more generally: 'in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness' (Mulvey, p. 11). Teresa de Lauretis, following Mulvey, has expanded both her own and Mulvey's analyses of narrative cinema to examine the structure of narrative in general, beginning with that of popular myth and folktale (Teresa de Lauretis, 'Desire in Narrative', in Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*,

canonical, focus upon and revolve around an enigmatic female character who becomes the object of the male gaze. While these men who look are free to express their desire, to master and control with their gaze, the women, like those in the films explored by Mulvey, are constrained to remain in a state of 'to-be-looked-at-ness', of 'la mascarade'. Towards the end of her study, however, Kelly turns to examine two texts by women, Le Ravissement de Lol V Stein and La Princesse de Clèves. It is here that she suggests, though somewhat disappointingly, that the apparently inexorable narrative structure so far examined may be reversed or complicated in ways which enable women to occupy positions other than that of passive object to be looked at.

This is the thesis, too, and more successfully, of Joan DeJean, who engages directly with Irigaray's theorisation 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'.⁴² She examines Sappho's poem 'A l'aimée' and, like Kelly, 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

London: Macmillan, 1984). De Lauretis proposes that contemporary cinema, with its inevitable focus on the dynamics of looking, has simply inherited and made more evident the way in which all narrative is generated by the movement of active, male desire. Mulvey, in her 1981 response to her own 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' also comments that 'popular cinema inherited traditions of storytelling that are common to other forms of folk and mass culture' (Laura Mulvey, '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. This essay was originally published, in 1981, in Framework).

⁴² Joan DeJean, 'Looking Like a Woman: The Female Gaze in Sappho and Lafayette', L'Esprit créateur, 28 (1988), pp. 34-45 (p. 34). Within the context of cinema, this is the thesis, too, of both Mulvey and De Lauretis. De Lauretis, in particular, focuses on the central problem of Mulvey's early theories of the gaze by asking whether the only position open to female spectators can be one in which they look at themselves being looked at: 'How can the female spectator be entertained as a subject of the very movement that places her as its object, that makes her the figure of its own closure? Clearly, at least for women spectators, we cannot assume identification to be single or simple... no-one can really see oneself as an inert object or a sightless body... the ego must be active or at least fantasize itself in an active manner' (de Lauretis, Alice Doesn't, pp. 141-2). Mulvey herself, in her later essay, suggests that women do have access to action - by temporarily accepting 'masculinisation', by temporarily occupying the active, 'male' space within narrative, even while alternating between this and the female space of passivity or 'to-be-looked-at-ness' (Laura Mulvey, 'Afterthoughts on "Narrative and Visual Pleasure"', cited in de Lauretis, Alice Doesn't, p. 207).

desiring subject in the process of expressing her desire... speaking her desire through her eyes' (DeJean, p. 35). 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 characterised 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 destabilise 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.⁴³ 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 consistently 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 one such 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. Fleeting, 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 gazeless. 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

⁴³ bell hooks, lecture given at Nottingham University, February 1991.

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'adresse 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. Rather, it is of a different order entirely from her desire for Xavier, and this has everything to do with the level of self-awareness which she has achieved since, and because of, her relationship with him.

The key moment of Madévie's self-realisation 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 realisation 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 recognise 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 recognised simply as the same as the white other (as 'white'), but to be recognised, instead, as different - as black. The transgressive black gaze - that moment 'quand il arrive au nègre de regarder le Blanc farouchement' (Peau noire, p. 179) - thus represents, for Fanon, a demand for the recognition of difference. If difference is not so recognised - and historically, as Fanon points out, it has not been - the black Antillean is forced to remain in a state of passive dependence. If difference is recognised, however, struggle ensues: it is this struggle - the struggle for mutual recognition -

which will lead both to black liberation and, finally, to a relationship based on equality between black and white.⁴⁴

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 'civilise' 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 recognise 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

⁴⁴ Fanon cites the abolition of slavery as a key example of the way in which the black Antillean has not received recognition of difference, as an example of a form of 'liberation' based upon the assertion: 'Mon frère, il n'y pas de différence entre nous' (*Peau noire*, p. 179). That is, based upon the white other's decision to recognise the black as the same; as 'white'; as 'human'. The black Antillean has therefore never actively struggled for his or her own liberation: s/he has always had liberty granted. S/he has thus been constrained to remain in a state of passive dependence, enjoying 'liberty' on white terms - a liberty which, at any time, may be withdrawn. Furthermore: 'le nègre ignore le prix de la liberté, car il ne s'est pas battu pour elle' (*Peau noire*, p. 179). 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* (Paris: Editions Maspéro, 1961) - 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.

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. As he tellingly remarks to Madévie, in explanation of his lack of sympathy with the Independence movement: 'que voulez-vous? Je suis un Blanc' (Examen, p. 183). He not only refuses to return Madévie's gaze - as we have seen, he fears it.

It is with Cyril's refusal to recognise 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 organised 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. That is, she becomes involved with people who, like herself, have experienced moments of self-realisation, 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 rather than, or at least 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 Independence 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).⁴⁵

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 (or, prior to that, of the colonial class) is 'zoreill', 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.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ 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 (pp. 5-57), p. 50). Wilson goes on to argue that, 'on the symbolic level', Madévie becomes Guadeloupe, whose changing relationship to France is emblematised by Madévie's 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.

⁴⁶ There have been, it would seem, several attempts - none conclusive - to explain the origins of the use of the term 'zoreill'. 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.

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 recognise in the mirror as her own. Gilbert, unlike Cyril, recognises 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 et 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 libérée': 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

282). Edouard Glissant, on the other hand, in the glossary to his Le Discours antillais (Paris: Seuil, 1981) suggests that the name comes from the fact 'qu'ils [les Blancs] ont les oreilles rouges sous l'effet du soleil' (Le Discours antillais, p. 500).

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.⁴⁷ 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 organisation 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.⁴⁸ While they await their own, and their community's liberation, the role of women like Madévie is thus to help and to support male revolutionaries like Gilbert. Indeed, when Gilbert

⁴⁷ 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. Indeed, La Graine seems to develop in much greater detail the observations made by Madévie on these issues in Mon Examen de Blanc. 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

⁴⁸ See in particular Zimra's 'Negritude in the Feminine Mode: the case of Martinique and Guadeloupe', Journal of Ethnic Studies, 12 (1984), pp. 53-77.

proposes (or, rather, presumes) that he and Madévie should move in together, he does so with the cautionary words: 'tu ne seras pas un de ces médecins riches... Il te faudra me supporter, m'aider à être un militant lucide' (Examen, p.. 171-2).

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 symbolise 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 parroting 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, when he makes her feel 'libre, libérée, belle presque', he tells her, more specifically: '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 disabling. 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 recognises Madévie's blackness and the difference that it makes, he, too, like Fanon, fails to recognise the difference that her sex makes, except in order to exploit it in turn.

Although Peau noire was never intended to include a study of the relationship between the black man and the black woman, there seems, throughout, to be an implicit idealisation 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 (like same-sex) are by no means devoid of the play of power. Less centrally, though far more overtly, this is made clear also in Lacrosil's earlier text, *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 black, 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.⁴⁹ Rather, hers is a relief, like that of Cajou and of Madévie, which is informed by the difference that sex makes within an already complex, racialised 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'.⁵⁰ Of course, it is crucial to recognise, as does Zimra herself, that black women do need to align themselves with black men

⁴⁹ 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*, p. 44).

⁵⁰ Zimra, 'Patterns of Liberation', p. 105. Crucially, Lacrosil shows also that Benoît's access to patriarchal power is entirely different from that of white men, that his power as oppressor is conditioned by his own experience of colonial oppression. Benoît is an ex-soldier physically and mentally scarred by his treatment - particularly brutal because he is black - during a war spent in prisoner of war camps, and it is this point which is extremely important to Lacrosil's portrayal of, and even Sapotille's own understanding of, his treatment of his wife: 'il me faisait peur. Je craignais ses coups... Une cicatrice au front: ce n'était rien; c'était son âme qui avait été blessée. Benoît: un hypersensible qu'on avait trop malmené. Parce qu'il avait pleuré dans un camp, mes larmes le réhabilitaient. Quand je compris cela, je pris l'habitude de me taire... J'aurais dû respecter son effort pour rétablir [l]es valeurs sûres: le courage, le prestige du mâle' (*Sapotille*, pp. 48-9). 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 by his need to beat Sapotille in order to re-assert his masculinity.

against colonialism and racism. 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 symbolise 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.

Two

The Return of Africa's Daughters: Negritude 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 herself 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 very explicitly engaging with, working off, and interrogating what has come to be regarded as the founding literature of the Antillean tradition. Indeed, it is for this reason that it is

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). Though *Heremakhonon* and *Une Saison à Rihata* were Condé's first novels, she had previously produced two plays: *Dieu nous l'a donné* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 1972) and *La Mort d'Oluwémi d'Ajumako* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1973).

necessary to begin, before examining Condé's texts in any detail, with a vital, if lengthy discussion of negritude itself.

There is much debate as to the precise origins of negritude as philosophical ideal, literary trope and would-be political practice. Three black students, all from what were then French colonies and who met in Paris in the 1930s, are generally acknowledged to be its 'founding fathers': Aimé Césaire from Martinique; Léon Gontran Damas from Guyane; and Léopold Sédar Senghor from Sénégal. Like the Antillean neurosis described by Fanon, negritude itself is typically regarded as a phenomenon peculiar to writers from the colonies of France - as the inevitable final reaction to the French colonial policy of assimilation, and to the lacification complex that it can be seen to have provoked. As Fanon has explained, it was in the Antilles that the policy of assimilation can be seen to have had its most marked effects, for it was there - much more than in Africa - that black, colonised subjects were encouraged to believe that accession to whiteness, to 'Europeanness', was possible. Indeed, as Fanon explains in a later essay, it was this very distinction between Africans as 'nègres' and Antilleans as 'European'- a distinction encouraged by French colonial powers - which ensured that black Antilleans were able to imagine themselves as 'white':

L'Antillais était supérieur à l'Africain, d'une autre essence, assimilé ou métropolitain. Mais comme à l'extérieur il était un tout petit peu africain puisque, ma foi, noir, il était obligé - réaction normale dans l'économie psychologique - de durcir ses frontières afin d'être à l'abri de toute méprise. Disons que, non content d'être supérieur à l'Africain, l'Antillais le méprisait.³

³ Frantz Fanon, 'Antillais et Africains', in Frantz Fanon, Pour la révolution africaine (Paris: Maspéro, 1964), pp. 19-33 (p. 25).

As Fanon also points out, however, once in France - or, as during the second world war, when 'France' came to the Antilles⁴ - these same Antilleans found themselves defined as 'black', as 'des nègres', along with Africans: they suffered the same white racism in the same way. Such was the experience of Cajou, of Sapotille, and of Madévie in Paris, and such also was the experience of black Antillean students like Césaire.

However, if Lacrosil's heroines were paralysed by this experience, Césaire and others like him were not. For Césaire, the enforced solidarity with African students like Senghor led not to a strengthening of the desire to become white, of the desire to distinguish himself from them, but to an eventual realisation both of impossibility, and of the undesirability of aspiring to 'whiteness'. Rejected by the white French culture to which they had thought they belonged, Antillean students such as Césaire came to realise that, in the face of white racism, more was to be gained by rejecting the false ideology of assimilation, by refusing to allow themselves to be divided from their 'natural' allies, and by asserting instead what they had in common: their blackness. Thus 'une révolution dans les relations antillo-africains' finally occurred,⁵ as the Antillean now undertook 'une refonte totale de son monde, une métamorphose de son corps'.⁶

It was out of such a climate that the student magazine L'Etudiant Noir, set up in 1935 by Césaire, Senghor and Damas, grew. Although it was not the first literary magazine by black students and writers in Paris, L'Etudiant Noir represented a significant break with predecessors such as Revue Indigène, La Revue du Monde Noir and Légitime Défense which had all, to a

⁴ As Fanon explains, it was when thousands of French sailors and soldiers became stranded in Martinique and Guadeloupe during world war two, that the myth of the 'Antillean-as-European' became apparent, as Antilleans were subjected to large-scale, and sustained, European racism (Fanon, 'Antillais et Africains', p. 27).

⁵ Fanon, *ibid.*, p. 23.

⁶ Fanon, *ibid.*, p. 28.

greater or lesser extent, been principally concerned with imitating the style of contemporary French writers and poets.⁷ The avowed aim of L'Étudiant Noir was to revalue, even to assert the superiority of, blackness and black culture. Though the term 'négritude' itself did not appear until 1939, in Césaire's Cahier d'un retour au pays natal,⁸ it was in L'Étudiant Noir that Césaire first used the term 'négrerie'. In his essay 'Négrerie: Jeunesse noire et assimilation', it began to become clear that 'négritude' meant more than simply an assertion of black solidarity, that it meant, more specifically, the solidarity of the 'African diaspora', of all those peoples who could claim Africa as their origin, as their 'native land'.⁹

For Senghor in particular, negritude was based upon the idea of an unchanging black 'essence' or soul, an 'African personality' characterised as emotive, rhythmic, intuitive, mystic and in harmony with nature and the universe. It is this collective African personality which, for Senghor, is common to the black race throughout the diaspora. Both for Antillean poets like Césaire and for

⁷ Revue Indigène was founded in 1927 by the Haitian poet Jacques Roumain. The contributors were largely from the privileged mulatto élite in Haiti and their poetry was mainly in the style of contemporary European Modernist poets like Apollinaire (See A. James Arnold, Modernism and Negritude, Massachusetts: Harvard, 1981, p. 25). Some years later, between 1931 and 1932, La Revue du Monde Noir was set up by a Martinican in Paris, Paulette Nardal who also, with her three sisters, ran a literary and artistic salon in Paris. It aimed to acquaint black students in Paris with the work of the black American poets of the Harlem Renaissance. However, both magazine and salon had the reputation for being bourgeois and too mulatto, and were unpopular, particularly, with Césaire (See Arnold, p. 11). In 1932, the Martinican Etienne Léro founded Légitime Défense, a communist-surrealist magazine which was to have only one issue. This one issue, however, was much more radical than either of the previous reviews, for it began to reject the type of conformist poetry which featured in them, and which was popular in the Antilles generally. Its editors also used Harlem Renaissance poets such as Langston Hughes and Claude McKay - this time in order to assert the superiority of black values as well as the hypocrisy of the mulatto and black middle class in the Caribbean. As Ako points out, it is thus Légitime Défense which may perhaps be seen not only as a precursor of L'Étudiant Noir, but of the negritude movement itself. As far as literary works are concerned, precursors of negritude may be seen in René Maran's Batouala (1921), Suzanne Lacascade's Claire-Solange, âme africaine (1924) and Léon Gontran Damas' Pigments, published in 1937.

⁸ 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.

⁹ See Edward Ako, 'L'Étudiant Noir and the myth of the genesis of the negritude movement', Research in African Literatures, 15 (1984), pp. 341-353 (p. 347).

African poets like Senghor, the black diaspora must return to its shared African origin if personal and collective racial identity are to be rehabilitated. It must claim and celebrate that which has been rejected by the West as 'primitive', as 'savage', as 'backward'.¹⁰ For these black students in 1930s Paris, it was literature, and most especially poetry, which became the key mode of such return and rehabilitation, through 'a passionate exaltation of the black race, associated with a romantic myth of Africa'.¹¹

However, as Jacqueline Leiner has observed, African and Antillean evocations of Africa were inevitably different.¹² For Senghor, it was necessary to return only figuratively to Africa, to rehabilitate precolonial traditions and customs which had been systematically covered over and devalued during the colonial era. Though Senghor had become separated from such values and traditions by his French education, they had continued to exist in the everyday lives of the people, and he himself was still able to remember them from his childhood. For Césaire and the other Antilleans, however, it was necessary to rehabilitate a much more distant, more ancient and more mythical Africa. As Antilleans, they had undergone a double alienation that Africans had not: they had experienced not only the alienation of colonised subjects, but also that of literal displacement and exile from the 'native land'. As Césaire describes in his Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, for the Antillean a literal return to Africa was necessary as well as a figurative one.

¹⁰ Perhaps the most accessible of Senghor's essays on negritude are those which have been collected in Léopold Sédar Senghor, Liberté I: Négritude et humanisme (Paris: Seuil, 1964). For commentaries on Senghor's thought, and on the ideals of negritude in general, 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 inc., 1985), pp. 43-51 (p. 43), and Jacqueline Leiner, 'Africa and the West Indies: Two Negritudes', in Albert S. Gerard, ed., European Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa, Vol. 1 (Budapest: Akadémici Kiado, 1986), pp. 1135-1153 (p. 1144).

¹¹ Abiola Irele, The African Experience in Literature and Ideology (London: Heinemann, 1981), p. 67.

¹² Jacqueline Leiner, 'Africa and the West Indies: Two Negritudes', p. 1145.

Césaire's Cahier d'un retour au pays natal has become the seminal text of Antillean negritude. A first-person narrative poem, it describes the black Antillean's 'return' from the ruin and degradation of Martinique to the beauty and purity - described in minute detail - of Africa, identified as 'ma terre... ce pays mien' (Cahier, p. 22). In Africa, Césaire's hero rediscovers and accepts '[ses] ancêtres bambaras' (Cahier, p. 58), as well as 'la splendeur de ce sang' (Cahier, p. 26) - the African blood which unites him with the rest of the black diaspora, with 'les nègres' of Guadeloupe, of Haiti, of 'Virginie. Tennessee. Géorgie. Alabama' (Cahier, p. 25). He proclaims the diaspora peoples' collective rejection of Europe, and their desire instead to embrace Africa and 'Africanness': 'nous vous haïssons vous et votre raison, nous nous réclamons de la démence précoce de la folie flambante du cannibalisme tenace' (Cahier, p. 27). He gains a sense of pride from the discovery that he belongs to an immense people, which itself is descended from an ancient civilisation. On a personal level, his journey confers upon him a sense of freedom which comes from being able to proclaim, without shame, his identity as black: 'par une inattendue et bienfaisante révolution intérieure, j'honore maintenant mes laideurs repoussantes' (Cahier, p. 37). Quite simply, he discovers: 'il est beau d'être nègre' (Cahier, p. 64), and it is this discovery which has inspired generations of subsequent Antilleans to embark upon their own quests for identity in Africa - both literal and literary.

Such is the case of Condé's heroines in Heremakhonon and Une Saison à Rihata. 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 Paris, to Africa, of assimilated, Antillean bourgeoises in search of origins.¹³ Both women find themselves, for different reasons, in unnamed,

¹³ Such was the case also, as she points out in an essay of 1987, for Condé herself. As she admits, her own journey to Africa, where she lived from 1960 to 1970, was motivated both by a desire to flee Guadeloupe, and by a realisation, while a student in France, that she was not French. Echoing Fanon, she writes: 'ne pas être français, cela voulait dire

newly-decolonised West African countries, and both women confront, in similar ways, their position as exiled Antilleans. However, their experiences in Africa are also significantly different, as are their motivations for going there. Marie-Hélène, of Une Saison à Rihata, finds herself in Africa almost by mistake, as the young wife of Zek, an African she had met while studying in Paris. Through a rapid, and often quite disjointed series of analepses, we discover that Marie-Hélène, as a student of 'Sciences-Po', had been active in the movements for African independence, attending meetings and marches across Paris, '[et rêvant] d'une Afrique libre et fière qui montrerait la voie aux Antilles' (Rihata, p. 54).

Although it would appear that such dreams of - and for - Africa had motivated, at least in part, Marie-Hélène's decision to go and live there, this is, in fact, only implied within the text - and here Une Saison à Rihata differs quite significantly from its predecessor Heremakhonon. As we shall see, Une Saison à Rihata is marked in many ways by the increasing absence of its heroine, while Heremakhonon, despite its often confusing and fragmented style, centres much more closely upon, and is indeed narrated by, its heroine Véronica Mercier. Her reasons for going to Africa, in consequence, are made much more evident, as she provides constant commentary upon her journey and stay there. Having lived in Paris for nine years, Véronica, unlike Marie-Hélène, goes to live in Africa only temporarily, as a philosophy teacher on a one-year contract. In the opening scene of the novel, as she arrives at the airport, she is asked the reason for her visit to Africa, and as she replies, she herself realises what this reason is: 'Touriste peut-être. Mais d'une espèce particulière à la découverte de soi-même' (Heremakhonon p. 20). From this moment on, and again through a series of analepses, we discover, as Véronica discovers, the complex background to her journey.

être nègre. Etre nègre, cela voulait dire... être africain' (Condé, 'Notes sur un retour au pays natal', Conjonction: Revue Franco-Haitienne, 176, 1987 (pp. 7-23), p. 12).

Throughout the narrative, Véronica describes herself as 'une voyageuse paumée à la recherche de son identité' (Heremakhonon p. 131), and 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'égaliser les Blancs, nos anciens maîtres. Amen' (Heremakhonon p. 75). Similarly, she remembers how, though apparently ashamed of and unwilling to discuss her maternal grandmother, who was half-white, her parents are at the same time proud of the resulting 'beauty' - that is pale skin-colour - of their children.

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). She is in search, that is, of 'une terre non plus peuplée de nègres..., mais de Noirs. C'est-à-dire, en clair, que je suis à la recherche de ce qui peut rester du passé' (Heremakhonon p. 89). Hers, much more clearly and deliberately than that of Marie-Hélène, is a search which evokes that archetypal identity quest of negritude. Indeed, as she herself comments: 'j'ai lu Césaire comme tout le monde. Je veux dire tous ceux de notre monde, le tiers monde' (Heremakhonon p. 123).

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 problematisations of négritude 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, and this criticism is only implied within the novels under discussion here, Condé 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.¹⁴

Such has been the opinion of countless commentators upon negritude. And not only has it been criticised for being too heavily invested in and reliant upon European structures of thought, for reversing, but ultimately remaining within, the racist binary oppositions set up by Europe. In addition, and this is particularly true of Senghorian negritude, it has been criticised for theorising the relationship between Africa and Europe as one of complementarity. For Senghor, after all, not only does each race possess its own particular 'spirit', or distinctive 'nature', which enables it to coexist with the other in a complementary way, but the black race actually constitutes the origin and source of 'humanity' in its entirety. The return to, and renewal of, 'primitive' African culture - its spontaneity and its irrationality, for example - is, in Senghor's theorisation, not only necessary for

¹⁴ Maryse Condé, 'Pourquoi la négritude? Négritude ou révolution?', in Jeanne-Lydie Goré, ed., Négritude Africaine. Négritude Caraïbe (Université de Paris-Nord, Centre d'Etudes Francophones: Editions de la Francité, 1973), pp. 150-154 (p 153). See also Maryse Condé, 'Négritude césairienne, Négritude senghorienne', Revue de littérature comparée, 3 (1974), pp. 409-419.

the black diaspora itself, but also for the survival of 'white culture', for the whole of 'humanity' - however defined.¹⁵ The black race thus becomes the salvation of the West, and negritude is deprived of its revolutionary potential, as it provides instead a discourse through which Europe may theorise its own rebirth and renewal. It becomes just another discourse to be co-opted by the West.¹⁶

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'.¹⁷ Véronica, for example, once again demonstrating

¹⁵ See, for example, Senghor's Liberté I: Négritude et humanisme. On the aspects of Senghor's negritude discussed here see, in particular, Hal Wylie, 'Negritude and Beyond' p. 44; Alexandre Kimenyi, 'The 'Popularity' of Negritude', The Journal of Ethnic Studies, 9 (1981), pp. 69-74 (p. 73); Leiner, 'Africa and the West Indies', p. 1145; Jean Corzani, 'La négritude aux Antilles françaises', in Goré, ed., Négritude Africaine, Négritude Caraïbe, pp. 118-128. In his theories of racial complementarity, Senghor was influenced by the work of German ethnographer Leo Frobenius. As Corzani points out, Frobenius, irritated with European, especially French, positivism and Cartesian logic, created the image of the black man as 'l'homme vrai, complet, heureux, face à l'homme occidental amputé de lui-même, coupé des forces vives du cosmos' (Corzani, p. 119). Much of Frobenius' work on this question centred upon the notion of the païdeuma which, as Arnold explains, is 'a pre-historical, prehuman power [which] shapes human civilisations independantly of mankind' (Arnold, Modernism and Negritude, p. 38). It is a precultural, biological given which gives rise to two forms of civilisation: the Hamitic and the Ethiopian. His idea was that the world had been brought to its present catastrophe through the Hamitic strain, and that, because of the cyclical nature of history, only the inevitable renewal of the Ethiopian strain could 'save' civilisation (Arnold, Modernism and Negritude, p. 51).

¹⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre's essay, 'Orphée Noir' provides a good example of this 'co-option'. This essay first appeared as an introduction to the first collection of negritude poetry, edited by Senghor, Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948), pp. ix-xliii. Sartre begins by describing negritude in the 'essentialist' terms of Senghor, referring to the black man's affinity with nature and with Earth, but goes on to theorise it in Marxist- existentialist terms, as 'l'être-dans-le-monde du Nègre' (Sartre, p. xxix), as an outcome of tension between the 'black man's' 'situation' and 'freedom'. For Sartre, negritude is a necessary moment of negativity, it is 'racisme anti-raciste' (Sartre, p. xiv), the second stage in a Marxist dialectic. His view of negritude is thus of a phenomenon subject to the laws of a universal, historical dialectic: white supremacy is the first stage; negritude the second, and a society without races the third. Ultimately, for Sartre, the 'black man' is a proletarian and his struggle becomes absorbed into the class struggle. Sartre's aim is to emphasise the historical role of the black man in a political and social revolution which is fundamentally European, and the result is that negritude is neutralised and utilised to the advantage of a Western world in crisis.

¹⁷ Vèvè Clark, 'Developing Diaspora Literacy: Allusion in Maryse Condé's Heremakhonon', in Boyce Davies and Savory Fido, eds., Out of the Kumbia, pp. 303-320 (p. 315).

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). 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 voit-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).¹⁸

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.¹⁹ Fanon, too, points to the disjunction between negritude myth and African reality, as he describes how post-independence African leaders - 'ces hommes,

¹⁸ 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).

¹⁹ 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).

qui [avant l'indépendance] ont chanté la race, qui ont assumé tout le passé, l'abâtardissement et l'anthropophagie' - found themselves, after independence, incapable of creating a politics of action out of hitherto abstract ideals (Les Damnés, p. 122). For Fanon, the problem lies in these very ideals themselves, ideals which, like those of Senghor (President of Sénégal from its independence in 1960, until 1980) can loosely be described as those of negritude.

As Alexandre Kimenyi explains, Senghor's politics was based upon an effort to adapt Western models of Marxism to a more specifically African brand of socialism. This socialism itself was to be based upon the notion that traditional African social organisation, rooted in communal and spiritual values, formed the 'natural' foundation of a truly socialist society in which religion and tradition would be paramount.²⁰ For Fanon, however, such harking back to precolonial African culture and its traditions cannot but fail to end in disaster. While he acknowledges the benefits of remembering the precolonial, in terms of restoring lost racial pride, he points out that it is impossible, ever, to return to it - for it no longer exists as such. More fundamentally, it is impossible to ensure the efficient functioning of a modernised country, and more especially of a modern economy, by adopting the principles of a precolonial society and its economy. As Fanon goes on to explain, this particular problem is compounded by the fact that although a new, indigenous elite has been educated by the colonial élite precisely for the purpose of taking over the running of the country upon independence, it is an élite which has been kept largely ignorant about the specific workings of its country's modern economy. With neither the financial nor the professional resources necessary, this new élite is therefore obliged simply to take over where the colonial élite left off, and this has serious ramifications as far as the economic and social welfare of the country is

²⁰ Alexandre Kimenyi, "The "Popularity" of Negritude", pp. 73-4. See also Abiola Irele, The African Experience in Literature and Ideology, p70.

concerned. Instead of attempting to create new, national industries, for example, the recently 'independent' country typically continues in its role as mediator of the former colonial power's own economic interests. As Fanon explains: 'on continue à expédier les matières premières, on continue à se faire les petits agriculteurs de l'Europe, les spécialistes des produits bruts' (Damnés, p. 111).

Such a relationship of economic dependency is one which ensures that the same, colonial social structures also remain in place within the newly 'decolonised' country. That is, that the new 'bourgeoisie nationale', like the colonial class before it, simply prospers at the expense of the rural masses (Damnés, pp. 113-16). There is, as Fanon points out, no African unity here - neither within the new nation nor between African nations. In order that the people of the new nation be kept loyal to its leadership, chauvinism, tribalism, and false national pride are typically fostered, rivalry rather than unity encouraged between new African nations (Damnés, pp. 117-18).²¹ Such, indeed, is the type of African nation in which both Véronica and Marie-Hélène find themselves. In Une Saison à Rihata, as in Heremakhonon, the country depicted 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.²² 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

²¹ Fanon gives specific examples of new leaders who, while apparently espousing the principles of negritude, were only too ready to abandon these principles when imprecise affirmations of a unified 'black culture' developed into actual political action in their specific countries. He cites both Jacques Rabemananjara (then a Minister in the Madagascar government) and President Senghor himself as black leaders who, although ostensibly proponents of African cultural unity and black freedom, supported the French government when Algeria began to fight for independence (Damnés, p. 171).

²² The title of Condé's Une Saison à Rihata bears striking resemblance to that of Césaire's 1966 play Une Saison au Congo, which similarly depicts the African struggle for independence in the aftermath of decolonisation, and the fight against corruption, both internal and European.

d'usurper le pouvoir' (Rihata p. 32). Even Madou, Zek's brother and a minister in Toumany's government, realises 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 organised, mass action, probably violent,²³ which will revolutionise social, economic and political structures, rather than simply allow power to be transferred from one bourgeois élite to another. For Fanon, cultural concerns alone - which for him form the basis of negritude - are incapable of freeing either a nation or an entire race: they must at least be accompanied, and preferably preceded, by organised national struggle. For Fanon:

L'intellectuel colonisé cependant tôt ou tard se rendra compte qu'on ne prouve pas sa nation à partir de la culture mais qu'on la manifeste dans le combat que mène le peuple contre les forces d'occupation... On ne fera jamais honte au colonialisme en déployant devant son regard des trésors culturels méconnus. (Damnés, p. 163)

This is also the opinion of the revolutionary Victor, in Une saison à Rihata. When, the griot, Sory, is imprisoned for singing an anti-government song at his son's baptism, Victor can only comment that '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). It therefore comes as no surprise when, later in the narrative, it is Victor who assassinates

²³ As Fanon points out: 'le colonialisme... est de la violence à l'état de nature et ne peut s'incliner que devant une plus grande violence' (Damnés, p. 43).

Madou, shooting him with a gun stolen from the minister's chauffeur. In Heremakhonon, similarly, we are presented with attempts at resistance and revolution, primarily with the figures of Saliou, Véronica's immediate superior at the university, and Birame III, one of her students there. Both men attempt to defy the corrupt régime in place, and Saliou, in particular, is part of organised movements who resist and attempt to undermine it. Just as Victor, in Une Saison à Rihata is finally arrested, so Saliou and Birame III, among many others, are punished: Saliou is imprisoned and then dies in mysterious circumstances, while Birame III is transported to a labour camp. In neither novel 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 very large part of both novels which is occupied by 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”²⁴ (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. As Fanon points out: despised for so long by Antilleans precisely because of their blackness, Africans were unwilling simply to accept those Antilleans who, after the war, came to Africa in search of acceptance and recognition. Instead:

Ils renvoyèrent l’Antillais de l’autre côté en lui rappelant qu’eux n’avaient pas déserté, qu’eux n’avaient pas trahi, qu’ils avaient peiné, souffert, lutté sur terre africaine. L’Antillais avait dit non au blanc, l’Africain disait non à l’Antillais’.²⁴

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:

²⁴ Fanon, ‘Antillais et Africains’, p. 30. 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. Like Marie-Hélène, Juletane participates in the struggle for African independence while she is a student in Paris, and like Véronica she then goes to Africa with the explicit hope of recovering her African past. Like both of Condé’s heroines, she finds herself ostracised in what she had imagined would be her homeland, ‘une étrangère’ (*Juletane*, p. 35) or ‘une toubabesse’ - a ‘white woman’ (*Juletane*, p. 79). Indeed, Condé, in ‘Notes sur un retour au pays natal’ describes how she, too, found herself ostracised in Africa, and especially after the publication of her two-volume African historical novel *Ségou* (*Les murailles de la terre* (1er tome), Paris: Laffont, 1984 and *La terre en miettes* (2e tome), Paris: Laffont, 1985). Like Juletane, she was accused of being ‘une toubabesse, une blanche’ (‘Notes’, p. 17).

'Bon, il efface d'un coup trois siècles et demi' (Heremakhonon, p. 21). Similarly, she goes on to make angry reference, on several occasions, to Tegnossou and Agadja, African kings who sold their own people into slavery in the eighteenth century.²⁵ 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, Véronica finds herself unwilling to assume automatic solidarity in the name of 'the race', and admits to feeling hardly more touched by the political events in Africa than she would be by those in any 'distant' country were she still in Paris (Heremakhonon, p. 223). It is clear that for both women, an interest in political struggle proves unsustainable in a country which, so manifestly, is not theirs.

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. (Cahier, p. 38)

Indeed, for this reason, 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' (Arnold, p. 158). Instead, it is more helpfully conceived of simply as a necessary first stage on a much longer

²⁵ When Véronica is introduced to Mwalimwana, for example, and he tells her: '[L]es Antilles?... C'est une de ses enfants que l'Afrique a perdue', she imagines replying: 'Vendue, Mwalimwana, vendue. Pas perdue. Tegnossou se faisait 400 livres sterling à chaque navire' (Heremakhonon, p. 58). As she comments to herself later: 'C'est ainsi que toute l'affaire a commencé. Par le désir apparemment innocent de Tegnossou de rouler en chaise à porteurs. D'Agadja de jouer de l'orgue' (Heremakhonon, p. 174). Indeed, such also are the comments of Condé herself in 'Pourquoi la négritude', as she details at some length the various possessions gathered by Tegnossou and Agadja in exchange for sending slaves to Europe and the Caribbean ('Pourquoi la négritude?' p. 151).

journey of self-reconciliation. Thus the 'return' of the Cahier's title is, in fact, a double return: from the Antilles to Africa, and then from Africa back to the Antilles once more. Véronica, too, again much more overtly than Marie-Hélène, becomes aware that if her return to Africa has been unsuccessful, if she has failed to find in Africa her 'home', then a second return must instead be undertaken. Slowly, as she remembers that she has not returned to Guadeloupe for nine years, it becomes clear to Véronica that:

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)

For the Antillean, it is, in fact, 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 - what Jacqueline Leiner calls an exploration into the 'palimpsest' of Antillean identity²⁶ - 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.

²⁶ Leiner, 'Africa and the West Indies: Two Negritudes', p. 1149.

Negritude and the Dislocation of Woman

The particular poetic configurations which, as we shall see, can be seen to be 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, as Arnold explains, it was very much a part of the modernist, and especially surrealist, movements of the day. For many negritude poets, surrealism provided the perfect means with which to develop the ideals of negritude, for both movements could be seen as 'critical counter-current[s] to established rule and convention'.²⁷ That is, both could be seen as attempts to interrogate and to undermine the Western obsession with rationalism and with reason, with the black race occupying a similar position in relation to 'humanity' as the surreal or the unconscious to reason.²⁸ More than this, 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'.²⁹ Surrealism's claims to 'call forth deep and unconscious forces' encouraged both Césaire and other negritude poets to believe that if the surrealist approach were utilised 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 colonised subject.³⁰

²⁷ Hal Wylie, 'Negritude and Beyond', p. 44.

²⁸ Hal Wylie, *ibid.*, p. 44.

²⁹ 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).

³⁰ Knutson, *ibid.*, p. 57.

For many poets of the surrealist movement, the preoccupation with the workings of the unconscious was one which drew heavily upon, and was influenced by, Sigmund Freud's work on the unconscious and on dreams. This is true also, as Arnold points out, for many of the negritude poets, and perhaps particularly for Césaire,³¹ and it is an influence which may be seen very clearly, I would suggest, in the way in which the feeling of exile, from one's 'native land', is imagined within negritude poetry, within surrealism in general, and in the work of Freud himself. In his 1919 essay 'Das Unheimliche' ('The Uncanny'),³² 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' ('The Uncanny', p. 244). The 'unheimlich' feeling, which several of his patients have described to him, is one which 'proceeds from something familiar which has been repressed' ('The Uncanny', p. 247). For Freud, the familiar yet unfamiliar place par excellence is the mother's body, 'the former Heim (home) of all human beings' ('The Uncanny', p. 245).

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 motherland, 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' ('The Uncanny', p. 245).

³¹ See A. James Arnold, Modernism and Negritude, pp. 64-66; pp. 85-88.

³² Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' in Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol.17, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), pp. 239-255.

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 originare'.³³ 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'.³⁴

In negritude poetry too, and unsurprisingly, the return to Africa as motherland is one which is effected through an imagined relationship with a variously exoticised and eroticised black woman-mother-lover. It is this woman-mother-lover who, celebrated and idealised, 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'.³⁵ As

³³ Luce Irigaray, *Ethique de la différence sexuelle*, (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1984), p. 99. In *Spéculum de l'autre femme*, (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1974), Irigaray makes reference, in a footnote, precisely to this part of Freud's essay (*Spéculum*, p. 51).

³⁴ Irigaray, 'Les Femmes-mères: ce sous-sol muet de l'ordre social', in Luce Irigaray, *Le Corps-à-corps avec la mère* (Montréal: Editions de la pleine lune, 1981), p. 84. Interestingly, Arlette Smith outlines three metaphorisations of the native land by the person in exile: 'celle de la mère disparue, de la mère adoptive et de la séductrice' ('Sémiologie de l'exil dans les oeuvres de Maryse Condé', *French Review*, 62, 1988-89 (pp. 51-58), p. 51). For Smith, 'la figuration de la terre d'exil par la séductrice [est] de connotation si différente de celle de la mère' (Smith, p. 54). For Irigaray, however, the seductress and the mother are precisely the same in the male imaginary, for - as in Freud's schema - man's desire to return to the origin, the mother, is actualised in his relations with other women, who 'become' his mother.

³⁵ Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude*, pp. 153-4.

Shari Benstock finds to be the case with Western modernism generally, negritude can therefore be seen to 'enforce patriarchal privilege in a feminised... foreign setting, imaging the landscape as a female (m)other'.³⁶ The negritude quest for identity is one which turns out to be exclusively masculine, the quest of 'the exiled sons of Africa'³⁷ for the lost Mother.

In the poetry of both Senghor and Césaire, Africa is therefore imagined and figured alternately as 'mother' and as 'woman-lover'. Senghor's 'Ndessé', for example, is addressed throughout to 'Mère' ('je ne suis qu'un enfant qui souvient de ton lait maternel'³⁸), 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
Vêtue de ta couleur qui est vie, de ta forme qui est beauté!
J'ai grandi à ton ombre, la douceur de tes mains bandait mes yeux.
Et voilà qu'au coeur de l'été et de midi, je te découvre terre promise du haut d'un haut col
calciné
Et ta beauté me foudroie en plein coeur comme l'éclair d'un aigle. (Anthologie, p. 151)

In Césaire's Cahier, too, Africa is figured both as the mother which 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', Cahier, pp. 21-2), and as object of 'la mâle soif et l'entêté désir' (Cahier, p. 23).

³⁶ 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 (p. 29).

³⁷ Irele, The African Experience in Literature and Ideology, p. 143. Emphasis mine.

³⁸ Senghor, Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française, p. 159.

Whether African or Antillean, negritude can therefore be seen to be a discourse which, as a reaction to assimilationist values, imagines access to 'authentic identity' in terms equally as sexualised as those of its reverse - the lactification complex itself. That is, 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'.³⁹ In her fictional work, and in Heremakhonon in particular, Condé, too, draws attention to the way in which negritude is an overwhelmingly sexualised 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 sexualised 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

³⁹ Fanon, 'Antillais et Africains', p. 28.

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 young 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 Capécia-like 'lactification' complex:

Répetons-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, informs 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 eroticisation 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 'cette partie de la Côte que venaient les ancêtres de mon père... ce "marabout mandingue"' (Heremakhonon p. 20), 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'accéderai à la fierté d'être moi-même' (Heremakhonon p. 71).⁴⁰

Her relationship with Sory, she is convinced, will be: 'une solution. La solution. Le vrai retour' (Cahier, 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' (Heremakhonon p. 47), 'un nègre avec aïeux', and thus her only means of access to her African past.

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

⁴⁰ 'Gri-Gri', which originates from Guinea or Senegal, may refer alternately to: 'un petit objet magique pouvant porter bonheur ou malheur'; 'un sachet de cuir (en Afrique noir islamique) contenant des versets du Coran'; 'amulette, porte-bonheur', (Le Grand Robert de la langue française, Deuxième Edition, 1989).

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 realise exactly why her own, sexualised 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 is 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, and 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,⁴¹ it is perhaps unsurprising that the Cahier's second, and 'Antillean' movement of return displays most consistently the familiar surrealist trope of 'woman as mediatrix'. Like the return to Africa, that to the Antilles turns out to be the return of exiled sons to the motherland, to the island-as-mother - and via a relationship with that land which is

⁴¹ It is important to note that the work of Césaire, in particular, was influenced and encouraged by André Breton himself. In 1941, having returned to Martinique to teach in 1939, Césaire, his wife Suzanne Césaire and the Martinican writer René Ménénil set up the magazine Tropiques, in which, for the first time in Martinique rather than in Paris, black poets published their work. Most of the poetry contained in Tropiques was surrealist, and it was through this magazine that Breton 'discovered' Césaire and became a literary influence on the Tropiques group. As Arnold remarks, 'Césaire had already begun to write in a recognizably surrealist vein, but the meeting with André Breton manifestly convinced him that here were a man and a movement dedicated to goals similar to his own' (Arnold, Modernism and Negritude, p. 75).

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'.⁴²

It is therefore perhaps not unexpected that images of rebirth abound throughout the Cahier, as do those of penetration, copulation, conception and pregnancy: a new nation, peopled by blacks proud of their blackness, will be born from the womb of the woman-mother as earth, as the island. This rebirth is, in fact, figured on a variety of levels - usually, as Da Silva points out, involving images either of water or of earth. Indeed, the poem moves, initially, from 'les ovaires de l'eau où le futur agite ses petites têtes' (Cahier, p. 45), to images of plant-like 'germination' (Cahier p. 48; p. 56), images which are seen by Da Silva as references precisely to 'la terre... [et] les images primitives de l'utérus maternel dont la fonction est d'engendrer' (Da Silva, p. 114). This earth - initially putrid, rotting and degraded - will, as the poem progresses, 'faire germer une race forte, authentique, consciente de ses valeurs et de la beauté de leur peau. La terre et le nègre s'unissent et de leur amour dépend la survie de ce peuple' (Da Silva, p. 115).

However, it is not images of love, but images of rape and of violent penetration which abound throughout the Cahier. The earth - always figured as feminine, as the mother - is penetrated, copulated with. The active, virile force of negritude (and its poetic hero) not only projects itself towards, but gashes open, ploughs up the earth in a phallic act of deflorescence. It then becomes the site of nourishment first for the gestating and then for the new-born negritude hero, turning blood and water - those which were previously putrid - into maternal milk to sustain

⁴² 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), pp. 105-125 (p. 106).

him. It is this process alone which, according to Da Silva, is capable of giving back to the black man his 'rightful place' in the world (Da Silva, p. 118). It is thus 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' (Cahier, p. 29), 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' (Cahier, p. 47). Second, we see the growth of 'le nouveau-nègre' in the earth-womb: 'et toi veuille astre de ton lumineux fondement tirer lémurien du sperme insondable de l'homme la/forme non osée/que le ventre tremblant de la femme porte tel un minéral!' (Cahier p. 46). Third, the narrator himself undergoes rebirth: 'Je force la membrane vitelline qui me/sépare de moi-même./Je force les grandes eaux qui me ceignent de sang' (Cahier p. 34). 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' (Cahier, p. 49). Indeed, recalling Véronica's own characterisation 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' (Da Silva, p. 123).⁴³

⁴³ 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 feminised 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

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]' (Da Silva, p. 124). However, what Da Silva fails to point out is that this 'terre fertile' is also an exploited earth, just as it had been at the beginning of the Cahier. 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. As Da Silva recognises, this is not the nurturing and maternal native land 'ordinarily' dreamt of: it is, it would seem, a ruined and abused feminine/maternal body, the site of years of colonial exploitation. Da Silva fails to interrogate whether the mother-earth of negritude is in fact significantly different from the colonised 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...' (Cahier, p. 57, my emphasis).

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'.⁴⁴ As Sartre has shown in his famous essay 'Orphée noir', written as an introduction to Senghor's Anthologie, this is all the more true for the colonised man who is the hero of negritude poetry. For Sartre, the colonised quest for identity in the motherland is an 'orphic' quest: 'parce que cette inlassable descente du nègre en soi-même me fait

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).

⁴⁴ Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, La jeune née (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1978) p. 173. My emphasis.

songer à Orphée allant réclamer Eurydice à Pluton'.⁴⁵ 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 coloniser, the White Man, figured as Pluto. Eurydice, as a trope for the black mother Earth, exists only as an object of exchange between the black negritude hero, 'Orphée noir', and the white (male) coloniser. Once more, woman exists only as symbolic mediatrix of black, male identity - this time gained by asserting himself against the white man.

As Susheila Nasta has pointed out in relation to other discourses of colonial liberation, negritude can be seen once more to be less of a radical refusal of European conventions, and more as an adoption and continuation of them. That is, with its discourse of 'mythologised femaleness', it can be seen not only as a part of surrealist discourse, but also of colonial discourse itself: as little more than an adaptation of European representations of colonised nations as female and in need of 'paternal governance'.⁴⁶ Negritude poetry like the Cahier, especially when read with Da Silva, becomes merely a perpetuation of a discourse of 'penetration of the female' in which, as Lemuel Johnson has noted, 'the Carib/ean picture of discovery and conquest seems rooted'.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Sartre, 'Orphée Noir', p. xvii. Interestingly, Michael Seidel, in his Exile and the Narrative Imagination (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), writes that: 'the underworld descent, for a host of reasons, is one of the most profound narrative models for the exilic experience in literature' (Seidel, p. 13).

⁴⁶ Susheila Nasta, 'Introduction', in Susheila Nasta, ed., Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia (London: The Women's Press, 1991), p. xiii. As Caroline Rooney also explains: while 'motherland' is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as 'native country', 'fatherland' is defined as 'one's native country': fatherland is thus 'marked by ownership', while motherland is 'no-one's', it is 'so open to adoption by the colonising country...yet more nature/land to be acted upon and made to serve' (Caroline Rooney, "'Dangerous Knowledge" and the Poetics of Survival: A Reading of Our Sister Killjoy and A Question of Power', in Nasta, ed., Motherlands (pp. 99-128), pp. 99-100).

⁴⁷ Lemuel A. Johnson, 'A-beng: (Re)calling the Body In(to) Question', p. 130.

Within the various nationalist discourses of colonised and newly decolonised countries, it has been necessary, as Elleke Boehmer has pointed out, that the colonised nation represent itself as excessively masculine; that its heroes, like those of negritude poetry, are phallic, thrusting, a 'rising strength' in Boehmer's words.⁴⁸ This becomes especially pertinent when it is remembered that the colonised nation is typically represented as passive, inert, weak, disordered: as feminine. It is unsurprising that, faced with the gendered discourse of colonialism, nationalist discourses like negritude should themselves also '[rely] heavily on gendered languages to imagine itself' (Boehmer, p. 8).⁴⁹ For Boehmer, within the discourse of negritude, as within other nationalist discourses, 'the idea of nationhood bears a masculine identity though national ideals may bear a feminine face' (Boehmer, p. 8). Such nationalist discourses, it would seem, favour 'a distinctly homosocial form of male bonding': for them, the nation can be seen as a 'passionate brotherhood'.⁵⁰ The idea of the nation as a fraternity is a common and constant theme. As Jonathan Goldberg points out, women

⁴⁸ Elleke Boehmer, 'Stories of Women and Mothers: Gender and Nationalism in the Early Fiction of Flora Nwapa', in Nasta, ed., Motherlands, pp. 3-23 (pp. 7-8).

⁴⁹ Although, as Fanon has shown, negritude is perhaps not strictly speaking a 'nationalist' discourse, it has been converted, at least nominally, to more overtly political and 'nationalist' ends - and not only by Senghor. In Martinique itself, Césaire attempted to adapt the poetic ideals of negritude to a Marxist, or Communist, agenda, as is evident in his Discours sur le colonialisme (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1950). Written while he was Martinican député to the French National Assembly as a member of the French Communist party, this text was written precisely as an attempt to set out the credentials of his engagement in overtly political struggle. By 1956, however, he found himself no longer willing to accept the Marxist demands that he subordinate the specificities of black experience and black oppression to those of class oppression - demands which had led him, in 1946, '[à amener] le peuple antillais à voter en faveur de l'assimilation, en faveur du statut de département d'outre-mer' (Condé, 'Pourquoi la négritude?', p. 154). In 1958, he therefore founded the independent 'Parti Progressiste Martiniquaise' (PPM), and began to take a much more pro-liberation stance. Indeed, as Clarisse Zimra has remarked, if Césaire's assumption that full autonomy would follow semi-autonomy was wrong, departmentalisation has, in fact, led to a form of negritude far more 'militant' in the Antilles than in those African countries, like Sénégal, which have at least nominally achieved decolonisation. As far as Zimra is concerned, departmentalisation has effectively left the Antilles more colonised than ever, for 'the bondage to the métropole is felt much more severely than any de facto trade bondage between France and its former African colonies' (Zimra, 'Negritude in the Feminine Mode, p. 59). The result, it would seem, is a much more radical situation in which negritude converted to a 'nationalism' of sorts, is much in evidence.

⁵⁰ Editor's Introduction to Andrew Parker; Mary Russo; Doris Sommer; Patricia Yaeger, eds. Nationalisms and Sexualities (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 6.

have come to be 'translated into a trope of ideal femininity, a fantasmatic female that secures male-male arrangements and an all-male history'.⁵¹

In terms which recall the negritude heroes of Césaire, Boehmer describes the way in which, in nationalist discourses, it is the male figure who is 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, but it is a role which excludes her from the sphere of public national life. Figures of mothers of the nation are everywhere emblazoned but the presence of women in the nation is officially marginalised and generally ignored.⁵²

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.⁵³ Like Sartre's Eurydice, they are silent and silenced by and within the androcentric discursive structures surrounding them.

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

⁵¹ Jonathan Goldberg, "Bradford's Ancient Members" and "A Case of Buggery... Amongst Them", in Parker et al, eds., Nationalisms and Sexualities, pp. 60-76 (p. 63).

⁵² Elleke Boehmer, 'Stories of Women and of Mothers', p. 6.

⁵³ On a practical level, for women of a nation undergoing decolonisation to seek emancipation or identity as women 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 (Nasta, ed., Motherlands, p. xv). 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 and the Nardal sisters 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.

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 idealisation and fetishisation 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-feminine⁵⁷

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

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 Sedgwick, for example, discussing patriarchal organisation in a similar way, amends Irigaray's term to 'homosocial' - precisely in order to rid it of heterosexist and homophobic associations (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

⁵⁵ Toril Moi, cited in Johnson, 'A-Beng: (Re)calling the body In(to) Question', 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. 75-6. Whitford's citation from Irigaray here is from 'The power of discourse', p. 123 in the same volume.

⁵⁸ Irigaray, 'Les Femmes-mères: ce sous-sol muet de l'ordre social', p. 81.

'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' (Da Silva, p. 112), 'l'image du sang menstruel, l'eau néfaste qu'il faut éviter' (Da Silva, p. 115) - 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 Boehmer and Nasta, 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.⁶¹

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.⁶²

⁵⁹ Irigaray, 'Le corps-à-corps avec la mère' in Luce Irigaray, *Le Corps-à-corps avec la mère*, p. 20.

⁶⁰ Irigaray, 'Les Femmes-mères, ce sous-sol muet de l'ordre social', p. 81.

⁶¹ Irigaray, *Spéculum de l'autre femme*, p. 282.

⁶² Shari Benstock, too, reading with and against an essay by Sandra Gilbert, identifies the native land dreamt of in exile as a motherland, as a 'matria', the 'internal exclusion' of patriarchy, 'the other by and through which patria is defined' (Benstock, 'Expatriate Modernism', p. 25). As she explains, exile from one's native land is itself usually defined in terms of expatriation, as the state of being driven away by some 'law' or 'edict' from one's native land. For Benstock, expatriation is 'etymologically conjoined with the patriarchal, incorporating the father/ruler whose law effects and enforces expatriating' (Benstock, p. 24). It is thus this definition which, in terms similar to those of Irigaray, she uses to explain women's de facto position of exile within patriarchy: 'For women, the definition of

The Daughter's Quest for Motherland: negritude 'au féminin'?

Perhaps surprisingly, both Véronica and Marie-Hélène, when faced with the realisation 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 realises, she wishes that she were 'loin... Dans le ventre de ma mère que je n'aurais jamais dû quitter' (Heremakhonon, p. 127).⁶³ Unfortunately, however, this ability to imagine a link between mother and native land does not lead unproblematically or necessarily, as it did for the heroes of negritude, 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.

patriarchy already assumes the reality of expatriate in patria; for women, this expatriation is internalised, experienced as an exclusion imposed from the outside and lived from inside' (Benstock, p. 20). That is, matría is always expatriated (Benstock, p. 25).

⁶³ Interestingly, Condé herself, in an interview, similarly 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 Jacquy and Monique Hugon, 'L'Afrique: un continent difficile. Entretien avec Maryse Condé', Notre Librairie, 74 (1984), pp. 56-60 (pp. 22-3).

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. They are, in the words of Irigaray:

Laissée au vide, au manque de toute représentation, re-présentation... de son désir (d')origine. Lequel en passera, dès lors, par le désir-discours-loi du désir de l'homme: tu seras ma femme-mère, ma femme si tu veux, tu peux, être (comme) ma mère = tu seras pour moi la possibilité de répéter-représenter-reproduire-m'approprier le (mon) rapport à l'origine. Or cette opération... constitue... un exil, un extradition [du désir-origine de la fillette, de la femme].⁶⁴

That is, 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.⁶⁵ 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

⁶⁴ Irigaray, Spéculum, de l'autre femme, p. 47.

⁶⁵ 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 rivalry. Not only was their childhood marked by constant comparisons of the darker skin of Marie-Hélène with that of her sister, 'une chabine', but their rivalrous love for the same man, Olnel, when they were in Paris, eventually led to the suicide of Delphine, and the adoption of her son, Christophe, by Zek and Marie-Hélène.

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

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 As Marcus points out, literal displacement and exile, like that of the Caribbean peoples, is necessarily experienced differently by women, for they are already 'displaced by gender in their home cultures'.⁷¹

Thus Marie-Hélène is unable to imagine returning to Guadeloupe precisely because of her problematic - or, rather, unresolved - relationship with her mother. That is, not only 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 fœtus' (*Rihata* p. 77). What is more, and in a way which reminds us of Irigaray's explanation of the mother-daughter relationship within

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. 269-294 (p. 276).

⁶⁹ See both 'Le Corps-à-corps avec la mère' and 'Les Femmes-mères: ce sous-sol muet de l'ordre social', 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'. See also *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, as well as Whitford's *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*.

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. 330-349 (p. 343).

⁷¹ Jane Marcus, 'Alibis and Legends', p. 275.

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 contributed, it would seem, 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'⁷² of a more disempowering sort than that of the heroes of negritude: as the exile at once of a colonised 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 idealised 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'.⁷³ Against Madou's idealisation of maternity, or Senghor's belief in the extended family as the basis of African socialism, we see the way in which Marie-

⁷² 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. 113-132 (p. 114).

⁷³ 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 Kumbia, pp. 321-330 (pp. 321-2).

Hélène's entire life has been restricted, and her plans confounded, by both. 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'.⁷⁴ 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 realise 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, we learn, 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.

⁷⁴ Liddell, *ibid.*, p. 321. Véronica, too, is confronted with, and critical of, the reality of the extended family. 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: 'outré 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).

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 accueilli ma délivrance avec joie. C'est presque dans la haine que je t'ai expulsée. (Rihata, p. 167)

This admission is, however, 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'.⁷⁵ She refuses, it would seem - 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. That is, 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'.⁷⁶ 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'.⁷⁷ Rather, it is somewhere from which the dis/placed are able to see themselves in relation to the placed, and which threatens to destabilise notions of 'place' and 'placement' altogether, and which threatens also to destabilise patriarchal structures and their representations.⁷⁸

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

⁷⁵ Johnson, 'A-Beng', p. 136.

⁷⁶ Jane Marcus, 'Alibis and Legends', pp. 272-3.

⁷⁷ Marcus, *ibid.*, p. 273.

⁷⁸ Marcus, *ibid.*, p. 273.

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'⁷⁹ - 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'.⁸⁰ More than this, it represents a means through

⁷⁹ Cixous and Clément, *La jeune née*, p. 173. Emphasis mine

⁸⁰ 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 Kumbula* (pp. 59-74), p. 67).

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.⁸¹

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 realises 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).

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.

⁸¹ 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.

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'.⁸² 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... féérique' - 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

⁸² Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, p. 134.

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).⁸³ 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'⁸⁴ 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, realises 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 communication 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 realisation that, despite her

⁸³ According to the Oxford English Dictionary, vol. VIII, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), jacaranda is a 'tropical American tree' - and would thus grow, precisely, in the Caribbean. In a similarly oblique manner, the Church is associated, for Marie-Hélène, with the Caribbean motherland. For her, 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.

⁸⁴ Irigaray, Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un, p. 76. Here, Irigaray is describing the radical potential, precisely, of hysteria.

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. Indeed, 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 been 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, it would seem,

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'.⁸⁵ 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.⁸⁶

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 symbolised, 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

⁸⁵ Irigaray, 'Les Femmes-mère: ce sous-sol muet de l'ordre social', p. 86.

⁸⁶ Irigaray, 'Les Femmes-mères: ce sous-sol muet de l'ordre social', p. 86. As Elleke Boehmer points out, in relation specifically to the work of Alice Walker, many women writers, in their attempts to demythologise androcentric representations of the nation as exploitable mother's body, may choose simply to remythologise it as a nourishing mother for women. As Boehmer 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?' (Boehmer, 'Stories of Women and Mothers', p. 9).

subjects, rather than as objects exchanged for each other by men.⁸⁷ What is more, if women cease to exist solely as objects of exchange - 'si les "marchandises" refusaient d'aller au "marché"'⁸⁸ - 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

⁸⁷ See Irigaray, *Ethique de la différence sexuelle*, p. 106, as well as Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*, p. 78.

⁸⁸ Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, p. 193.

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.

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 characterises 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. 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 both Condé and Martinican writer and theorist Edouard Glissant demonstrate - as a feeling of 'bâtardise': of 'illegitimacy'.

As Condé points out in one of her works of non-fiction, 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 members of the same tribe 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

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 That is, it requires that a clear line of descent 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

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. 111-130 (p. 119).

³ Glissant, *ibid.*, p. 119.

⁴ Glissant, *ibid.*, p. 119.

⁵ Glissant, Le Discours antillais, p. 137.

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 community or even people, back to the primal, African Ancestor.⁷ This, indeed, is the overriding theme of the texts which will be examined in this chapter: both Simone Schwarz-Bart's Ti Jean L'horizon⁸ and Condé's Les Derniers rois mages,⁹ 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 texts¹⁰ -

⁶ Eloïse Brière, 'L'Inquiétude généalogique: tourment du Nouveau Monde', Présence Francophone, 36 (1990), pp. 57-72 (p. 59).

⁷ Lauren Yoder's essay 'Mythmaking in the Caribbean: Jean-Louis Baghio'o and Le Flamboyant à fleurs bleus', Callaloo, 12 (1989), pp. 667-679, is a useful and interesting study of the dual quest of the Antillean hero for personal and communal legitimation.

⁸ Simone Schwarz-Bart, Ti-Jean l'horizon (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1979).

⁹ Maryse Condé, Les Derniers rois mages (Paris: Mercure de France, 1992).

¹⁰ Schwarz-Bart's first novel (apart from Un plat de porc aux bananes vertes, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967, which she co-authored with her husband, André Schwarz-Bart), Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972), deals almost exclusively with the lives of women, just as Condé's first two novels also dealt predominantly with female characters.

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.¹¹ 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.¹² Unlike any of the novels examined in previous chapters, that of Schwarz-Bart is set in Guadeloupe - in a small village, Fond-Zombi, in Basse-Terre. As we quickly discover, this village is divided into two distinct communities, communities who have become separated from each other over the course of time. This separation itself, we learn, has everything to do with each community's relationship to origins. The people of 'En-Bas', are almost entirely

¹¹ 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, pp. 16-30). Césaire's poetry, while imagining the heroic return to an idealised motherland, is also concerned, if somewhat confusedly, with seeking an heroic - if not necessarily African - paternal Ancestor. This is evident, for example, in the long poem Et les chiens se taisaient, written in 1946, as it is also in his 1963 play La Tragédie du roi Christophe, in his 1969 play Une Tempête or in the major historical study of 1960, Toussaint Louverture: La révolution française et le problème colonial, in which Césaire's earlier veneration of the Haitian hero Toussaint Louverture, in the Cahier, is picked up. Senghor, too, though not haunted by the Antillean sense of 'bâtardise', exhibits an even clearer preoccupation in his poetry with returning to the African motherland in order to rediscover his paternal ancestry. In 'A l'appel de la Race de Saba', for example, which is addressed throughout to 'Mère', the narrator returns to Africa in order to revive the memory of his father, 'Homme du Royaume de Sine', and in order not to forget 'les pas de mes pères ni des pères de mes pères' (Senghor, Anthologie, p. 153). In 'Ndessé', another poem addressed to 'mère', the narrator similarly returns to Africa in order to demand: 'mère... dis-moi donc l'orgueil de mes pères' (Senghor, Anthologie, p. 159).

¹² See Clarisse Zimra, 'In the Name of the Father: Chronotopia, Utopia and Dystopia in Ti Jean L'horizon', published recently in L'Esprit Créateur XXXIII (1993), pp. 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. Other articles which deal with Ti Jean l'horizon include Kitzie McKinney's 'Second Vision: Antillean Versions of the Quest in Two Novels by Simone Schwarz-Bart', The French Review, 62 (1989), pp. 650-660; Bernadette Cailler's 'Ti Jean L'horizon de Simone Schwarz-Bart, où la leçon du royaume des morts', Stanford French Review, 6 (1982), pp. 283-297 and Josie P. Campbell's 'To Sing the Song, To Tell the Tale: A Study of Toni Morrison and Simone Schwarz-Bart', Comparative Literature Studies, 22 (1984), pp. 394-411.

ignorant of their origins, though 'une petite voix leur susurrât à l'oreille qu'ils n'avaient pas toujours habité le pays, n'en étaient pas originaires, vraiment, au même titre que les arbres et les pierres, les animaux issus de cette aimable terre rouge' (Ti Jean, p. 11). The people of 'En-Haut', on the other hand - those who live on the almost inaccessible plateaux around the volcano - have remained acutely aware that they are directly descended from African peoples brought over during slavery.

The people of 'En-Bas' look up - literally and figuratively - to the people of 'En-Haut', and it is from their point of view that we learn of the way of life of those who live on the plateaux. We are told that they have kept African customs alive, that they recount stories of Africa to their children, and that they possess magical powers, powers which themselves '[venaient] en droite ligne de l'Afrique' (Ti Jean, p. 16). What is more, their chief, Wademba, who is over a hundred and fifty years old, is apparently himself 'le dernier nègre d'Afrique' (Ti Jean, p. 55). Indeed, it is Wademba, and his connection to Africa, which is central to Schwarz-Bart's text, for it is with Wademba that issues of 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,¹³ 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.

The first 'book' of Ti Jean is therefore concerned with Wademba's preparation for his own death, with his attempts to ensure the purity of his lineage. As mother of his son - for it must necessarily be a son to whom the genealogy is entrusted - Wademba chooses his own daughter, Awa. He begins by preparing her for her future role: as Zimra puts it, he 'ritually initiates her sexually', by beginning an incestuous relationship with her while she is still very young.¹⁴ Second, he sends her 'En-Bas', where her mother before her had gone, in order that she may meet and marry the hunter Jean L'horizon, whose name her son will eventually take. For Wademba, it transpires, it is vital that the future hero should form a link between the estranged peoples of 'En-Haut' and 'En-Bas'. Finally, he ensures that each time Awa becomes pregnant, she gives birth to a dead child, until eventually Jean L'horizon leaves her. It is at this point that Wademba himself 'spiritually' impregnates Awa:

Soudain, quelque chose écarta ses cuisses, elle se sentit assaillie, pénétrée par un corps invisible; et comme elle reconnaissait l'élan, l'attaque fabuleuse de l'Immortel, une vague d'écume l'emporta et elle sut confusément que cet enfant-là vivrait, ne se dégrapperait pas, non, de ses entrailles. (Ti Jean, p. 26)

¹³ 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).

¹⁴ Clarisse Zimra, 'In the Name of the Father', p. 65.

Awa does indeed give birth to a live baby boy, Ti Jean: Wademba has ensured the purity of his lineage for Ti Jean is at once his son and his grandson. However, when Awa takes her son to the plateau and asks her father to name him, Wademba refuses, claiming that it is impossible for him to give the child 'un nom d'Afrique' (Ti Jean, p. 28). Instead, he insists: 'il n'y pas de nom pour cet enfant, car son nom l'attend devant lui, son nom est quelque part devant lui et le moment venu, il viendra se déposer sur sa tête' (Ti Jean, p. 28). The child is instead named after Jean l'horizon, his stepfather from 'En-Bas': Wademba has successfully ensured that Ti Jean 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.

As Wademba finally prepares for his death, he summons Ti Jean to his bedside and announces to him that not only is he, Wademba, about to undertake a final journey to 'le Vieux-pays', but that for Ti Jean, too, a journey awaits. He gives his (grand)son three gifts which will help him on his journey: the first is a musket, '[qui] est douée d'un très grand pouvoir, car j'ai mis en elle toute ma connaissance' (Ti Jean, p. 58), the second is 'un bracelet de connaissance qui parlera pour moi', and the third 'un ceinturon de force' (Ti Jean, p. 64). Although Wademba is unable to predict what awaits his (grand)son, Ti-Jean hears a voice, as Wademba lays dying, which tells him that his (grand)father is returning to his African village of Obanishé, that:

Si tu te présentes un jour là-bas, toi ou ton fils ou ton petit-fils, jusqu'à la millièrme 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)

Ti Jean therefore sets about waiting for his story to begin and becomes, like his stepfather, a hunter. It is while he is out hunting one day that Ti Jean first sees 'la Bête', a huge, cow-like creature which, shortly after this first sighting, descends upon the village of Fond-Zombi and eats the sun, plunging everything into darkness. It is this which marks the beginning of Ti-Jean's story, for he realises that it is he who must try and liberate the sun, for Guadeloupe and for the entire world - that it must be he who enters the Beast's mouth, in order to follow the sun into the Beast's stomach. This he achieves quite quickly, his life as a hunter having prepared him for this moment, but once he has entered the Beast's mouth in search of the sun, his mission undergoes a radical transformation. He finds himself, magically, in Africa - literally in 'le ventre maternel' of the negritude quest for Motherland. Once there, he begins searching not for the sun, but for his grandfather's village of Obanishé, for his African origins, and for a legitimate, African name. For the moment, he forgets his mission to liberate Guadeloupe from darkness and becomes entirely sidetracked by a search for his and for Wademba's African ancestry. As we shall see later, however, it is a search which proves to be much more complicated than either he or Wademba could have imagined.

Ti Jean's quest, which will be examined in more detail later, is manifestly that of an illegitimate, Antillean son both for his own, legitimate, African origins and (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 more stories about Wadamba 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, Wadamba 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 Wadamba 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 of origins: a 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, according to Condé, is that of Ti Jean.¹⁵

Schwarz-Bart's text thus belongs to a cycle of tales about Ti Jean, to a long tradition of stories which, in various forms, tell of the Antillean quest for origins. Indeed, we are

¹⁵ Condé, La Civilisation du bossale, p. 34 and pp. 40-5.

reminded at various points in the text that Schwarz-Bart's is but one version, a rewriting, of a continuum of tales, for at one stage in his journey Ti Jean meets a deformed woman who tells him the story of Losiko-Siko. This tale, which she has remembered 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, he meets Eusèbe l'Ancien, a former friend of Wadamba's, and tells him his own story. For Eusèbe, this time, '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 - both his own and those of his people - then Schwarz-Bart herself may be seen to be utilising what Zimra calls 'the collective memory of the folktale'¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ 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.

¹⁶ Zimra, 'On Ancestral Ground', pp. 24-5.

¹⁷ See Condé, 'Survivance et mort des mythes africaines dans la littérature des Antilles francophones', *Afrique littéraire et artistique*, 54-55 (1979), pp. 56-7 and Francine Mil's interview with Schwarz-Bart, 'Simone Schwarz-Bart et le merveilleux antillais', *Flash Antilles-Afrique*, 14 (1979), pp. 31-3.

For Glissant, too - though he is careful to point out that Antillean folktales, in their existing form, can in no way be seen to constitute actual origin myths¹⁸ - the conte is 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.¹⁹

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 produce a written explanation of origins, 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.²⁰

¹⁸ For Glissant, though they often thematise the search for origins, Antillean folktales are primarily 'des contes sarcastiques, caustiques, sceptiques' (Glissant, 'Le chaos-monde', p. 121). Indeed, in Le Discours antillais, he gives an example of just such an Antillean tale, one which thematises origins in a satirical and mocking manner, and which thus becomes little more than '[une] parodie de Genèse': 'Dieu a enlevé trop vite du four de la Création le Blanc (blême), trop tard le Nègre (brûlé); ce qui tiendrait à laisser croire dans cette version que le Mulâtre - avec lequel l'Antillais voulait donc ici se confondre - est le seul à avoir été cuit à point. Mais une autre version de ces trois fourrées dit que la première était en effet trop blême, la deuxième pas assez cuite (les Mulâtres) et la troisième à point (les Nègres)' (Le Discours antillais, p. 251). For both Glissant and Condé, however, the majority of Antillean folktales remain unconcerned with explaining origins. Rather, they 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' (Condé, La Civilisation du bossale, p. 38). 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' (Chamoiseau and Confiant, Lettres créoles, p. 63). 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 (Lettres créoles, p. 36).

¹⁹ Glissant, 'Le chaos-monde', p. 113.

²⁰ This movement is one which will be problematised in the following two chapters - as, indeed, it is by Glissant himself throughout Le Discours antillais.

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 (Discours antillais, p. 138). Indeed, more than this, 'le mythe non seulement préfigure l'histoire et est parfois producteur de l'histoire mais semble préparer l'Histoire' (Discours antillais, p. 151). That is, as Glissant explains more specifically elsewhere, 'la source, en Occident, de l'Histoire... c'est le Mythe fondateur' ('Le chaos-monde', p. 119). This second movement of progression, from myth to history, is one which is of crucial importance, as Glissant goes on to explain, because the Antilles has always been defined (by the West) as 'historyless', as having existed in a state of 'prehistory' until the advent of Western exploration and colonialism - until, that is, the West's 'discovery' of the 'New World'.²¹

Of course, the Antilles, like the rest of the 'New World', is not literally 'historyless'. Rather, it possesses no form of history as the West has defined it, and which Glissant himself defines as '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' (Discours antillais, p. 141). That which is excluded - what Glissant terms 'l'histoire' - is what Brière calls 'l'histoire non-officielle... [de] la tradition orale'.²² 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

²¹ See Glissant, Le Discours antillais, p. 132, and Brière, 'L'Inquiétude généalogique', p. 58.

²² Brière, 'L'Inquiétude généalogique', p. 58.

Western model of historical development: from oral story, to origin myth, to written, official, legitimate history. In other words, because it has not followed the Hegelian movement from 'an-histoire', to 'préhistoire', to 'Histoire' - a hierarchisation, as Glissant points out, associated not only by Hegel but by the dominant Western imagination in general, with Africa, the Americas, and Europe respectively.

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' (Discours antillais, p. 131). As Zimra puts it, the Antilles have been systematically 'refused the right to their own historicity'.²³ 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'.²⁴

²³ Zimra, 'In the Name of the Father', p. 60.

²⁴ 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, for example, but also of repeating the colonial game of reinforcing differences between Martinique and Guadeloupe. As Fanon points out in his essay 'Antillais et Africains' - and this would seem still to be the case today - Martinique has always been considered to be the more 'civilised' of the two islands: 'la Guadeloupe, on ne saura jamais pourquoi, [a toujours été] considérée comme un pays de sauvages' (Fanon, 'Antillais et Africains', p. 25).

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).²⁵

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. Without a history which is distinct from that of the West, and which is accepted as being equally as valid as that of the West, the inhabitants of the Antilles have necessarily been left with the sense that they do not exist as a people or as a culture distinct from the West. It is, in turn, for this reason that the creation of coherent origin myths is of such importance: not only in order to explain the origins of a

²⁵ With the story of the Beast, too, we are presented with an example of the way in which official (Western) History works to undermine local histories and traditional explanations of the world. At first, the inhabitants of Fond-Zombi believe that they are the only ones to have been hit by the disaster until, from French television news, they realise that the entire world, even 'la métropole', has also been plunged into darkness. However, they also learn that an eclipse, and not the Beast that they have all seen, is being offered as an explanation for the disappearance of the sun: 'Peu à peu, l'ombre d'un doute plana sur le souvenir de la Bête, de sa course furieuse et de son ascension dans le ciel, dont certains parlaient maintenant comme d'une chose un peu ridicule, une chimère, une vision d'ivrognes et de marécageux, une couillonnade qui aurait enflammé l'âme de quelques nègres désœuvrés. Ceux-là même qui l'avaient vue n'osaient plus y croire... Après tout, c'était peut-être... une fumée de nègres anciens, une fable qu'ils s'étaient racontée à eux-mêmes pour se donner un peu d'importance sur la terre' (Ti Jean, p. 85).

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. Indeed, 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'.²⁶

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' (Discours antillais, p. 138). 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 her novel 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. Though we are presented with a complex web of analepses and prolepses, of stories within stories and, most of all, of multiple family histories

²⁶ Yoder, 'Mythmaking in the Caribbean', p. 668. Yoder's quotation, here, is from Mircea Eliade's La Nostalgie des origines (Paris, 1971), p. 163.

and genealogies, the genealogy in which all others are embedded is that of Spéro's family - and this is a genealogy which, we soon learn, can apparently be traced back to an exiled African Ancestor like Wadamba. This African Ancestor is reputedly the father of Djéré, Spéro's grandfather, and we learn how first Djéré, then his son Justin, and then Spéro, have all been brought up to respect and to venerate him. We learn also how, from generation to generation, the Ancestor's Antillean descendants have felt compelled, like Ti Jean, to attempt to prove definitively their link with this original, African Father. What becomes clear, as the novel progresses, is that 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 popular, Antillean imagination.

In Condé's text, we are told that the Ancestor is an African king who was exiled from his kingdom of Dahomey (now Bénin) to Martinique in 1894, and who died in Algeria several years later (Rois mages, p. 18). In his glossary to Le Discours antillais, Glissant informs us of the importance of a similar figure - 'Béhanzin: Roi du Dahomey, 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' (Discours antillais, p. 496).²⁷ 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

²⁷ 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.

the beginnings of an alternative version of 'legitimate' History - can be seen not only to be the project of Condé's novel, but to be thematised also within the text itself.

Condé's narrative takes place in the course of only one day as Spéro, at his home on Crocker island, near Charleston, awaits his African-American wife Debbie's return from her usual Sunday activities in Charleston's black community. The narrative jumps from the present, to the recent past in North America, to Spéro's more distant past in Guadeloupe, and returns time and again to the story of the Ancestor. As Spéro looks back upon his own life and that of his family, we are able to piece together both the story of the Ancestor, and that of the line of filiation which links him with Spéro. This is a story which begins with Djéré, whose memory of his father, the Ancestor, is one which is associated with trauma - with the first great trauma of his own life, and with the New World trauma par excellence: he is transported from his native land, and then abandoned before his father has the opportunity to legitimate him (Rois mages, p. 70). He is then further exiled from Martinique when his mother, Hosannah, meets Romulus, a Guadeloupean, who takes her and her illegitimate son back to Guadeloupe (Rois mages, p. 74). Djéré is then encouraged by Romulus - like Jean L'horizon, an Antillean stepfather - to believe that his real, African father will come back to claim him. When the Ancestor dies without ever legitimating his Antillean son, Djéré is crushed (Rois mages, p. 77).

As he grows older, Djéré begins to seek solace in memories not simply of his father but, more specifically, of the stories which were told to him by his father in Africa. These are African stories of animals and of origins, like those which circulate in Ti Jean's village - what is more, Djéré begins also to write these stories 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 of '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 extract to be included is, perhaps unsurprisingly, entitled 'Les Origines', and is a myth of origins written down by Djéré from the version told to him by his father. What is more, it is a myth of origins which explains both the genesis of the Ancestor's people, and that of the world.

Djéré records, first, his father's explanation of the birth of the world:

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 queen of this village then herself begins to give birth - but the first of her children, both of whom are sons, are stillborn. It is not until she finally gives birth to a daughter, Posu Adewene, that the villagers know that their future is assured: 'Celle-là va rester. C'est une fille' (Rois mages, p. 89). When she is fourteen, Posu Adewene meets Agasu, the panther feared by the village, and it is thus that the Ancestor's dynasty is begun: 'Agasu et Posu Adewene restèrent à fixer les yeux dans les yeux, la forêt retenant sa voix autour d'eux, puis Agasu bondit en avant. C'est ainsi que fut conçu mon aïeul Tengisu, le fondateur de notre dynastie' (Rois mages, p. 91). 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, number three, 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 number three simply continues and consolidates. The title of Cahier three, 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.²⁸ 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 (Totem and Taboo, p. 162).

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' (Totem and Taboo, p. 161) - 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' (Totem and Taboo, p. 170). 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.

²⁸ 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. 267-286.

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' (Totem and Taboo, p. 171). 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? (Totem and Taboo, p. 171)

For 'primitive man', then, a shared name 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' (Totem and Taboo, p. 210). Indeed, for Freud, this is in fact the origin of organised religion, of the ritualised 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 (Totem and Taboo, pp. 206-9). 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' (Totem and Taboo, p. 210, emphasis mine).

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, and apparently very Martinican name 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 organised 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 organised 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. As a boy, Justin pays little attention to these stories, and it is not until he is posted to Martinique during his military service that he even believes in

the existence of the exiled African king. Once in Martinique, however, he is struck - like Glissant - by the important position occupied by the king within the Martinican collective memory. He goes to visit the house in which the king and his family allegedly lived, he questions people who claim to have seen him, and spends days in the Schoelcher library reading about Dahomey and about the king's people. Though he finds numerous references to the king himself, as well as to his exile on Martinique, he never finds what he is really seeking: a reference to his own, Antillean, branch of the family.

It is when Justin finds the Cahiers, 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 had read in Martinique. 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 illegitimate (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 two. 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 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.²⁹ In a manner

²⁹ 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. He is born, we are told, 'couvert de taches sombres tout le long du dos' (Rois mages, p. 59). These marks move Justin to circumcise his son and to mark his forehead with 'les incisions

which recalls the awakening of Justin's interest in his own father's story, it is when Spéro learns of the exiled king of Dahomey in a history lesson, at school, that he, himself, becomes obsessed not only with the Ancestor but with proving, at all costs, a link between History and his own family's story. Like his father, Spéro begins his project of legitimation in libraries - having been sent to art college in Lille, he spends most of his time searching through history books for an official reference to his family. Of course, this search proves as fruitless as had that of Justin, and Spéro decides, instead, to go to Paris to speak to a historian, a Monsieur Bodriol, who is an expert on 'les rois-dieux de Bénin' (Rois mages, p. 21).

Spéro presents the historian with the photograph of Djéré, as a baby, with the king, his wives, and their children. However, for Monsieur Bodriol, this 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 Monsieur Bodriol, '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

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.

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 - that is, 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 realises - 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' (Discours antillais, p. 18). 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'.³⁰ 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,' (Discours antillais, p. 148). This, as we shall examine in more detail later, is precisely Spéro's discovery: that the Antillean situation per se, as both Condé and Glissant pointed out, 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.

³⁰ Condé, La Civilisation de bossale, p. 8.

'Les héros du temps passé...'

Almost as soon as Ti Jean sets out on the journey to his ancestral village of Obanishé, it becomes evident that his quest will not be quite as uncomplicated as Wademba had predicted. This he learns from the first person whom he encounters in Africa - a child, Maïari, who is the son of the king of Obanishé. Maïari informs him not only that Wademba has recently passed along the same route, himself in search of Obanishé, but also of the fate that awaited him upon his entrance into the village. He was, explains Maïari, neither welcomed nor venerated by the villagers: instead, he was killed, 'fléché' - a fate which, moreover, also awaits Ti Jean. Maïari himself initially treats Ti Jean with suspicion and hostility, addressing him repeatedly as 'étranger qui n'est pas d'ici' (Ti Jean, p. 130), or as 'étranger qui a la face de Wademba' (Ti Jean, p. 134). When he is rescued by Ti Jean from the jaws of a lion, however, he agrees to tell him the story behind his (grand)father's rejection - a story which itself proves to be one of lost and illegitimate lines, of confused and complicated genealogies.

It is thus that Ti Jean learns that Maïari belongs to a people, the Ba'Sonanqués who, long ago, were enslaved by another African people, the Sonanqués. As he explains to Ti Jean:

Ici vivait alors un peuple qui portait un nom, un peuple qui parlait une langue et avait des souvenirs aussi vieux que les collines, et ce peuple était le nôtre. Les Sonanqués avait entrepris de nous dévorer... ils posèrent leur talon sur notre nuque et leurs coutumes devinrent nôtres, et nous oubliâmes jusqu'à notre nom. Et c'est pourquoi, depuis des temps et des temps encore, nous sommes seulement connus sous le nom de Ba'Sonanqués: les fils, la vile progéniture des Sonanqués. (Ti Jean, p. 139)

It is to this colonised, bastardised people that Ti Jean learns Wademba, too, belonged. He was, in fact, the son of Gaor, the king's messenger, who was put to death for witchcraft, for his ability to change into a crow. With Gaor dead, the child Wademba was sold into slavery and taken to Guadeloupe. He is thus twice enslaved, twice orphaned, and twice illegitimate. It is

for this very reason that Wadamba, on his return to Obanishé, 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. The only advice that he is offered by Maïari 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).

Thus convinced that Maïari must be mistaken, Ti Jean decides to continue his journey to Obanishé, and Maïari promises to help the person who saved his life. Together, they make up a story which will convince the king of the village to accept Ti Jean. Maïari tells him that he must never use his magical powers - for he, like Gaor, can change form - that he must swear hatred for the Sonanqués, and that he must announce himself willing to fight for the Ba’Sonanqués. What is more, when he is finally presented to, and accepted by, the king, he is told that in return for respecting their elders, and giving them any sons that he may have, he will be 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 Wadamba 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 demeurerait, 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, for he is caught changing his form into a crow. As his African name had predicted, 'il-dit-oui-à-la-mort-et-non-à-la-vie' and, like his ancestor Gaor, he is put to death for witchcraft. The traditions and magical abilities brought from Africa and handed down to him by Wademba, and of which the people of 'En-Haut' were so proud are, in the end, the very attributes which mark both Ti Jean and Wademba as foreign once in Africa itself.

As he leaves Obanishé, and we follow his wanderings through the underworld, Ti Jean finally begins to understand that slavery does, indeed, render impossible a straightforward, genealogical quest back to the African origin. Not only this - and, here, the double enslavement of Wademba makes the point all the more forcefully - he realises that such an African origin no longer exists to be discovered. He realises 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. Indeed, like Véronica in Condé's Heremakhonon, he begins to realise 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 Wadamba 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). Ti Jean begins, now, to recall how Wadamba had told him the story of Obé - a slave who escaped to the forests of Basse-Terre, and who then led a bloody slave rebellion³¹ - as he gave him his musket, the first of the three ancestral gifts which were to help Ti Jean on his journey. 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 Wadamba, 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).

Wadamba'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. As both Glissant and Guadeloupean writer Micheline Rice-Maximin explain, entire maroon communities existed in Guadeloupe, just as they existed, more famously, on larger Caribbean islands like Jamaica. Like the maroons of the Blue Mountains in Jamaica, the hidden communities of Guadeloupean maroons formed themselves into 'nations',

³¹ 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.96-7). Louis Delgrès, perhaps the best-known of these heroic figures, will be the subject of the following chapter.

or 'Guinées' in which slave rebellions were organised and, as in the case of the people of 'En-Haut', in which African traditions were revived and kept alive.³² These traditions, as for Wadamba's people, provided the maroons with the sense of rootedness and community which were destroyed on the Plantation.

However, as both Glissant and Rice-Maximin point out, maroon communities did not simply represent an attempt to recreate 'Africa' in a different land. Rather, it is possible to see in the maroons' way of life a first attempt at becoming rooted in the new land. 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' (*Discours antillais*, p. 276). 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. (*Discours antillais*, p. 104)

³² Micheline Rice-Maximin, 'The Maroon in Guadeloupean Literature', *West Virginia University Philological Papers*, 32 (1986-7), pp. 15-21 (p. 18).

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]' (Le Discours antillais, p. 27). 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 avait 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'.³³ The maroon thus became not a hero for the people but,

³³ See Glissant, Le Discours antillais, p. 154 and p. 104. 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. In a similar manner, it was vital that the colonial authorities play down the role of the maroons in the abolition of slavery. In so doing, Victor Schoelcher, the abolitionist who finally helped achieve abolition in Martinique and Guadeloupe in 1848, 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

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 dépouillé de ses héros "naturels", populaires, et qui donc, en les reniant sous la pression aliénante de l'action colonialiste, s'est reniée elle-même' (Discours antillais, p. 104). 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.³⁴

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 - of those transplanted Africans who first attempted to make the new land their own - 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

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.

³⁴ 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 independence in 1804 has become legendary, and to whom Césaire pays homage in the Cahier.

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 therefore begins to realise 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. Indeed, 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 finally finds the Beast, it is upon the advice of those whom he has met on his journey that he draws - that of Eusèbe l'Ancien, who told him that the Beast's strength lay in the bird that lived in its ear, and that of the deformed woman who told him the story of Losiko-Siko, and warned him to cut the Beast open gently to avoid harming the creatures inside. It is precisely because he remembers the words of the deformed

woman that Ti Jean's quest succeeds, for as he carefully traces a line along the Beast's stomach with his sword, 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 débordement 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 realises 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.³⁵ He is at once the original Ancestor and the original Father: an Antillean Ancestor-Father to replace Wadamba 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 my 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

³⁵ *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 very recent 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.

rebirth is dependent, it is made clear, upon the sacrifice of the fertile and life-giving female Beast.³⁶

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.³⁷ What is more, it is

³⁶ 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).

³⁷ This, as we have seen in the previous chapter is similar to the thesis of Luce Irigaray throughout much of her work. In fact, it is a thesis developed in one of her earliest works, *Spéculum de l'autre femme*, in relation, specifically, to a Western allegory of genesis which in many ways resembles Schwarz-Bart's Caribbean explanation of origins: Plato's 'Simile of the Cave', in *The Republic*. Like *Ti Jean*, Plato's 'Simile' traces the founding movement from darkness into light, this time of a prisoner who, having always been locked in a cave, is suddenly allowed to move out of the darkness of the cavern and into the light above. The sun, or 'the Idea', is equated with knowledge, with Truth, and with the Origin, for 'it is the sun that produces the changing seasons and years and controls everything in the visible world' (Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974, p. 319). Ascent from the cavern, towards light, is depicted by Plato as a 'simile' for a movement towards Truth and knowledge. What is crucial for Irigaray, however, is that for Plato, the birth of truth and knowledge depend on leaving behind the darkness of the cave, just as the (re)birth of Guadeloupe into light, or truth - that of a reimagined, Guadeloupean, history - depends on Ti Jean's emergence, with the sun, from the Beast's stomach. For Irigaray, Plato's entire myth is a representation of phallogocentrism for, as Whitford explains, the roles of imaginary mother and father are attributed, respectively, to the cavern and to the Idea (Light, the Sun, the Origin) (Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*, p. 108. See also Irigaray, 'L'Hystéra de Platon', in Irigaray, *Spéculum de l'autre femme*, pp. 301-443). Rebirth into truth, as in Schwarz-Bart's text, comes to mean leaving behind not only the cavern, but the mother, and her role in reproduction. Thus, as Whitford explains once more: 'what Irigaray finds in the myth is an imaginary primal scene in which the mother's role has been elided. Irigaray argues that the Idea [the Sun]

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 Wadamba 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 Wadamba. As Zimra points out, 'Awa' is the African name for Eve, the primal Mother, which in turn confirms Wadamba in his role as original Father.³⁸ However, as she also points out, Awa's name is actually contained within that of Wadamba. Even more than this, when Awa is sent to live amongst the people of 'En-Bas' she is baptised, 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.

in Plato is a male engenderer. The fact that the woman also engenders has been obliterated from the scene of representation' (Whitford, p. 106).

³⁸ Zimra, 'In the Name of the Father', p. 65.

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 Condé's 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 feminised 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.³⁹

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:

³⁹ 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 authorised by him (Freud, Totem and Taboo, p. 211).

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:

Voilà que, la nuit venue, il se mit à rapprocher des concessions pour lorgner les ventres des femmes du clan sous leur pagnes. Il les surprenait dans leur sommeil et les examinait. Ventres ronds comme 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 native 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 Wadamba, 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.⁴⁰ 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).⁴¹

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, a complexity which prevents the tracing of a line back to an original African ancestor, but to see that the complexity of this quest has everything to do with what it depends upon, what it erases - those other genealogies which, as I mentioned earlier, intersect with that of the Ancestor. These are genealogies which, as Spéro now begins to realise, are predominantly maternal.

⁴⁰ 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 Kumbia, pp. 45-58.

⁴¹ It is interesting to note, here, that crabs in particular - about which Spéro is having a recurring nightmare as 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 sa 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.

The genealogy most obviously connected with that of Spéro is, of course, that of his wife, Debbie, and then of their daughter, Anita. Debbie's own, quite complex, past begins to intersect with that of Spéro on their first meeting, in Guadeloupe, while Debbie is on a tour of the Caribbean given to her by her mother as a graduation present, and Spéro is selling his paintings to tourists like herself. When she stops to buy one from him, he invites her to go for a drink with him, and then to dinner. It is at this point that Spéro tells Debbie the story of the Ancestor, in order to ensure her continued interest in him: the charm works, and Debbie stays first with him in Guadeloupe, and then agrees to marry him, as she grows more and more fascinated by the story of the African king.

Once they are married, Spéro and Debbie depart from Guadeloupe to Crocker island, the home of Debbie's own ancestors, and it is in America that Spéro begins to realise both the extent of, and the reasons for, his new wife's interest in his lineage. He becomes aware that Debbie, like himself, is afflicted with a sense of illegitimacy and non-belonging as typical of the African-American diaspora as it is of the Antilles. Indeed, as if in order to cure herself of this affliction, Debbie becomes a historian, and spends most of her time collecting oral testimonies from the older members of Charleston's Black community. Soon, she is known as 'une des meilleures spécialistes de la Reconstruction du Sud' (Rois mages, p. 39), but despite her success, and despite her involvement in every facet of black cultural life in Charleston, it is obvious that this is not enough. As Spéro himself realises 'à Charleston, le sang des martyrs n'était pas un champ fertile' (Rois mages, p. 32). Indeed, it becomes even more obvious that nowhere is this more true than within Debbie's own family - at least her paternal family - the Middletons.

Like Spéro, we learn of Debbie's disappointment when, attracted by her father's reputation as a follower of Martin Luther King, she had begun researching her own ancestral past some years earlier. What she uncovers is not the heroic story of a black liberation leader but, rather, the story of a man remembered by his former pupils as 'ce jeune maître qui leur bottait le cul et qui dans ses fréquentes colères les traitait de bons à rien de nègres' (Rois mages, p. 98). Others tell her that he became interested in questions of race not because he met Martin Luther King but, rather less illustriously, because he was thrown out of toilets reserved only for whites (Rois mages, p. 98).

As Debbie searches further back into her father's genealogy, she discovers only more stories of family dishonour. For example, it is rumoured that her ancestor Senior, the first of the Middletons to leave Barbados, was in fact the son of the slave owner who brought him to America to use as a slave buyer (Rois mages, p. 145). Thus a mulatto as well as being implicated in the wrong side of slavery Senior, like George, proves an unworthy Ancestor for Debbie. As Spéro begins to realise, 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.⁴²

⁴² One of Debbie's black, writer-historian friends, Isaac Jamieson is, like Spéro, obsessed with his family's past, and especially with the story of his grandfather, who fled Alabama for California in order to ensure his descendants' freedom. This grandfather is named Melchior, the name which is also given - because the date is the sixth of January - to the child chosen by Spéro's own Ancestor for his reincarnation. This recurrent reference to one of 'les rois mages' serves, it would seem, both as a reminder that we are dealing here with myths of origin and, perhaps more importantly, to link together the quests for legitimacy of disparate communities of the African diaspora, communities which are haunted equally by a sense of bâtardise. Isaac, however, succeeds in his search for legitimacy where Spéro had failed, for he manages to publish the story of his grandfather, an undertaking which he, too, had seen as 'son devoir filial' (Rois mages, p. 281). Spéro suspects that Debbie has an affair with Isaac, an affair again apparently motivated by Isaac's successful legitimization of his genealogy.

The growing differences between Debbie and Spéro are further magnified with the birth of their daughter, Anita. 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 realised 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, hitherto caught up in the shame, and power, of her own father's genealogy, marrying into the Ancestor's lineage represents 'le vrai retour' dreamt of by Véronica in Heremakhonon and undertaken by Marie-Hélène in Une Saison à Rihata. 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 of 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. She encourages the child to become interested in everything to do with Africa, and especially Bénin, and by the age of seven Anita knows more than does Spéro about their ancestral past. 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 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 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 Ti Jean, cannot exist.⁴³

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 piece of information which, like Marisia herself, is a vital - but subordinated - part of the story of the Ancestor. It is when Spéro's father, Justin, has returned from his discoveries about the Ancestor in Martinique that he marries Marisia. When he meets her 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, it would seem, has been precipitated by a sudden, and quite literal, crisis of legitimacy.

Marisia is the child, we learn, 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..., légítima 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'

⁴³ With Anita, Condé would seem to have returned once more to explore the themes of female exile and genealogical dispossession familiar to us from her first novels. Indeed, in many ways, Anita is the African-American counterpart of Véronica in Heremakhonon. She grows to despise her parents in the same way as does Véronica as Debbie exhibits the same, paradoxical and bourgeois pride in the race as do Veronica's parents. Anita's 'return' to Africa itself recalls not only that of Véronica, but that also of 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.

(Rois mages, p. 52) and take that of the old 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 about 'primitive man' 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 Marisia meets Justin, a hospital orderly, he tells her the story of the Ancestor: like his son he is afraid that she will take him for less than he feels himself to be, 'pour un rien-du-tout... Collecteur d'excréments' (Rois mages, p. 54). Like Debbie, Marisia is captivated by the story and 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, as we might expect, the situation is, in fact, much more complex. The line of descent into which both Marisia and Debbie marry is, of course, 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 realisation, 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 apparently becomes clear to him, though this is by no means made explicit, is that the failure of his 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, he begins to become aware that in a culture which is quite manifestly matrifocal - in which, as Fritz Gracchus points out,⁴⁴ maternal names and maternal lines of filiation are commonplace - the idea that

⁴⁴ As Fritz Gracchus points out, in an essay on the question of fatherhood in the Antilles, the (rural, non-bourgeois) Antillean family is, as elsewhere in the Caribbean, still characterised 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, pp. 95-115). According to the 1988 INSEE report, almost a third of families with children in Guadeloupe and Martinique are headed solely by women, and of those families headed by two parents, only a small proportion of these parents are married. Many Guadeloupean women are in 'visiting' relationships, that is, they do not live with the father of one or several of their children, but are visited by him regularly, and occasionally receive money from him. Other single mothers have simply been abandoned by the father of their children, and will often be solely responsible for several children of

'legitimacy' is conferred solely by the paternal side may be inappropriate, and its pursuit thus doomed to failure.⁴⁵ As Gracchus makes clear, it is an idea which is Western, and whose imposition upon the Antilles has served to render non-Western models of descent and self-definition 'pathological', or 'illegitimate'.⁴⁶

As we saw earlier, both Spéro and Ti Jean had accepted the futility of the Antillean quest for paternal origins in Africa, and had realised that the Antillean situation *per se* is one of 'illegitimacy', of *bâtardise*. However, each of them reacted in a quite different manner to this realisation: 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 - Antillean identity. That is, to have refused to accept the

different fathers (INSEE & Secretariat d'Etat Chargé des droits des femmes (Délégation régionale de la Guadeloupe), *Femmes en Chiffres: Guadeloupe*, 1988). As Claudie Fougeyrollas 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).

⁴⁵ As if to reinforce Spéro's growing awareness of the matrifocality of Antillean culture he is, throughout the text, depicted as increasingly troubled by the issue of black fatherhood, and especially by his own role as a father. This is a preoccupation which begins, it would seem, with the recollection of a comment made by his mother when he was younger about the conduct of the Ancestor himself. Frustrated by the amount of time invested by Justin in the veneration of the Ancestor, Marisia exclaims: 'roi africain ou pas, le papa de Djéré s'était comporté comme tous les autres nègres de la terre. Il ne s'était pas occupé de son enfant. Il l'avait laissé derrière lui à la charge de sa seule pauvre maman' (*Rois mages*, p. 18). Later in the narrative, when he begins an affair with Debbie's best friend, Paule, it is apparently this remark which prevents Spéro from despising his lover for cheating on her best friend. As he reasons, she herself is simply another victim of 'cette grande solitude des femmes noires', one of the tens of women he has known deserted by their men (*Rois mages*, p. 65). Both of these incidents are crucial, for still later in the text Spéro becomes obsessed with asking himself whether he too, as he suspects, has really been a bad father. He recalls the story of 'un papa-voleur' who lived in his village in Guadeloupe and who was stabbed by his wife after having raped two of their daughters (*Rois mages*, p. 187). Spéro worries: 'si Debbie accaparait tant Anita, était-ce donc pour la protéger de lui?' (*Rois mages*, p. 187).

⁴⁶ As Gracchus explains: 'ce dont on peut être certain, c'est que la famille dite matrifocale n'est pas moins cohérente que la famille conjugale. La différence tient au fait qu'elles appartiennent à des ordres, à des dispositifs de pouvoir, à des histoires différents. Dire qu'une famille est plus stable qu'une autre suppose une référence qui ne peut qu'être partisan' ('L'Antillais et la question du père', p. 105).

'illegitimacy' of Antillean identity, and to have repeated instead the Western erasure of non-Western forms of self-definition 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, as for him and for Marisia, the Antillean sense of 'legitimacy' - that which accords a sense of identity and belonging - may more widely be seen to be conferred by the 'illegitimate' (the maternal) side.

It must be remembered, of course, 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, of course, 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 colonisation' (Le Discours antillais, p. 159), and not simply because it imposes 'une Histoire totalitaire' that erases the histories of colonised 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.

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-Herma¹ and Condé's Traversée de la mangrove². 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 at once 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

¹ Michèle Lacrosil, Demain Jab-Herma (Paris: Gallimard, 1967).

² Maryse Condé, Traversée de la mangrove (Paris: Mercure de France, 1989).

history and identity begin to emerge - discourses which, again, have much to do with the work of Glissant - so is the question of the position of women in these revised discourses 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 acts at Fort Matouba, in Guadeloupe, during the Guadeloupean 'revolution' of 1802. Delgrès occupies at once an ambiguous position in French historical accounts of the period and, more than any other figure, has come to occupy an almost legendary position in Antillean accounts.

A mulatto, Delgrès had been made an officer in the newly-established Antillean section of the French army when slavery was abolished in 1794. This was the year in which Britain, taking advantage of France's disarray during the Revolution, and allying itself with the French Royalist anti-revolutionaries, had invaded Guadeloupe. As Lucien René-Abenon explains, desperate measures were needed at this time if France was to safeguard its empire, and to this end Victor Hughes, a French army General, was sent to Guadeloupe with the orders to abolish slavery, and thereby to win over the mass of Guadeloupean people both to the Revolutionary cause and, more importantly, to the battle against the British occupation of the island.³ White

³ Lucien-René Abenon Petite histoire de la Guadeloupe, p. 90. As Abenon explains, such a move towards abolition came by no means as a total surprise, even if it was principally an act of self-preservation on the part of the French, rather than a humanitarian gesture. The Revolution in the 'métropole', with its discourse of equality for all, and its 'Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme', had for some time been leading to a questioning - in both France and the

and black soldiers fought together against both Royalist 'colons' and the British, and a guillotine - brought over by Hughes himself - was set up in Pointe-à-Pitre to enable the punishment of all such anti-revolutionaries. However, the British defeated, the island began to suffer economically, now deprived of slaves to work on the plantations. In order to remedy the situation, Hughes introduced forced labour for all those with no employment and when Bonaparte, desirous of reestablishing the former sugar economy, came to power in 1798, it was a short step from forced labour to slavery. For Bonaparte, it was essential that France's authority be reasserted in its colonies, and for him slavery was a vital part of such authority.⁴

In 1802, Bonaparte sent General Richepance to Guadeloupe to reinstate slavery. Richepance disarmed the black troops and deposed Pélage as their leader. However, many of these soldiers decided to take arms themselves, and to prepare an attack against Richepance's forces in order to oppose the reinstatement of slavery. These soldiers included Pélage himself, as well as others: Ignace, Codou, Palème and, of course, Delgrès. Faced with an opposition far superior in numbers and in weaponry, however, the rebels were soon defeated: Ignace was killed in Baimbridge, near Pointe-à-Pitre, while Delgrès and the others were surrounded at Matouba, in Basse-Terre. It is here that his famous, heroic action took place:

Sur le point d'être pris à l'habitation Danglemont, [Delgrès] se fit sauter avec plusieurs centaines de ses compagnons le 28 mai 1802. Leur mort montra que le peuple guadeloupéen n'accepta pas avec résignation le sort qui lui était fait; certains avaient préféré la mort à la servitude.⁵

Antilles - of the place of slaves and slavery within the new egalitarian society. Furthermore, from 1790 onwards, there had been several slave revolts and uprisings in the Antilles (*Petite histoire de la Guadeloupe*, pp. 83-89).

⁴ Abenon, *ibid.*, p. 93.

⁵ Abenon, *ibid.*, p. 96. Prior to the heroic, yet hopeless acts of Delgrès, there had been another, much more crucial attempt at resistance, an attempt which was almost the turning point in Guadeloupe's colonial history. In 1801, Bonaparte sent one of his men, Lacrosse, to restore French authority in Guadeloupe. Lacrosse, however, was met with resistance by the freed slaves who had served France against the British, and in October 1801 there was a mutiny, in

Slavery was, however, reinstated, and was not finally abolished until 1848. Nevertheless, as Michèle Rice-Maximin points out, Delgrès' actions at Matouba have come to constitute 'one of the most symbolic moments in Guadeloupean history'.⁶

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 and the 'Révolution guadeloupéenne', but instead via a tale of intrigue set in the Guadeloupe of 1952, when the Antillean plantocracy was beginning to disappear, control of sugar production slowly being assumed by large, centralised, French sugar companies. The narrative begins with the arrival in Guadeloupe of Philippe Bonnier, an employee of the French sugar company which has been running the plantation of Pâline via a manager, Georges Robérieu. Pâline's former owner, Constant Sougès, the last in a long line of planters, has until now been allowed to stay on, ostensibly still running Pâline despite the presence of Robérieu. What follows is at once a depiction of the ruin of planter society, and of the effect that this has on both the workers - who live in conditions only marginally better than those during slavery - and on the white 'creoles' like Sougès, who are still clinging to an illusion of the wealth and grandeur of former generations.

The narrative moves quickly and repeatedly between the Great House at Pâline, the Sougès family home, and the world of the workers - in the fields, in their shacks, and in the plantation-owned bar-bistrot 'Chez Pulchérie'. But Demain Jab-Herma is not simply an

which the black soldiers challenged Lacrosse and offered power instead to Pélage, a black officer who had served during the revolution. Pélage, however, was a loyalist, and instead of breaking with France, as did Toussaint Louverture in Haiti, he attempted instead to negotiate with Lacrosse and with France: it was an attempt which failed, and France thus regained control. According to Abenon, however, 'si Pélage avait voulu rompre alors avec la France, la population entière l'aurait sans doute suivi, et le sort des événements aurait pu changer' (Abenon, *ibid.*, p. 95).

⁶ Micheline Rice-Maximin, 'The Maroon in Guadeloupean Literature', p. 16.

examination of a vital period in the development of Guadeloupe's economy, for Philippe has come to investigate at once the continuing viability of the plantation as a financial investment for the Company, and the theft of numerous barrels of rum. Indeed, Lacrosil's novel has been described as a 'detective novel',⁷ for the theft of the rum is complicated by two other equally mysterious crimes: the murder of two women and a child, and the presence in Pâline of a fetish, brought by Philippe to Guadeloupe from Dakar apparently at someone's request. As we make our way through the novel, it becomes clear that it is none other than the figure of Delgrès who forms the link between these mysteries, and who throws up as well the questions about Guadeloupean history, heroism, and identity which are central to Lacrosil's text.

It is in the bar, 'Chez Pulchérie', that these connections are gradually made, as the workers who go there tell, over and over again, stories about the legend of Delgrès: 'le conteur évoquait le temps des esclaves et les longues luttes de libération, et c'était toujours de Delgrès qu'il était question, même quand il n'était pas nommé. Il était l'espoir et le modèle. "C'est un mâle, ça"' (Jab-Herma, p. 17). More specifically, the legend evoked is that of Delgrès' gold, forty barrels of which was allegedly buried by two of Delgrès' 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 they decide that they would share it out and use it to improve their living conditions. One worker, however, named Cragget, a mulatto around whom events will begin to revolve, breaks the spell and declares: 'moi, je foutrais le camp' (Jab-Herma, p. 17). Cragget despises his fellow workers' obsession with Delgrès, not because he himself does not believe the story too, but

⁷ 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).

because he feels that their endless storytelling prevents them from taking action. For Cragget, this is in direct contrast with the ideals of their hero, of Delgrès himself, for he committed 'un acte pur': 'il est allé, lui, au bout de sa révolte' (Jab-Herma, p. 24). It is now that Cragget, too, decides to act, to search himself for 'la route de Delgrès', by crossing the bridge to Tirêha.

Cragget's particular investment in the story of Delgrès is in fact revealed early in the narrative, as he remembers how he had once broken into the library at Pâline and stayed up all night reading the story of Delgrès, 'comme l'avaient fait avant lui Sougès, Jab-Herma, et la plupart des gens du pays' (Jab-Herma, p. 41). Not only does he discover that Delgrès, like him, was a young mulatto, but that he was, again like him, given privileges and expectations which were then taken away. For Cragget, this itself has everything to do with his position as a mulatto, as the son of a black mother and an unknown white father: like that of Ti Jean or of Djéré, Cragget's story is marked by the admission, forced out of him at school: 'moi, j'ai pas de papa' (Jab-Herma, p. 89). It is this fatherlessness, in turn, which leads to Cragget's obsession with Delgrès, for again like Ti Jean and like Djéré, Cragget embarks upon his own quest for legitimacy. This time, the quest is an attempt to claim none other than Delgrès - the archetypal Antillean Ancestor-Hero - as legitimate father.⁸ For this reason Cragget undertakes to fulfill the conditions, demanded by the legend, which will allow him to make the journey to Tirêha. In so doing, he commits also all of the crimes which have puzzled Philippe and the rest of the community of Pâline. As the legend demands, he sends for an African fetish to carry

⁸ 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, Out of the Kumbia, (pp. 143-160), p. 153).

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 Saça, the young daughter of Sougès' servant Clarine, in order to make the necessary child sacrifice. In addition, he inadvertently kills Clarine herself, as well as Pilou, the secretary with whom Philippe is having an affair.

Cragget's quest is 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 childhood.⁹ 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 qui faisait le marchand ambulant était une tentative désespérée; voler, une protestation; tuer, un cri de révolte. Voler et tuer pour devenir un autre. (*Jab-Herma*, p. 244)¹⁰

⁹ Zimra, 'Righting the Calabash', p. 152. It is important to note also here the circumstances of Cragget's birth and childhood. He is, we learn, the son of an Antillean servant and an Englishman who has been sent to jail. His mother's employer takes charge of him: 'Elle lui avait donné une gouvernante, un bureau côté parc. Une nourriture de jeune prince. Des leçons de violon et de cheval. Le fait qu'il était un petit mûlatre aux cheveux étonnants amusait la vieille demoiselle' (*Jab-Herma*, p. 91). He does well at his studies, and is expected to continue in them and go to a 'grande école', when his guardian suddenly dies and leaves all her money to a society for the prevention of juvenile delinquency. The only provision made for him is that he becomes 'agriculteur' (*Jab-Herma*, p. 90). He goes to Paris and attempts to find a job which will finance a degree, but no-one will help a mulatto and he ends up first as a roadsweeper in Paris, and then in Guadeloupe as a plantation worker. Cragget now feels that he, a mulatto like Delgrès, merits more than the 'slavery' which he feels has been systematically re-imposed upon him since his guardian's death.

¹⁰ 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. Philippe represents for the mulatto 'un mirage, l'image que Cragget aurait aimé offrir à tous!' (*Jab-Herma*, p. 13). Faced with 'le nez droit, la bouche pure..., ce regard céleste, ces joues candides' (*Jab-Herma*, p. 84), Cragget, in a way similar to Lacrosil's Cajou before him, 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, and goes to his office each day in order to catch sight of him. What is more, when he learns that Philippe is having an affair with his secretary, Pilou, Cragget suddenly begins to see Pilou in a different light: 'une mûlatresse, l'Autre l'a embrassé, lèvres rondes, cheveux épais, qu'est-ce qui lui plaît là-dedans?... Le visage de Pilou devient insignifiant. Est-ce que cette fille lui plaît? Elle l'a embrassé: m'embrasserait-elle? Il lui fallait ce que l'Autre avait eu' (*Jab-Herma*, p. 86). Pilou has in fact achieved what he himself would like to achieve, and for Cragget she thus becomes the ideal means of access to Philippe: if he has sex with the woman with whom Philippe has also had sex, it will amount, it would seem, to the same thing as having sex with Philippe himself, and thus appropriating his whiteness. When Pilou rejects him as he tries, in the dark, to seduce her by pretending to be

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. Cragget's quest, however, ultimately fails: he manages neither to cross the bridge, nor to find the gold, nor to escape his position at Pâline. It would seem that this failure occurs simply because his knowledge of the legend is imperfect: first, he attempts to sacrifice a female child, Saça, while the legend - in the true tradition of heroic filiation - specifies that it must be a boy. Second, the fetish should have been brought to Guadeloupe by a stranger while Philippe, however imperfectly, is already known to Cragget, for he remembers seeing him from a distance, in Paris, as he worked as a roadsweeper there.

It is possible, however, to argue also, as does Zimra, that Cragget's 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'.¹¹ 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',¹² in which the hero 'accède en effet au statut du héros mythique pour avoir choisi la Mort de son plein gré' (Rosello, p. 45). 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' (Rosello, pp. 47-8).

Philippe, he kills her. Although her death is ostensibly because she has discovered that he is stealing the rum, it is thus of course linked also to the failure of his attempt to attain whiteness.

¹¹ Zimra, 'Righting the Calabash', p. 152.

¹² Rosello, Littérature et identité créole, p. 27.

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 first dig up the gold together and then share it in order that everyone's situation be alleviated, Cragget acts contrary to the interests of the collectivity. First, as we have seen, his quest is motivated purely by self-interest and, second, when it fails, his suicide is similarly motivated 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 - as well as the other white 'Creoles' - also claims a link to Delgrès. When Philippe finally asks to have the legend explained to him, it is Sougès who elects to tell it, and he begins precisely by claiming Delgrès as 'notre héros' (Jab-Herma p. 229). He declares, in a manner which recalls Rosello's comments on Antillean heroism, that: 'nous l'admirons d'avoir choisi sa mort... C'est parce qu'il a su perdre que Louis Delgrès est grand... Delgrès lui-même ne croyait pas à la victoire; il voulait faire de sa mort un acte de révolte, et marquer le coup' (Jab-Herma, p. 232). As he speaks, and takes the side of Delgrès over the French soldiers he was opposing, it becomes obvious to Philippe that Sougès 'vivait

¹³ Zimra, 'Righting the Calabash', p. 151.

la ruine de Pâline en même temps que celle de Delgrès' (Jab-Herma, p. 232). Just as Cragget felt his situation to be parallel to that of his hero, so Sougès positions himself as a Guadeloupean victim of the modern-day tyranny of the French. Equally, when Philippe asks what happened to the rest of Delgrès's troops, after his death, it becomes obvious that Sougès, again like Cragget, pays little attention to the collective aspect of Delgrès' actions. He tells the Frenchman, dispassionately: 'Oh! poursuivis, massacrés: plus d'un millier d'exécutions hâtives! Deux mille soldats noirs furent emprisonnés, déportés' (Jab-Herma, p. 233).

As Zimra points out, Sougès, like Cragget, divorces Delgrès' heroic act from its context as part of a slave revolt, and identifies only with Delgrès' individual situation, with his betrayal, and with his power to oppose that betrayal by choosing his own death (Jab-Herma, p. 155). During the night in which almost all the prominent male characters of the text dream of Delgrès, Sougès therefore 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 not because he is white, or even of the planter class, that Sougès is unable to claim Delgrès as his Ancestor. Rather, it is because of the particular investment that he has in such a claim: like Cragget, he is motivated by self-interest rather than a concern for the collectivity, thus misinterpreting the heroic code of which Delgrès is the father.

It is possible, however, to problematise 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. Lacrosil's text may, in fact, be much more complex than Zimra is suggesting, for 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 himself 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' (Discours antillais, p. 497).

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. Futile in the sense that the events surrounding Delgrès' actions are irretrievably and irrecuperably obscured by the historical and mythical narratives which surround him. Lacrosil's project, instead, may be interpreted more radically as an examination of the entire heroic code, the entire discourse on heroism, 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

¹⁴ Rosello, Littérature et identité créole, p. 55.

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. That is, as a self-certain, self-sufficient and self-present individual (Discours antillais, p. 190). 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 in fact 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 see the 'choice' of death or type of death as an important - if not the only - resource of oppressed peoples.¹⁵

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.¹⁶ As Rosello points out, 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

¹⁵ Rosello, *ibid.*, pp. 42-3.

¹⁶ Rosello, like Zimra, sees Césaire as the 'Father' (the literary Ancestor) of this cult of the hero, and singles out not his homage to Toussaint in the Cahier, but 'le Rebelle' of his long poem Et les chiens se taisaient. The Rebel is a suicidal hero after the model of Delgrès. His suicide is a 'choice' over being killed by the colonial authorities for killing his master (see Rosello, *ibid.*, pp. 45-51).

hundred men and women who died with him are necessarily obscured.¹⁷ 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'.¹⁸

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.¹⁹ 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 refocussing attention upon that very community.

¹⁷ 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' (Rosello, *ibid.*, p. 53).

¹⁸ Bernadette Cailler, 'Edouard Glissant: A Creative Critic', *World Literature Today*, 63 (1989), pp. 589-592 (p. 589).

¹⁹ In the introduction to his translation of *Le Discours antillais*, Dash rightly points out how remarkable this 'demythification of the self-certain subject' is within the Caribbean context, where the point of departure has always been 'the effort to write the subject into existence', where the 'master theme has always been the quest for individual identity' and where the protagonist has always been 'the heroic prodigal, the solemn demiurge, the vengeful enfant terrible, outspoken Caliban' (Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans., Michael Dash, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1989, p. xiii).

Heroism Redefined

It is precisely the characteristic split between Antillean hero and Antillean community which preoccupies Condé several years later in Traversée de la mangrove. This is a text which, like that of Lacrosil, 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 a body in the woods around Rivière au Sel, a village in Basse-Terre. The body is that of Francis Sancher, an enigmatic figure who had arrived in the village less than a year before his sudden death. Quite early in the text we learn, from Moïse the postman, that 'sa famille vient d'ici et il cherche ses traces. C'étaient des békés qui ont fui après l'abolition' (Traversée, p. 64). It is this piece of information which immediately positions him as classic Antillean hero returning to the native land - Antillean, this time - in search of the mystery of his genealogy. It is through the subsequent recounting, by each villager, of her or his encounters with the dead man that Condé's text develops, and that we discover the fascination of an entire village with the mysterious origins, arrival, and death of this stranger amongst them. Echoing the sentiments of the entire village Moïse, himself the first to befriend Sancher, tells him: 'ce que je cherchais, c'est à savoir qui tu es' (Traversée, p. 47).

It is Lucien Evariste, however, known in the village as 'l'écrivain', who becomes the most obsessed with discovering this truth, for it is to him that Sancher gives some documents, which were handed down to him after the death of his father, and which allegedly prove that 'tout part d'ici', from Guadeloupe (Traversée, p. 235). It is thus from Lucien that we then learn how Sancher believes his family to be under the influence of a centuries-old curse, 'une malédiction... Qui se traduisait par des morts subites, brutales, inexplicées, toujours au même

âge, la cinquantaine' (Traversée, p. 235). It is a curse which affects the male members of the family: his father, his grandfather, back to his great-great-great grandfather, '[s]on aïeul-aïeul', François-Désiré, 'un fils de haute famille' who had fled Guadeloupe after having committed the mysterious crime which incurred the curse (Traversée, pp. 163-4). It is Lucien, too, who is in fact most aware of the reasons for his, and the village's, obsession with this mysterious stranger, for he laments - and here echoing Glissant - that his community, and indeed Guadeloupe as a whole, fundamentally lacks a hero and thus, according to his logic, a Revolution.²⁰ It is for this reason that the community conjectures wildly and endlessly about Sancher's life, for it is motivated by the same communal need for a central, heroic figure that led the workers of Pâline to tell endless stories around the figure of Delgrès.

Lucien himself, educated in Paris and described as 'révolutionnaire et athée' (Traversée p. 228),²¹ has returned to Guadeloupe in order to undertake precisely this type of hero-making and hero-worship, for he runs a radio programme, entitled 'Moun an tan lontan' ('figures d'autrefois', p. 229) for the local radio station, 'Radyo Kon Lambi'. This broadcast is preoccupied solely with heroic tales:

Il contait 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)

In addition to his work at the radio station, however, Lucien has decided to go further and to write a novel, to resuscitate for himself an authentically Guadeloupean hero, to write 'une

²⁰ As Lucien comments: 'Ah, être né ailleurs! Au Chili! En Argentine! Ou tout simplement à un jet de pierre, à Cuba! (Traversée, p. 229).

²¹ Significantly, this archetypal (and apparently ironically stereotypical) pro-independence revolutionary brings to live with him, on his return to Guadeloupe 'une négresse noire' called Margarita, who is unable to speak French. This he does, as we might by now expect, in order to symbolise his rejection of his assimilated, middle-class origins.

fresque historique retraçant les hauts faits des Nèg mawon' (*Traversée*, p. 230).²² When he hears of the arrival of Sancher, reputedly Cuban, he imagines a hero who has fought alongside Castro in the Cuban revolution and, convinced that he is the hero that he and his community has been seeking, he invites him to speak on his radio programme.

Even when he discovers that Sancher is not Cuban, Lucien cannot prevent himself from becoming more and more absorbed in putting together, 'morceau à morceau, le puzzle que constituait sa vie' (*Traversée*, p. 236). At the same time, he slowly abandons his work at Radyo Kon Lambi, work that he had always felt he was undertaking for the benefit of his community as a whole. Equally, he decides to abandon his earlier plans for a novel about the maroons, and to write instead the story of Sancher's life and heroic travels. What is more, he decides also that this work will necessitate a journey of his own, on the trail of his hero and his origins: 'pour écrire ce livre-là, ne lui faudrait-il pas suivre son héros à la trace? Relever les empreintes qu'il avait laissées dans les chemins? 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. Ever since his return to Guadeloupe he has felt paralysed, despite

²² Unable to speak or to write Creole, and having been assured by his revolutionary friends that his book must be in 'sa langue maternelle', Lucien puts off beginning his book, afraid that once it was finished, and published in Paris, it would be attacked by local critics: "'Lucien Evariste, ce roman-là est-il bien guadeloupéen? Il est écrit en français. Quel français? As-tu pensé en l'écrivant à la langue de ta mère, le créole? As-tu comme le talentueux Martiniquais, Patrick Chamoiseau, déconstruit le français-français?'" (*Traversée*, p. 241). Here, as elsewhere, Condé comments ironically upon her own position as Guadeloupean writer, in fact predicting the very way in which her novel was received, and specifically by its first reader, Patrick Chamoiseau (See Chamoiseau's 'Reflections on Maryse Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove*', *Callaloo*, 14 (1991), pp. 389-395). Equally, we are told that Lucien is excited at the news of Sancher's arrival in the village not only because he is Cuban, and therefore *de facto* a revolutionary hero, but because he is reputed to be a writer, and thus someone with whom Lucien can discuss 'style, technique narrative, utilisation de l'oralité dans l'écriture'. As Lucien goes on to comment - and here it must be remembered that Condé herself has spent many years as a lecturer in North America: 'en temps normal, pareilles discussions étaient impossibles, les quelques écrivains guadeloupéens passent le plus clair de leur temps à pérorer sur la culture antillaise à Los Angeles ou à Berkeley' (*Traversée*, p. 231).

his pro-independence activities, by 'la torpeur de cette terre stérile qui ne parvenait pas à accoucher de sa Révolution' (*Traversée*, p. 229). Following his hero's tracks becomes little more than a welcome excuse to leave behind that island, and to leave behind a community that he no longer has any interest in 'saving'.

As Condé's text develops, however, it transpires that Lucien's interpretation of Sancher's heroic status has little to do with the figure of Sancher himself, 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 investment in the heroic code begins to become evident. As Sancher in fact warns Lucien before the latter departs on his own heroic quest:

Moi que tu vois devant toi, je ne saurais te parler que d'hommes et de femmes mis en terre avec la même envie de vivre interrompue. Net. Pas de combats glorieux! Et puis, ceux-là dont tu me parles, je n'ai jamais entendu leur nom. Car 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 crime and the curse of his ancestor. Instead, it proceeds in a quite different fashion: 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

Chamoiseau in his reading of Condé's own text²³ - 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). 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 of 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 functions as a focal point, as a 'central figure' who unites the community of Rivière au Sel, he never comes to constitute the communal hero dreamt of by Lucien. Rather, he serves to unite them 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 useful and informative, for in her study of the Antillean heroic code she not only problematises, but attempts also to reimagine, the figure of the Antillean hero. Rosello tries to imagine 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, brings together and redefines that community itself. 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

²³ Chamoiseau does not make exactly the same point as Vilma, but objects rather to the word 'traversée' because he feels that the more creolised 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*', p. 390).

desperately in need of reimagination. As we have seen, for example in the work of Lacrosil, the 'figure métis' has hitherto been the literal métis(se): the mulatto, and most especially the 'tragic' mulatto like 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. As Rosello explains, within this traditional schema:

La définition du métissage comme positionnement se heurte donc toujours à l'écueil des frontières figées, d'une vision totalisante des races et de la culture. Les métis(es), tiraillé(e)s entre deux entités, sont encore victimes de l'Un, dont ils ou elles sont les bâtard(e)s, les singes, les traîtres(ses).²⁴

What Rosello wishes to undertake is a revision of the traditional interpretation of the 'figure métis': rather than read it as an always problematic position of racial 'non-belonging', she wishes to use it instead as a figure of resistance (Rosello, p. 143). Rosello's reimagined 'figure métis' is one which, instead of being paralysed - like Sapotille, like Cajou, or even like Cragget - by its position between 'pure' extremes, actively adopts that position 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 with 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 heroic figure.

²⁴ Rosello, Littérature et identité créole, p. 148.

In this undertaking, Rosello owes much to the work of Glissant, for whom métissage, as we shall see later, is at the heart of contemporary attempts to undermine the investment of Antillean historical narratives in the figure of the individual hero. Her work bears certain similarities, too, 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' which allows us precisely 'to think otherwise'.²⁵ 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 very 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. (Lionnet, p. 14)

As Lionnet goes on to explain, the Greek metis is a usefully polyvalent term which connotes that which 'can never be subsumed under a single, identifiable system of diametric dichotomies': it is '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' (Lionnet, p. 14). 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

²⁵ Françoise Lionnet, Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 6.

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'. As she explains, 'appartenance' is that which has traditionally defined the 'figure métis' in terms of inclusion and exclusion: it describes 'comment le sujet se défine en termes de "même" et "autre" dans le contexte de métissage antillais'. 'Alliance', however, 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"' (Rosello, p. 144).

For Rosello, the notion of 'linking' is important because 'le lien, qui permet à tout moment à un sujet de se définit et de se redéfinir par rapport à un groupe, a aussi un pouvoir créateur dans la mesure où, en se modifiant, le lien change aussi la définition des communautés aux seins desquelles le sujet se pense' (Rosello, p. 144). 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, crucially, 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 itself of Rivière au Sel is 'une communauté métisse', and from the beginning this métissage - and its importance - is apparent. Moïse, for example, Sancher's first contact in Rivière au Sel, tells him early in their relationship that he is the son of a poor, Guadeloupean father and of a Chinese mother, Shawn (Traversée, p. 41). At the other end of the community, there is the prominent and wealthy Ramsaran family, of East Indian origin, whose members look constantly towards India, not Africa, as the origin and source of their identity.²⁶ This family, as Sylvestre Ramsaran comments, is faced with the prospect of becoming métisse, through his son's relationship with Hosannah Taillefer, 'une câpresse, pas Indienne pour deux sous' (Traversée, p. 143).

The other prominent family in Rivière au Sel is the Lameaulnes family, who is itself mulatto. Loulou, the father, is half-white and half-black, and his daughter Mira, 'une chabine dorée' (Traversée, p. 48), is the illegitimate child of a young 'négresse noire', Rosalie Sorane, with whom Loulou had a brief affair. Mira's stepmother, Dinah, is also métisse, the daughter of a mulatto mother from the Dutch part of the neighbouring island of St. Martin, and an Indonesian student whom she met in Paris. One of Loulou's sons from his first marriage, to a woman named Aurore whose origin we are never told, is Aristide, the half-brother with whom

²⁶ This is perhaps one of the most innovative representations in Traversée de la mangrove, as far as both Antillean writing in general, and Condé's writing in particular are concerned, for the presence of East Indian Guadeloupeans is not well documented within the Antillean literary tradition. We learn, for example, how Carmélien, rejected by Mira Lameaulnes because she sees him primarily as a 'kouli malaba', and ashamed of his ignorance of events in India itself, when his fellow students in Bordeaux assume that he is 'un Indien des Indes', has constantly felt equally as dispossessed of his cultural origins as any black Guadeloupean descended from African slaves. As Léocadie Timothée, the schoolteacher remarks, not only do most Guadeloupean families have relatives in France, 'en métropole', not only are Africa and America seen as important places to visit but, at the same time, 'les Zindiens retournent se baigner dans l'eau de leur fleuve' (Traversée, p. 148). Exceptions to this erasure of the Guadeloupean Indian experience may be found both in the recent work of Ernest Moutoussamy (for example, his Aurore, published in 1987) and, of course, in that of Jacqueline Manicom, who is herself half Indian and whose Madévie, the heroine of Mon Examen de blanc, is of East Indian origin. Her other novel, La Graine: journal d'une sage femme, is in fact also a novel about the métissage of society, about the treatment which poor women of all racial origins receive at a Paris clinic.

Mira has been having an 'incestuous' relationship for some time. What is significant about this community's métissage, however, 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, the community of Rivière au Sel, obsessively working to keep separate the various strata of the village, has hitherto defined itself largely in terms of 'appartenance'. That is, it has been entirely invested in the divisive strategies of the system of the Same, and it is only with the arrival of Sancher that this community moves from one mode of definition to another, that it begins to become defined in terms of 'alliance' rather than 'appartenance', in terms of links rather than exclusions.

Sancher, whom we eventually discover to be a literal 'métis', 'un mulâtre foncé' is of mysterious and uncertain origins (Traversée, p. 159). Indeed, for the schoolteacher Léocadie Timothée, he epitomises the métissage which is already at work in their community. As she comments, seemingly drawing a comparison between the métissage of Rivière au Sel and that of Sancher:

Vraiment, ce pays-là est à l'encan. Il appartient à tout le monde à présent. Des métros, toutes qualités de Blancs venus du Canada ou de l'Italie, des Vietnamiens, et puis celui-là, vomé par on ne sait quel mauvais porteur, qui s'est installé parmi nous. (Traversée p. 147)

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 Sancher is having a relationship with Mira Lameaulnes, and is visited by her father Loulou. Loulou comes to implore Sancher to treat his daughter as he feels her status as mulatto

demands. He phrases his request by appealing to what he perceives to be their common ancestry as mulattoes, and thus tells Sancher:

Nous appartenons au même camp. Dans les livres d'histoire, on appelle nos ancêtres les Découvreurs... nous n'avons rien de commun avec ces Nègres à tête grinnée, ces cultivateurs qui ont toujours manié le coutelas ou conduit le cabrouet à boeufs pour notre compte. (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'. He can be seen to be invested not in such a notion of 'appartenance', but instead in one of 'alliance', as he builds links with many, if not most, of the culturally and racially disparate members of the village community: with Moïse, despised by the Lameaulnes family for whom his Chinese mother used to work; with Dodose Pélagie, separated from her black, peasant background by her disastrous marriage to the social climber Emmanuel Pélagie; with Rosa Ramsaran who, as we shall see later, has been separated from her daughter Vilma by her own inherited, but now inadequate, Indian traditions; and with countless other villagers, all suffering to a greater or lesser extent from their inadequate relations with the rest of the community.

When the community comes together around his body, to tell of their particular relationship to him, it is therefore but a literal manifestation of the way in which Sancher has served, since his arrival in Rivière au Sel, to bring together the members of a community hitherto separated from each other. That is, they become linked, however indistinctly, via their relationship with him.²⁷ His is, it would seem, and as several critics have already pointed out,

²⁷ That this communal gathering takes place around Sancher's body is particularly significant because, as Patrick Chamoiseau has pointed out, the wake is 'at the heart of our history and culture, of our memory'. The wake is a powerful, Antillean cultural space because it was one of the few places at which slaves were able to gather 'without

the literal 'death of the hero', for his death apparently works to unite rather than to efface an entire community.²⁸ 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, or so it would initially seem, is one which moves - as Rosello recommends - from the all-effacing, 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'.²⁹ 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 re-focussing upon

spreading the fear that they were plotting to revolt or to burn down a plantation' (Patrick Chamoiseau, 'Reflections on Maryse Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove*', p. 391). It is thus the Antillean communal space *par excellence*, the space in which, as Condé puts it: 'people who are not heroes, who are just ordinary men and women, and whose life seems totally meaningless' were able to come together (Mohamed B. Taleb-Khyer, 'An Interview with Maryse Condé and Rita Dove', *Callaloo*, 14, 1991 (pp. 347-366), p. 357).

²⁸ See, for example, Danielle Kormos, 'A propos de *La Traversée de la mangrove*'; Michael Lucey, 'Voices Accounting for the Past: Maryse Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove*', in Condé, ed., *L'Héritage de Caliban*, pp. 103-110; Delphine Perret, 'L'écriture mosaïque de *Traversée de la mangrove*', in Condé, ed., *L'Héritage de Caliban*, pp. 187-200 and Françoise Lionnet, '*Traversée de la mangrove* de Maryse Condé: vers un nouvel humanisme antillais?', *The French Review*, 66 (1993), pp. 475-486.

²⁹ Cailler, 'Edouard Glissant: A Creative Critic', p. 592.

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 self-serving 'heroism' of a Cragget, or even of a Delgrès, is not, in fact, without precedent within 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. This figure is 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, torn between two conflicting identities, is still trapped within the 'tragic mulatto' paradigm. In fact, Cragget's situation itself emerges, in part, out of the rigid stratification of Pâline society, for this is a community which, predating that of Rivière au Sel, is much more manifestly divided between the various racial groups of which it is made up: between the békés, the black workers and, with the arrival of Philippe, 'les blancs de France'. Jab-Herma himself is very black, thoroughly connected both to Africa and its traditions, and to the land and people of Guadeloupe. Indeed, as well as being Sougès' chauffeur he is the village quimboiseur, and it is in this double capacity that he acts as a link figure between the disparate sections of his community. When the inhabitants of the House are trying to solve the mystery of the crimes, for example, it is to Jab-Herma that they turn, for: 'certains faits étaient connus dans le salon, d'autres, dans le village, et [Jab-Herma] 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 link with Sougès, at one end of the community, in fact goes far beyond that of employer and employee, for they grew up together after Sougès was nursed by Jab-Herma's mother, and were separated only when Sougès inherited Pâline. It is for this reason that Jab-Herma is now Sougès' chauffeur, and it is for this reason also that Sougès feels able to call upon him when he needs information about events in the village. As Sougès is aware, Jab-Herma's position as quimboiseur guarantees that it is in him that the villagers confide. However, as we eventually learn, 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 itself. It is for this reason that it is to him that Clarine turns when she is contemplating crossing the bridge to Tirêha. It is for this reason, too, that Jab-Herma feels responsible when Clarine is killed on the bridge, for she undertakes the journey only after she has found the fetish in Philippe's room, convinced of the protection that it will afford her.

It becomes evident at this point that Jab-Herma's own belief in his powers as quimboiseur is waning. As he comments to himself: 'cette mort, il l'avait annoncée sans trop y croire: un peu de foi et je me serais montré plus autoritaire et plus convaincant. Le doute lui reprit: un fétiche pour empêcher une mort?' (Jab-Herma, p. 69). That night, as 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 realise that though he has lost, through his own non-belief, his magical power as quimboiseur, he has by no means lost his power over the community of Pâline. He becomes aware that his own lack of belief matters little, for everyone else in the village, including Constant Sougès, either believes in, or fears, his 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. Importantly, however, this is 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 they believe in Delgrès. As Zimra points out Jab-Herma, crucially, 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'.³⁰ 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 reaches a decision about the future of Pâline.

Philippe decides that it will be necessary for the Company either to destroy the Sougès ancestral home in order to build a new factory, or to close the plantation altogether. Sougès is thus faced with a decision which entails choosing between his own personal ruin, or allowing the sugar company to close the plantation and thereby put the entire village out of work (Jab-Herma, pp. 215-6). When Jab-Herma is told about the Company's decision for Pâline, despite

³⁰ Zimra, 'Righting the Calabash', p. 155.

being sworn to secrecy, he hurries to tell the villagers that Philippe may be going to close the factory. In so doing, he prevents Sougès from making a decision on behalf of the workers: he uses his position on the borders between the disparate sections of a community in order to mobilise 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.³¹

The power of Jab-Herma is one recognised also by Philippe, who resolves to include him in his plans for Pâline for the very reason that he is a figure who usefully inhabits borders. As he therefore remarks towards the end of the text: 'Jab-Herma représenterait le village, un chef pour qui l'occulte était une stratégie, rien du sorcier traditionnel, ce serait le meilleur intermédiaire' (Jab-Herma, p. 253). Philippe decides that he will continue to deploy Jab-Herma as literal go-between, and plans to set up a recruitment office in which Jab-Herma will work, mediating once more the relationship between workers and owners. Jab-Herma, for his part, 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 co-operation

³¹ Jab-Herma's position as 'figure métis' is, in fact, one also 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 is aware that the ancient beliefs which the workers desperately trust are themselves no longer effective in the present, 'post-colonial' situation. Instead of rejecting them entirely - or, rather, rejecting the villagers' belief in them - he chooses instead to use their belief as a strategy of resistance, to move the entire community forward. Jab-Herma 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).

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. Amongst the final images of the text, therefore, is that of Philippe telling the villagers: 'vous m'avez adopté; ce pays est maintenant le mien; croyez que je n'oublierai pas...' (Jab-Herma, p. 250). Equally, we see Jab-Herma pointing towards the House and declaring: 'Cela est le passé. Seul l'avenir compte' (Jab-Herma, p. 253). By the end of the novel, Jab-Herma has himself come to represent the future: the text thus ends with Philippe, having announced his plans officially to Sougès, shouting: 'faites entrer Jab-Herma' (Jab-Herma, p. 254).

It is these final words, however, and their focus upon the future, which betray a fundamental 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 himself 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, like Cragget, he proceeds to act primarily in order to relieve himself of the personal burden of guilt and humiliation associated with 'his' crime. It is the weight of this crime which paralyses him so completely that he, again 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 that, like the inadequacies of Cragget as traditional heroic figure, they may be indicative instead 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, community-effacing hero. As useful as Rosello's refiguration of the heroic role may be, it remains, undeniably, a heroic role. As we have seen, it is a role, too, in which a single individual has the means to undertake 'radical' acts, acts which turn out - in this case at least - to be undertaken precisely for a community, and which, in a manner quite similar to that of the traditional hero, deprive that community of the means of acting for itself.

From 'figure métis' to 'communauté métisse'

If the figure of Sancher does not 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, however, there is a mystery which surrounds Xantippe, and one, too, which is never entirely solved. Although we learn early in the text that he took refuge in the woods at Christmas several years ago, when his wife and four children were burnt to death as their house caught fire, he remains, for most of the villagers, simply 'un pauvre bougre à la tête fêlée' (Traversée, p. 82).

Xantippe is a figure who preoccupies Sancher as he repeatedly glimpses him during their parallel wanderings through the woods. In fact, it soon becomes evident that Sancher's preoccupation with Xantippe is motivated primarily by fear: it is specifically to him that Sancher's sense of foreboding about death is linked. In Xantippe's own narrative we learn why: 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, for along with Sancher himself, he is the only figure to be present in the narrative of every one of the

villagers. Indeed, it is here that his wider importance within Condé's text begins to become apparent.

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 Xantippe himself goes on to explain: '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, if not indeed implied in: 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, a 'crime' which he remembers because he himself is its hero, the archetypal 'neg mawon'. He explains how, after the fire, he was able to become 'neg mawon' because he had been brought up amongst the trees and plants of the woods - 'nos amis depuis l'Afrique' (Traversée, p. 255) - and was therefore able to take refuge there. As Xantippe's narrative progresses, however, we learn that it was he who named the trees and plants of Guadeloupe. Indeed, his entire narrative goes on to read like a tale of creation as, with a quotation from Césaire's Cahier, he describes how he named also the rocks and 'les ravines, sexes grands ouverts' (Traversée, p. 255). With yet more evocations of the negritude tradition - as well as of the origin myths of both Ti Jean l'horizon and Les Cahiers de Djéré - Xantippe describes how the world in which the villagers live is one '[qui] est sorti de [s]es reins dans une giclée de foutre', and of how he planted the earth like his father and his grandfather in order that 'la terre [lui] donnait tous les trésors de son ventre' (Traversée, pp. 255-6). At the same time, like the hero of negritude, Xantippe 'planted'

children in the womb of Gracieuse, 'négresse noire', children who, once more in the way of origin myths, were born sometimes two at a time.

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 or 'founding' position in the text. He is never posited, nor does he posit himself, as an alternative 'heroic' figure to Sancher. Rather, he effaces himself from the origin, remaining at all times present in the narratives of the villagers, but barely perceptible, as a figure in the background 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 points out, the figure of the 'new' Negator is one who 'yields his leadership position' not only to the people but, more specifically, to 'the people as makers of history and literature'.³²

As each villager completes his or her narrative, what we begin to see in Traversée de la mangrove 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.³³ 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

³² Cailler, 'Edouard Glissant: A Creative Critic', p. 589. Emphasis mine.

³³ Cailler, *ibid.*, p. 592.

consolidator of these communal relationships, is the more radical operation of what may be called, after Glissant, 'la poétique de la Relation'.³⁴

This is a term which, as Cailler explains, is part of Glissant's own attempts to redefine the 'heroic' role in the Antilles, and he uses it to describe the forging of 'multiple relationships between people' which occur, as they do in Condé's text, 'within the same culture and across cultures'.³⁵ 'La Relation' is, as Barbara Webb also explains, a name for 'the dynamics of identity and difference in the complex interrelationships of cultures'.³⁶ However, what is most significant as far as Condé's text is concerned, is the way in which Glissant imagines these interrelationships to be produced: via 'what is related (in the sense of being narrated)'.³⁷ Not only is this significant because, as we have seen, Condé's text is made up of the disparate narratives 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 chœur 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

³⁴ See the section entitled 'Poétique de la Relation' in Glissant's Le Discours antillais, pp. 246-254, as well as his later work Poétique de la Relation (Paris: Gallimard, 1990).

³⁵ Bernadette Cailler, 'Creolisation versus Francophonie: Language, identity and culture in the works of Edouard Glissant', in Condé, ed., L'Héritage de Caliban, pp. 49-62 (p. 55).

³⁶ Barbara Webb, Myth and History in Caribbean Fiction (Amherst: Massachusetts University Press, 1992), p. 22.

³⁷ Cailler, 'Creolisation versus Francophonie', p. 55.

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 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 - the forgotten crime of Sancher, or the story of Xantippe himself - 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).³⁸ 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 another writer in Rivière au Sel: that of Emile Etienne. Though Etienne is called 'l'historien' by the villagers, his planned text, as he in fact tells Sancher, will be the very antithesis of traditional History, of what he remembers, from school, as 'les tristes leçons d'histoire, le défilé monotone des batailles perdues, gagnées' (Traversée, p. 249). Instead, it will be:

³⁸ As Vilma Ramsaran remarks in her narrative, herself commenting upon what has brought them together at Sancher's wake: 'nos anciens disaient bien que la mort n'est qu'un pont jeté entre les êtres, une passerelle qui les rapproche sur laquelle ils se rencontrent à mi-chemin pour se chuchoter ce qu'ils n'ont pas pu se confier' (Traversée p. 206, emphasis mine).

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)³⁹

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.

What begins to become evident as Condé's text progresses, is that if there is a recoverable origin of Antillean history at all - and here, as in Ti Jean l'horizon or Les Derniers rois mages, that origin is clearly slavery, the 'ancestral crime' which haunts Rivière au Sel - it is an origin which is neither single nor simple. As Glissant points out, and as the narratives of Traversée de la mangrove make abundantly clear, slavery is not simply the story of the transportation of a people to a different land, nor simply that of resisting, maroon heroes like Ti Jean, Delgrès, or Xantippe. Rather, it tells of the creation of a new people, of the transformation of disparate peoples into 'une nouvelle donnée du monde... un autre peuple' (Discours antillais, p. 28). As such, it is inevitably a story which is made up, like Traversée de

³⁹ Condé herself, in her interview with Taleb-Khyer, has set up a similar distinction between the writing of 'History' - in which she feels she was caught up in her earlier novels like Ségou - and the writing of 'the memory of so many communities' (Taleb-Khyer, 'An Interview with Maryse Condé and Rita Dove', p. 357). While History, for Condé, is a 'rational organisation of facts' which lead to a coherent meaning, memory, she explains, is something quite different: 'memory is something totally disorganised; there's no rule, there's no order. It comes from all corners, and builds up, and you have to find meaning in the complexity of things. Also memory is not made only of the things which are supposed to be important. Memory is made up of a lot of trivialities, a lot of unnecessary things' (Taleb-Khyer, p. 357).

la mangrove, of many stories: it is 'une tresse d'histoires'⁴⁰, 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': like the Antillean people, Antillean history is métisse. What has been effaced by 'the West' is not simply Antillean history but also, and more damagingly, its diversity.⁴¹

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' (Discours antillais, p. 190). 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

⁴⁰ 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.

⁴¹ Of course, Glissant is by no means the only theorist to point out the exclusions inherent in dominant models of history. Numerous Western, and particularly poststructuralist, theorists - with whose work that of Glissant has many affinities generally - have interrogated 'History' in similar terms. See, for example, Derek Attridge, Geoff Bennington and Robert Young, eds., Poststructuralism and the Question of History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Johannes Fabian, Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Tejaswini Niranjana, Siting Translation: History, Poststructuralism and the Colonial Context (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins, 1973) and Robert Young, White Mythologies, op. cit.

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' (Discours antillais, pp. 11-12).⁴²

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', but in terms of 'alliance', as they build, however tentatively, 'a new sense of community, no longer based solely on the principle of filiation, [but] envisioned as a bridge across cultures'.⁴³ It is, moreover, this reimagined sense

⁴² 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 recognises 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).

⁴³ Webb, Myth and History in Caribbean Fiction, p. 25.

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, linked thoroughly 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. (Discours antillais, p. 18)

It is this notion of 'becoming Antillean', of assuming an identity based on métissage rather than on filiation, which brings us back to the text of 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 people (significantly in Créole), 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 qui a kimbwazé deux de nos plus belles jeunesses', and others that he was 'un vagabond qui est venu enterrer sa pourriture chez nous! On ne sait même pas si c'était un Blanc, un Nègre, un Zindien. Il avait tous les sangs dans son corps' (Traversée, p. 243). Crucially, Quentin will never discover the 'truth' for, as we have seen to be the case of other Antillean bâtards, no truth exists for him to discover. 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 revitalised 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. As he tells Man Sonson, who asks him like many in the village to marry Mira and to legitimate his child:

Il ne faut même pas qu'elle garde cet enfant. Je le lui ai dit depuis le début... Je ne suis pas venu ici pour planter des enfants et les regarder marcher sur cette terre. Je suis venu mettre un point final, terminer, oui, terminer une race maudite. Et lui est là qui me guette. (Traversée, p. 94)

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. Indeed, this should come as no surprise given that Sancher, entirely oriented towards the past and paralysed by his own genealogy, is himself

positioned squarely within those same discourses of filiation: those discourses of heroism and individualism which characterise the realm of 'le Même'.

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, of Mira herself. In so doing, Sancher effaces both the role of Mira in reproduction, and her relationship with her child.⁴⁴ 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. That is, they are discourses 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.⁴⁵ Genealogy is essentially paternal: the maternal role and the maternal line of filiation is lost.

⁴⁴ This is even more manifest in Sancher's treatment of Dinah, the step-mother of Mira, when she also falls in love with him and finally becomes pregnant. Sancher tricks her into drinking a herbal tea which weakens her, and then another which sends her to sleep. While she is asleep, he aborts her with a knitting needle, and in order to explain his actions, he tells her almost exactly what he had told Mira: 'il ne faut pas que cet enfant-là ouvre ses yeux au jour. Il ne faut pas. Un signe est sur lui, comme sur moi. Il vivra une vie de malheurs et pour finir, il mourra comme un chien, comme je vais bientôt mourir. Si je suis venu ici, c'est pour en finir. Boucler la boucle. Tirer le trait final, tu comprends. Revenir à la case départ et tout arrêter' (*Traversée*, p. 115).

⁴⁵ Thus, in *Traversée*, when Loulou comes to Sancher and appeals to their common ancestry, he does so in predictable terms, telling him: 'nos ancêtres les Découvreurs... ont sali leur sang avec des Nègresses; dans ton cas je crois aussi avec des Indiennes' (*Traversée*, pp. 133-4). For him, as for Sancher, his lineage is unreservedly male. Significantly, in *Demain Jab-Herma*, both Pilou and Clarine, sacrificed for an heroic ideal, die at least partly because of what Cragget sees to be their 'shameful' implication in métissage. He killed Clarine 'pour punir Elisa de l'avoir mis au monde... il avait senti qu'il tuait sa propre mère', that he was punishing her for her part in his tragic miscegenation. Pilou, he killed 'comme une soeur', because she had 'le même idéal, le même désir de rejoindre l'Autre' (*Jab-Herma*, p. 245).

Thus the traditional constructions of métissage which these discourses have inevitably produced, and in which Sanher 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.⁴⁶ 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' (Lionnet, p. 12). 'Le Même' is also patriarchy, its discourses of unity, of origins and of binary divisions are also those of phallogocentrism.

⁴⁶ Lionnet, Autobiographical Voices, pp. 9-11.

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 filiation - 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. While the community at large in Rivière au Sel has suffered - in Glissant's terms - from the systematic Historical effacement of their Diversity, of the radical potential of their métissage, at the same time the women of the community have suffered from the kind of effacement that Sancher attempts to impose upon Mira. As we have seen, however, the community refuses to allow itself 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 would necessarily 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.⁴⁷ 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.

⁴⁷ 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 Wadamba over Awa, and as that of Sancher over Dinah, as well as of that of History over communal memories.

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, as foreigner, 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, that they will prove Sancher's guilt and seek revenge for his 'crimes'. Aristide, for example, jealous that another man has stolen his sister-lover, feels initially a desire to beat Mira herself, 'en lui rappelant toute la honte que cet homme-là avait apportée sur son nom et celui de la famille' (*Traversée*, p. 69). Eventually, however, he decides that he must avenge her, and attempts several times to have Sancher arrested. He is each time unsuccessful, however, and is left disappointed when Sancher finally dies without his intervention. This, too, is the case for Carmélien, who is at once the sister of Vilma and in love with Mira, and who similarly promises himself that he will seek revenge on Sancher on their behalf.

It is clear, however, that this desire to avenge Mira and Vilma - especially given the interest of many other of the men of Rivière au Sel, is by no means motivated only by individual jealousy, or by concern for Mira and Vilma 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 of paternal genealogies, as 'pollutors' or 'guardians' of the purity of those 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 itself. 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'.⁴⁸ 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 the fact 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

⁴⁸ Lionnet, Autobiographical Voices, p. 11. It is also this kind of discourse which, in Demain Jab-Herma, governs the life of the békée Joëlle, paralysed by her role as Sougès's wife, a role which allows her no possibility of independent action. When she does attempt to act independently of Sougès - significantly by suddenly dying her hair blond, like that of Philippe - Sougès assumes that she has done it in order to seduce Philippe. This suspicion is, he thinks, confirmed when she tells him that she is leaving, for he assumes that it is with Philippe, and forbids it. He reasons that if she leaves, his position at Pâline will be in even greater jeopardy, for if he is seen to have no authority in his marriage, then it will be assumed that he similarly has no authority at Pâline. Joëlle comes to represent for Constant everything that he feels he is in danger of losing, and must therefore protect from the arrival of the outsider Philippe.

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 himself 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 to return home in shame and humiliation, to return to their fathers' houses so that he might afford the protection necessary in the absence of Sancher. As Mira herself makes clear:

Mon père s'imagine qu'après ce malheur dont le Bon Dieu a été généreux, je baisserai les yeux devant lui et passerai mes jours dans l'expiation. Je deviendrai un zombie à la table des repas, mettant la main sur la bouche de mon enfant pour étouffer sa voix. (Traversée, p. 245)

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'). Vilma tells of her father's recent decision, transmitted to her by her mother, that she is to be married - to the financial advantage of her family - to a local businessman, 'un chabin triste' named Marius Vindrex (Traversée p. 198). It is with this news that Vilma decides to take action, to challenge her father's attempts to sell her by devaluing herself as goods to be sold. Having seen Sancher and found him attractive, she goes to his house on the pretext of asking for work: within a week they are lovers, and soon she is pregnant.

In a similar manner, first from Sancher and then in the narrative of Mira herself, we learn not of rape but of desire, for when Aristide finally goes to confront Sancher, the latter tells him: 'je ne lui ai pas dit de venir. C'est elle qui est venue. Je ne la retiens pas. Au contraire' (Traversée, p. 74). When Loulou himself then persists in demanding that Sancher pay for what he has done, Sancher tells him not only that he was not the first, that 'un autre s'était largement frayé le passage' (Traversée, p. 74) - which, of course, Aristide himself knows - but that far from him asking or even forcing Mira, 'c'est elle qui s'est offerte' (Traversée, p. 75). It is at this point that Sancher turns to Mira, and that she begins to speak for herself, to tell them what happened, and here yet another version of events ensues, for it becomes obvious that Mira did much more than simply 'offer' herself, or allow herself to be 'taken'. She tells first of 'le goût du mal, du défendu', which led her to begin having sex with her brother, Aristide: although for him it was he who committed incest with her, it transpires that it was in fact mutually desired (Traversée, p. 56). She tells next of how, having found her relationship with Aristide unsatisfying, she decided to satisfy her desire by 'seducing' Sancher when they met, by chance, at the ravine:

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. Significantly, her vision of the future is one in which women are not sacrificed or effaced for the benefit of the liberation of a community which is masculine. Rather, she imagines her own future at the same time, and 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. She is part of the radicality of asserted métissage, instead of

constituting merely the instrument of its achievement, as is the case with the other discourses of liberation - those based in some way on filiation - that we have hitherto examined. 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, it becomes evident, moreover, that women's involvement in métissage, like that of the community as a whole, does not take place only at this quite literal level. That is, Mira's actions do not stop at reclaiming her role both in reproduction and in métissage by giving birth to, and claiming as her own, children like Quentin who are literally 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 community but, as we shall see, 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.⁴⁹ It is at once the communal and the feminine texts - manifestations, both, of the Diversity which has been covered over - which are

⁴⁹ 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). This is true also of Daniel Maximin's L'Isolé soleil (Paris: Seuil, 1991), a novel in which the story of Delgrès is once more evoked and explored, but in order precisely to interrogate what is at stake in the Antillean investment in it, and to suggest a way in which Antillean history may be remembered differently. While the story of Delgrès remains almost entirely in the background, the disparate memories of an entire community, and especially those of the heroine, Marie-Gabriel, come to the fore.

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.⁵⁰ 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 female 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. In Traversée de la mangrove, it is the female narratives which in fact enable the communal narratives to come together, which allow the community to become linked together via narrative. 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-Herma⁵¹ - but they

⁵⁰ The only exception is the child Joby who, significantly, is the brother of Mira and the uncle of Quentin.

⁵¹ Within and alongside the larger 'heroic' plot about the search for Delgrès, Jab-Herma is also made up multiple, and muted, subplots which turn around the position of various classes of women. As well as that of 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

actually move it forward, they are the condition of existence of the communal text of métissage.

Indeed, the entire text is actually mediated by female 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 individual male narratives themselves open with the direct speech of a female member of their family. The masculine, communal narrative is thus itself mediated by and through the active, first-person female narrative which makes up the rest of the text. However, most crucially, just as Mira refuses to allow herself to be erased by/within the discourse of communal liberation, so the female 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 female text is predominantly the site of female self-invention. The female, 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.

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 far from the empty-headed arriviste that was Capécia's Mayotte. 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 much more clearly the position of women in Condé's text.

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 the same events are recounted from two perspectives. In a manner which recalls the mother-daughter relationships depicted in Condé's first two novels, we learn from both women of the way in which they have become separated and alienated from one another, how this alienation has been transmitted from mother to daughter, and how it has led directly to Vilma's attempts at revolt within the text of *Traversée de la mangrove*. We learn, for example, how Rosa was married to Sylvestre through an arranged marriage, and how she gave birth to three sons whose charge he immediately took from her. Her desire for a daughter which she could claim entirely as her own then sent her to Man Sonson, whose herbal drinks and baths eventually led to the birth of Shireen. However, the child died three months later, and when she gave birth to Vilma, shortly after, she found herself incapable of loving her as she had Shireen. Like the relationship of Véronica or of Marie-Hélène to their mothers, Vilma has been separated, since birth, from her mother.

It is therefore 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.⁵² As we learn from Vilma's own narrative, Rosa hands down to her daughter the same advice that she received from her mother, advice received also by generations of women before her:

⁵² As if to ensure that these arranged marriages are seen to be part of a wider problem of patriarchy, and not of specifically Indian restrictions, we learn also of Dodose Pélagie, another victim of an arranged marriage which went wrong. At fifteen, the death of her father having left her mother and siblings in poverty, she is forced to marry Emmanuel Pélagie, 'Directeur du Centre de Recherches Agronomiques et Fruitières de la Guadeloupe', and a black, pseudo-independentist. Now, after years of mistreatment and unhappiness, she - like several of the women of Rivière au Sel - decides to leave her husband, and looks forward to a future on her own.

'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 is faced with the prospect of being forced to return to her father's house, and she therefore looks for another method of rebellion - this time against the expected position of shame and repentance. Apparently paradoxically, given her rebellion against the traditional maternal advice passed on to her about marriage, it is to those same traditions, inherited from her Indian ancestors, that she now turns for inspiration in order to manifest her resistance. Her narrative begins and ends with her wish that she could 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.⁵³ 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 and informative 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' (Spivak, p. 302). 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' (Spivak, p. 297). 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 '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' (Spivak, p. 306). More specifically, it is within this space that female desire disappears, for the counter-narrative of sati as resistance - given that sati means

⁵³ 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.

'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 realises 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 and stories of her mother's life: first as she remembers her, working in her husband's shop and then, going back in time, to her life as a student in Amsterdam. She tells

of how her mother, pregnant with her, was called home in disgrace to the island of St. Martin by her father who then married her to the first prosperous businessman to present himself. A widower, with five children, '[il] la fit beaucoup souffrir' (*Traversée*, p. 108), and for this reason she was quick to warn Dinah herself against marrying Loulou Lameaulnes and taking care of his own 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. Instead, she has been forced to watch her distress from afar, until learning that she had gone to live with the very man with whom Dinah herself was in love. 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 her from her daughter:

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 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 'legitimise' 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, seeking to distance herself further from the family from which she feels irremediably alienated. She tells how, long before her relationship with Aristide, she had gained sensual pleasure from that which was forbidden - bathing in 'la Ravine'. She explains how, hidden in the woods, 'je me glissais dans l'eau qui pénétrait, brûlante de la chaleur du soleil de la journée, jusque dans les profondeurs de mon corps. Je tressaillais sous cet attouchement brutal' (Traversée, p. 51).

As her narrative progresses, however, it becomes evident that the forbidden pleasure which Mira derives from her visits to the ravine is one which is quite specific, and which is linked precisely to her dead mother. Her wanderings in the woods are in fact prolonged searches for her mother, and for a connection with her, for like Marie-Hélène and like Véronica Mira reverses the masculine quest both and goes in search of her lost mother:

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 to restore, in some manner, a broken link with her maternal ancestry and she is 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. More than this, hers is a reconnection, it would seem, which allows her to be part of, rather than effaced by, the new discourse of communal liberation that is métissage. As we have seen throughout this and previous chapters, theories of liberation hitherto developed by the intellectuals and activists of the Antillean 'tradition', and the stories remembered by those Antillean writers of fiction desirous of reclaiming Antillean history, have typically been masculine and masculinist. That is, they have typically been premised upon a founding erasure of woman. 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 Négrresse 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'imaginai 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 Pélégie comments at the end of her narrative: 'voici venu le temps de mon re-commencement' (*Traversée*, p. 225, emphasis mine). 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 imagine 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.⁵⁴ Within *Traversée de la mangrove*, however, this possibility 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

⁵⁴ Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices*, p. 9.

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.

Five

Narratives of Enslavement and Liberation: Finding a 'Mothers tongue'

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 to rewrite, as its title suggests, dominant historical narratives on the Salem witch trials of seventeenth-century New England. At the same time, however - and crucially - it is concerned with exploring various historical portrayals of slavery and, more especially, of resistance to it. It is in this respect that the second text to be examined here, Dany Bébel-Gisler's Léonora, l'histoire enfouie de la Guadeloupe², resembles that of Tituba. Léonora is a text which deals, as do Condé's earlier Heremakhonon and Une Saison à Rihata, with the contemporary Antillean experience of the legacy of slavery and, more specifically, with the contemporary Guadeloupean experience of the relationship of economic exploitation which has continued to exist between France and Guadeloupe. Indeed, Léonora describes a period in Guadeloupean history which begins with the movement towards mechanisation 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 organised forms of resistance to contemporary exploitation.

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).

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 provides a clue to yet another project of both 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 themselves, but which may be seen to be the tradition par excellence of 'marginal' history-writing: that of slave narrative. It is thus with a quite detailed examination of this tradition that this chapter will begin, before turning to explore the ways in which two contemporary texts from Guadeloupe have made use of it and for what reasons.

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. Indeed their popularity grew precisely from the fact that they were personalised accounts of slavery, that they told of the institution of slavery as it was experienced, first-hand, by the slave him or (more rarely) herself. Slave narratives were usually written down after having been narrated by the ex-slave at meetings

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), pp. 69-81 (pp. 71-2).

arranged by white abolitionists, abolitionists who subsequently sponsored the publication of the narratives, or wrote up the narratives themselves, in a bid to expose the system of slavery and to further the abolitionist cause. They 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.⁴ In order to guarantee that they were truthful accounts of slavery, the narratives were bound, as several critics have made clear, by thematic conventions and a formulaic structure. Each narrative was designed, and could therefore be accepted, as simply 'a personal variation on the general theme'.⁵ As James Olney explains:

The writer of a slave narrative finds himself in an irresolvably tight bind as a result of the very intention and premise of his narrative, which is to give a picture of 'slavery as it is'... To give a true picture of slavery as it really is, he must maintain that he exercises a clear-glass, neutral memory that is neither creative nor faulty... Thus the ex-slave narrator is debarred from use of a memory that would make anything of his narrative beyond or other than the purely, merely episodic.⁶

Prologues and epilogues, written by the white sponsor or patron were, for example, a conventional manner of 'proving' the veracity of the narrative, as was the narrative's frontispiece. This, typically, bore a drawing or photograph of the narrator, to accompany the narrative's title, a

⁴ The most often cited slave narrative is Frederick Douglass' My Bondage and My Freedom. Part 1 - Life as a Slave. Part 2 - Life as a Freeman (New York: Miller, Orton and Mulligan, 1855). As Sidonie Smith points out, one of the fundamental aspects of Douglass' narrative is precisely his analysis of the institution of slavery, and of its effects on white and black communities alike (Sidonie Smith, Where I'm Bound: Patterns of Slavery and Freedom in Black American Autobiography, London: Greenwood Press, 1974, p. 120).

⁵ Smith, Where I'm Bound, p. 13. As John Sekora explains, 'the abolitionist design for both lectures and narratives was... to explain slavery to an ignorant audience, not to chart an individual life' (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), p. 109). On the way in which slave narratives were seen primarily as depictions of the institution of slavery, rather than of 'the intellectual, emotional, moral growth of the narrator', see 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. 148-175 (p. 154). See also Davies and Gates' introduction to this volume, p. xxiii.

⁶ Olney, "'I was born'", p. 150.

title made up of the name of the ex-slave and, often, of a statement of his or her occupation. The narrative itself then began - and here Man Sonson's 'Moi, petite négresse noire, née à Rivière au Sel' is recalled - with a statement of birth: 'I was born' followed by a naming of the place though not date of birth. The description of conventional scenes then typically follow: observations of whippings and hangings; the bravery of an exceptional (and, according to Olney, 'often pure African'⁷) slave who refuses punishment; the cruel master or mistress; descriptions of the hardships of daily life; attempts to escape, successful and unsuccessful; the final adoption of a new surname upon gaining freedom, as well as the obligatory comments upon the institution of slavery.

Despite these conventions, however - and despite frequent abolitionist attempts to manipulate to their own ends these early attempts at marginal history-writing⁸ - slave narrative nonetheless represented for the narrator a manner of tracing an individual history, a marginal version of that 'perennial favourite among American literary themes' - the quest for selfhood.⁹ Conventions which for an abolitionist audience guaranteed the authenticity of the narrative as

⁷ Olney, *ibid.*, p. 153.

⁸ The frequent practice of ghostwriting was one which often had serious consequences upon what was recorded and what was left out of the narrative. Unbeknown to the illiterate narrator, material was routinely reorganised and deselected by the ghostwriter, whose primary motivation was to bring about the abolition of slavery. Events were rearranged, 'repetitive' descriptions cut out, and the language of the ex-slave's narrative - whether entirely ghostwritten or simply 'edited' - was equally routinely modified, replaced, or 'translated' from African-American English into standard English, ostensibly for the sake of the approval of a 'wider audience' (see Miriam DeCosta-Willis, 'Self and Society in the Afro-Cuban Slave Narrative', *Latin American Literary Review*, 16, 1988, (pp. 6-15), p. 11).

⁹ Molly Abel Travis, 'Speaking from the Silence of the Slave Narrative', p. 72. It is for this reason that many critics have seen in slave narrative one of the origins of the African-American tradition of autobiography as it exists today, a tradition in which personal history-making can indeed be seen to be intimately bound up with more general impulses to write marginal histories. This, despite the fact that so many critics of slave narrative have, in their preoccupation with deciding whether slave narrative is, or is not, autobiography, used its conventional and formulaic character to argue that it is in no way 'original' enough to constitute autobiography, 'the unique tale, uniquely told, of a unique life' (Olney, "I was born", p. 148). For Olney, despite acknowledging the reason for the conventional character of slave narrative, their 'rigidly fixed form' means that the narratives of ex-slaves, on the whole, bear 'much the same relationship to autobiography as painting by numbers bears to painting as a creative act' (Olney, *ibid.*, p. 150).

historical document, were for the slave narrator a fundamental aspect of a much more personal project. The medium of slave narrative can be seen, quite simply, to have represented for the narrator a means of recording and reliving a life-saving personal history of physical self-liberation from slavery. First, it can be seen, as by Smith, as a way of reaffirming the significance of the physical attainment of freedom. More specifically, however, it can be seen as a mode of gaining a second, 'spiritual' experience of freedom through writing.¹⁰ For Smith, as for others and as for theorists of autobiography in general, the act of writing becomes a mode of ordering and therefore gaining 'mastery' over chaotic past experience. 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, become not a hindrance to the 'autobiographical' process, but a crucial element in what Donald Wesling describes as the therapeutic importance of the impulse to 'claim and to order experience in personal narrative'.¹¹ The act of writing itself becomes a mode of 'self-liberation' - from what Smith calls 'the spiritual slavery of the past rather than the physical slavery of the South'.¹²

The act of writing slave narrative, however, can be seen to represent a form of liberation - both personal and collective - in a much more complex 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.¹³ As 'un gouverneur de la Martinique', quoted by Bébel-

¹⁰ Smith, Where I'm Bound, p.10.

¹¹ Donald Wesling, 'Writing as Power in the Slave Narrative of the Early Republic', Michigan Quarterly Review, 26 (1987), pp. 459-472 (p. 462).

¹² Smith, Where I'm Bound, p. 10.

¹³ See Davis and Gates, The Slave's Narrative, pp. xxiv-xxv on the penalties incurred for teaching a slave to read and write.

Gisler, is reported to have insisted: 'la sûreté des Blancs exige qu'on tienne les nègres dans la plus profonde ignorance'.¹⁴ Several commentators on slave narrative have suggested that the imperative here was, quite simply, to ensure that both the physical safety of whites and the economic profit of slaveowners were not put at risk. In other words, that access to literacy was dangerous because it meant that slaves were suddenly capable of conceptualising rebellion and escape, that they 'were able to think their freedom before they achieved it physically'.¹⁵ However, as we have seen previously and as we shall see in more detail later, slaves have always possessed their own, non-written forms of conceptualising and articulating their enslavement and their desire for freedom. It is thus more accurate to suggest that the real imperative was to ensure that 'la sûreté' of white dominance would not come under threat from the literacy of slaves.

As has been well documented, it was intrinsic to the colonial enterprise that colonised 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 'civilisation', with intellectual capacity, with humanity. It is this association which has had everything to do with the concomitant consignment of 'the Negro race', as speakers of 'non-written' languages, to the realm of non-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.¹⁶

¹⁴ Quoted in Dany Bébel-Gisler, Le Défi culturel guadeloupéen: devenir ce que nous sommes (Paris: Editions Caribéennes, 1989), p. 73.

¹⁵ Wesling, 'Writing as Power', p. 462.

¹⁶ Davies and Gates, The Slave's Narrative, p. xxviii.

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. That is, to continue to be constructed as a purely bodily 'thing' to be exploited.¹⁷ 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'. (*Le Défi*, p. 156)

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 (*Le Défi*, p. 191). At the same time as representing nothing but body, the slave is him or herself dispossessed of his or her own body: 'rien ne leur appartient, et surtout pas son corps' (*Le Défi*, p. 157), 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' (*Le Défi*, p. 72). 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 problematised 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.

¹⁷ See Davies and Gates, *ibid.*, p. xxx on what they term the 'thingness' of the slave.

The writing of slave narrative therefore represents nothing less than 'freedom from non-being',¹⁸ 'self-writing' in a quite literal way, a mode of 'healing the breach between... mind and... body created by slavery'.¹⁹ 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. Self-writing in this way can be described, as does Françoise Lionnet that of Zora Neale Hurston, as 'autoethnography', as an attempt at 'the defining of one's subjective ethnicity as mediated through language and history... a kind of "figural anthropology" of the self'.²⁰ It is a mode of writing oneself into history as subject of that history, rather than as subject to it.²¹

Such, as I pointed out initially, 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 racism... 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 "hodo"'. On ne

¹⁸ Olney, "I was born", p. 157.

¹⁹ Smith, Where I'm Bound, p. 109.

²⁰ Françoise Lionnet, Autobiographical Voices, p. 1989.

²¹ Of course, the position of those ex-slaves whose narratives were written for them, and were therefore subject to 'editing' and censorship, is somewhat different. Indeed, such slave narratives can be seen in many ways to have represented simply the ex-slave's further erasure as subject of his or her own story. However, it is possible to argue also that despite this rather limited access to 'subjectivity', the fact of having one's story written by another is preferable to not having it written at all.

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 realisation 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).

At the same time, it is made clear that it is her very blackness which led also to her condemnation as a witch. Not only does her colour ally her with Satan, but it is her 'art' - of healing people by using herbs and animal sacrifices - that arouses the suspicion of those around her who do not understand it. It is because she uses these skills to help and to cure her mistress Elizabeth Parris and her children that she is accused of witchcraft. However, what is made equally clear, now that her story has finally been recorded, is that Tituba's colour, and her use of Barbadian traditions, assured that she played a key role in the entire phenomenon of the Salem witch trials. It was her blackness which meant that she was the first to be accused, and it was with the accusation of Tituba that the trials began. What is more, not only was Tituba the principal actor throughout the events which followed, but she was also the only one of the 'witches' to survive.

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, is what precedes and follows the moment at which Tituba goes to Salem and thereby enters - however marginally - dominant historical discourses on North America. Before following Tituba's journey to North America, and after describing her survival of the trials themselves, Tituba's narrative describes her experience of slavery in Barbados and her part in movements of resistance against it.

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 set up 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 continues to make 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 expected opening lines of the narrative itself, outlining the place and conditions, though not of course 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:

Il est déjà bien haut le cocotier que mes parents ont planté là où le cordon de mon nombril est enterré, dans le petit hameau qu'on appelle Carangaise, dans la commune de Capesterre-Belle-Eau, en Guadeloupe. C'est là que j'ai été élevée avec mes frères et soeurs, cinq garçons et quatre filles. (*Léonora*, p. 11)²²

As the narrative progresses, we learn of the poverty of Léonora's parents, of the hardships of her childhood, and of her subsequent life working in Pointe-à-Pitre and in the cane-fields of her village, Carangaise. 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 her poverty and exploitation which lead to her exemplary involvement in the Trade Union movement and then in the growing Independence movement in Guadeloupe. More specifically, she becomes involved in the strikes and demonstrations of the 1960s and 1970s, and especially in the massive strike of 1975, which culminated in the authorities, for the first time, agreeing to negotiate with the newly-formed unions on pay and conditions.²³ It is

²² As both Elzéa Foule Aventurin and Jacqueline Manicom explain, the umbilical cord has a highly symbolic meaning in Antillean culture: as a survival of ancient rites, as an emblem of the link between child and mother, and as the desire to become rooted in a new country. Traditionally, after the birth, a child's umbilical cord is buried under the ground, near the parents' house, and a tree is planted with it. The tree's growth becomes a tangible sign of the child's growth, and of her/his 'intégration au pays' (Elzéa Foule Aventurin, *Karukera ensoleillée. Guadeloupe échouée*, Paris: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1980, p. 98). One's homeland is thus the place in which one's umbilical cord is buried. This tradition, as Aventurin explains, was particularly important in the aftermath of slavery, when 'freed' people were attempting to root themselves in a country of their own. (See also Jacqueline Manicom, *La graine: journal d'une sage-femme*, Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1974, p. 84).

²³ Guadeloupe, more than the other *départements d'outre-mer*, has a long history of militant and often violent anti-colonial activism. Pro-independence movements began to exert their influence in Guadeloupe as far back as 1944,

through Léonora's personal involvement in this action, 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.

It thus becomes possible to read both Tituba and Léonora as contemporary, Antillean versions of a tradition of marginal history-writing which never gained currency in the French colonies of the Caribbean. However, neither text 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 as we shall discover first, 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

with the setting up of the Guadeloupean section of the 'Parti Communiste Français' (PCF) which became the 'Parti Communiste Guadeloupéen' (PCG) in 1958, a pro-autonomy, rather than a pro-independence party as such. In 1963 several Guadeloupean students in Paris set up 'Le groupe de l'organisation nationale de la Guadeloupe' (GONG), a specifically pro-independence group. All of these movements, initially the affairs of Guadeloupean students and intellectuals in Paris, began in May 1967 to exert a real political threat over France's policy of assimilation in Guadeloupe. At this time, not only did a number of student members of GONG return to Guadeloupe, but a strike of building workers over pay was met with massive police retaliation. This led to several deaths and injuries, as well as to the imprisonment of members of independence parties such as GONG. In 1973 GONG was finally dissolved, and independence work begins to take place at the level of unionism. 'L'Union des Travailleurs Agricoles' (UTA) was the first to be founded, and was followed by the creation of unions in almost every sector of employment, all of whom eventually found their directly political expression in 1978, with the setting up of 'L'Union Populaire pour la Libération de la Guadeloupe' (UPLG). During 1981, a group calling itself 'Groupe de la Libération Armée' (GLA) undertook a series of bombing attacks and then set up 'Le Mouvement Populaire pour la Guadeloupe Indépendante' (MPGL) which refused to operate on the clandestine level of the UPLG and published a charter in 1982 which proposed a social and economic program for a socialist government. In May 1983, 'L'Alliance révolutionnaire Caraïbe' (ARC), a secret, militant organisation, carried out a series of coordinated bombing attacks in Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane and Paris. April 1985 saw 'La première conférence internationale des dernières colonies françaises' in Le Moule, Grande-Terre and in March 1986, during regional election campaigning, several bombing attacks were carried out, apparently by the UPLG, followed by rioting and by the arrest of members of the UPLG. This type of violence is indicative of the growing resentment felt in Guadeloupe at its continued 'colonial' status, though independence parties in Guadeloupe still receive relatively few votes in actual elections. (See François Cotellon, 'Un pays à décoloniser: la Guadeloupe', in Critique Socialiste, 49, 1984, pp. 47-63, as well as Le Monde, mardi 11 mars, 1986, p. 14 and jeudi 13 mars (1986), p. 11).

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-emasculatation.²⁴ 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 the narrative of Frederick Douglass himself woman occupies an exemplary place - that of what Braxton calls the 'outraged mother':

Travelling twelve miles through the darkness to share a morsel of food with her mulatto son and to reassure him that he is somebody's child. She travels twelve miles back again before the dawn. She sacrifices herself and improvises for the survival of flesh and spirit, and as mother of the race, she is muse to black poets... Yet when I surveyed the literature of the critical wilderness... I found her absent. I imagined our ancestor mothers lost forever.²⁵

Travis similarly points to the position of another woman in Douglass' narrative - Frederick's Aunt Hester, whose whipping is used to fulfil the slave narrative convention that the narrator's first observed whipping should be described. Hester's experience, as Travis feels to be the case with numerous such described observations of violence perpetrated upon slave women, is used primarily

²⁴ Smith, *Where I'm Bound*, p. 68. As both Smith and James Gray point out, the self-assertion of slave narrative was seen to be 'an assertion of black manhood', where 'manhood is predicated on resistance to society' and where a moment of self-assertion precipitates 'a strong sense of manliness' (Smith, *ibid.*, p. 50). See also James Gray, 'Culture, Gender and the Slave Narrative', *Proteus: A Journal of Ideas*, 7 (1990), pp. 37-42 (p. 40).

²⁵ 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), pp. 379-387 (p. 380).

as an example of the emasculation and powerlessness felt by the male slave narrator. These women are, themselves, erased as subjects in their own right, their experience of slavery written out. Indeed, one slave narrator, Moses Roper, who did in fact recognise, according to Travis, that slave narratives typically depicted an exclusively male experience of slavery, commented that this was because cases involving 'females' were 'too disgusting to appear in the narrative'.²⁶ While slave narratives routinely described acts of physical violence suffered by the slave - in fact, thrived on such 'sensationalism' - those specific acts of violence likely to be suffered by the female slave, such as rape, were routinely written out. What is more, when women themselves were permitted to occupy the position of narrator they fared, it seems, little better.

Although there were several slave narratives written by female ex-slaves, these were neither as numerous nor as well publicised as those written by men, and nor have they received as much subsequent critical attention. One narrative which has received much attention, however, is that of Harriet Jacobs, who has become perhaps the best-known female slave narrator. Jacobs was, however, obliged to write under a pseudonym, 'Linda Brent', as she was also obliged to subject herself to self-censorship, to 'speak in a code' 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.²⁷ Thus Jacobs' Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl situates itself 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 (Travis, p. 73).

²⁶ Travis, 'Speaking from the Silence of the Slave Narrative', p. 73.

²⁷ Travis, *ibid.*, p. 73.

For the female slave narrator, as much had to be 'disremembered' as remembered: 'hers is the desire to recover history but also the need to deny history. In this way, history acts as Platonic pharmakon, both cure and poison' (Travis, p. 75). For slave narrators such as Jacobs the 'breach between mind and body' was simply deepened further, for the particular bondage of the female body could not be described: it instead suffered a further repression. However problematic, as we shall see, was the accession of the male narrator to subjectivity via writing, that of the female narrator was necessarily problematic in a much more specific way. For her, the 'choice' lay between remaining silent - as the 'exemplary figure' of male emasculation, or as the 'mother of the (masculine) nation' - or speaking as a doubly alienated subject. Either way, the subjectivity of the female slave is effectively erased: she is subject, inevitably, to what Jane Marcus has termed 'multiplied veils'.²⁸

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, as we shall see, 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).²⁹ She

²⁸ Jane Marcus, 'Alibis and Legends', in Broe and Ingram, eds., Women's Writing in Exile, p. 270. As Travis points out, in 'The Narrative of William and Ellen Craft', the 'subjectivity' of Ellen was quite literally written out, as it was narrated, it seems, entirely by William (Travis, 'Speaking from the Silence of the Slave Narrative', p. 73).

²⁹ As Léonora explains, this Creole expression means 'le poteau central de la case' (Léonora, p. 12).

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).

Throughout her own life, it is upon the women of the family that Léonora depends. When she is fourteen, she is sent to Pointe-à-Pitre to work, and she goes to live with 'cousine Amélya' and her two sisters in Pointe-à-Pitre. Here, Amélya teaches her everything that her mother had no time to do - how to meet people, how to wash and to cook, and how to work at the many jobs that Léonora moves between in Pointe-à-Pitre. For Léonora, the years spent with the sisters are vital, for they teach her 'à ne pas baisser la tête devant la vie' (Léonora, p. 88). Indeed, they are a vital link in a chain of female support which continues throughout her life. When, some years later, having returned to her parents' house, Léonora finds herself pregnant, her father throws her out of the house, and it is from her mother and her sisters that she gains support, for they all leave with her - 'j'étais enceinte, il n'y avait pas d'autre moyen' - and set up home in an aunt's abandoned house (Léonora, p. 117). Still later, when she is ill and unable to cure herself, she is not only cared for by her sister, but she is visited by her dead grandmother, a white woman, whose traditional remedy alleviates her symptoms.

Léonora is not, however idealistic about the strength or power of women. She recounts also, at some length, 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.³⁰ When Léonora begins to become politicised, and to become involved in movements for workers' rights and independence, she remarks that it is women who are most numerous among the activists. What is more, like the women in *Demain Jab-Herma* - but this time in a much more organised and sustained fashion - 'chaque fois que nous entreprenons une action, les femmes étaient devant' (*Léonora*, p. 266). 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 at the same time enables, gaining freedom from restrictive and suffocating marital and familial situations.

This is the case for Léonora herself and throughout her narrative she describes, in largely negative terms, her relationship both with Alexandre, the father of her first child, and with her later husband, Joseph. She speaks frankly about her relationships with the two men, about the desire for Alexandre which led to her first, unexpected, pregnancy, and of the lack of desire for Joseph once she discovered his infidelities. Indeed, this lack of desire contributes to her growing awareness that she must leave Joseph, that he treats her little better than 'une esclave de maison' (*Léonora*, p. 137), and that his demands upon her are restricting her involvement in the Trade Union and Independence movements. Marriage, she realises, represents for her, as for countless other women, little more than a second mode of enslavement, and it is as such, in direct contrast to female slave narrators such as Jacobs, for whom marriage had to be seen to be the ultimate aim, that she describes it as 'un baril de tessons de bouteilles dans lequel la femme est piégée et se blesse à tous

³⁰ Indeed, 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... Comment se fait-il que la femme ait droit à un plus grand honneur... et qu'elle n'[ait] jamais la priorité sur l'homme?' (*Léonora*, p. 77). It is, of course, the dead mother who is worshipped and revered.

les coups, un bal masqué qui, parfois, finit tragiquement' (Léonora, p. 190). It is thus unsurprising, later, when she describes the sense of freedom that her separation from Joseph has afforded 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)

Despite the social disapproval at her readiness to live on her own, she tells of how she feels she has achieved 'un bonheur tout nouveau, celui de me garder entière pour moi-même' (Léonora, p. 294). Importantly, leaving Joseph has allowed Léonora also to tell her story, to articulate her felt sense of liberation. As she makes clear: 'si j'étais toujours avec Joseph, pourrais-je aller ainsi où je veux? Serais-je là, assise, à raconter ma vie? Il m'aurait fallu obéir à mon mari' (Léonora, p. 223). 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). Earlier, she had described how, 'en t'épousant, [ton mari] croit t'avoir achetée, "mofouazé" (métamorphosée) en lui-même. Tu n'es plus toi. En fait, ce n'est pas lui que tu déshonores, c'est son nom' (Léonora, p. 193). Now, however, 'honour' means something quite different to her: 'je suis une femme libre, chérissant sa liberté, et 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, is a contemporary example of slave narrative reworked from the perspective of gender. Indeed, this is clear from the very beginning, for the opening scene at once recalls and reworks 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. Tituba describes how, when she was seven years old, she witnessed first the attempted rape, and then the hanging, of her mother. She tells how, in the woods gathering wood with her mother, they are surprised by Darnell, the former owner of Abena. As Tituba

explains:

Quand je revins vers ma mère, elle se tenait, haletante, le dos contre un calebassier. Darnell était debout à moins d'un mètre d'elle. Il avait tombé la chemise, défait son pantalon, découvrant la blancheur de ses sous-vêtements et sa main gauche fouillait à hauteur de son sexe. (*Tituba*, p. 20)

This 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'.

Rape is described elsewhere in *Tituba*: this time it is the rape of Tituba herself, at the hands of the Churchmen of Salem who are attempting to force her to 'confess'. She describes an experience of sexual violence which later haunts her in dreams:

L'un des hommes se mit carrément à cheval sur moi et commença de me marteler le visage de ses poings, durs comme pierres. Un autre releva ma jupe et enfonça un bâton taillé en pointe dans la partie la plus sensible de mon corps en raillant: 'prends, prends, c'est la bite de John Indien'. (*Tituba*, p. 144)

Throughout the text, however, are descriptions also of bodily pleasure and female sexual desire, subjects equally erased from nineteenth century slave narratives. After having met John Indien, her future husband, for the first time, Tituba describes how she became suddenly aware of her body and of sexual desire: 'J'ôtai mes vêtements, me couchai et de la main, je parcourus mon corps... Je m'approchais de mon sexe... Jaillie des profondeurs de mon corps, une marée odorante inonda mes cuisses. Je m'entendis râler dans la nuit' (*Tituba*, p. 30). After this, she becomes equally aware of what attracts her to John Indien - 'la butte monumentale de son sexe' (*Tituba*, p. 36), and when they finally decide to live together, and throughout their relationship, she tells of constant mutual

sexual desire and satisfaction.³¹ The same is true of her subsequent relationships - with her Jewish master, Benjamin Cohen d'Azevedo, with the maroon leader Christopher and with the young Iphigène, 'son fils-amant'. Everywhere, the desire to which Jacobs could not admit is described.

It is through her relationship with Benjamin Cohen D'Azevedo, who buys her when she is freed from prison after the trials are over, that Tituba finally returns from Salem to Barbados. When his entire family is killed in a fire, Benjamin decides, finally, to grant Tituba her freedom, and it is thus as a freed slave that she returns to her island.³² It is here that the most radical and positive aspect of Tituba's experience of slavery unfolds, for it is here that we see, once more, the place of women within those marginalised histories of slave resistance. Upon her return, Tituba immediately becomes involved with a maroon community, and specifically with its leader, Christopher, and she attempts also to become involved in their revolutionary activities. However, she rapidly discovers that the maroon community is itself highly gendered and patriarchal. When Tituba 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, however, is anxious to act rather than be acted upon, and she continues to ask Christopher to allow her to fight against the whites with him. His reply, unsurprisingly, is to laugh,

³¹ At the same time, Tituba is aware - like Léonora - that the male-female relationship represents a form of enslavement which mirrors and recalls that between white master and black slave. Indeed, Man Yaya warns her of this shortly after she has met John Indien for the first time, telling her: 'les hommes n'aiment pas. Ils possèdent. Ils asservissent' (*Tituba*, p. 29). It is not until Tituba voluntarily enters into actual slavery, however, when she goes to work for John Indien's owner, that she is made aware of the parallel modes of enslavement, and admits that Man Yaya was right (*Tituba*, p. 45).

³² The relationship between Tituba and Benjamin, it is made clear, is founded upon a mutual understanding of the way in which each of them belongs to an oppressed people. However, Benjamin is nevertheless in a position to exert power over Tituba, for when he asks her what she would desire most in the world, and she replies that it would be her freedom, he refuses to grant it for fear that she will leave him. She, however, invests herself entirely in supporting him and caring for him, even with the knowledge that she is his slave. She repeats, in this sense, the 'voluntary enslavement' which she had experienced with John Indien and recalls also Léonora's connection between male-female and master-slave relationships.

and to tell her: 'le devoir des femmes, Tituba, ce n'est pas de se battre, faire la guerre, mais l'amour!' (Tituba, p. 233).

When her repeated enquiries about the planned uprising are met with more and more hostility and derision, Tituba decides to leave the maroons and to go to live on her own, to continue her role as healer to slaves on nearby plantations. She returns to the cabin that she had built for herself in the years before she left Barbados for North America, and where she had lived as a 'maroon' figure, between plantations and belonging to no-one. Here, 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. It is then, and with her discovery that she is pregnant, that Tituba begins to become interested once more in fighting directly against slavery. The final scenes of Condé's text then follow the events of an attempted slave rebellion, in which Tituba plays a central role. 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 immortalised 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 become, it transpires, 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. She becomes the legendary figure in Barbados which, she realises, 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 hodo' - a name remembered rather than erased. In Barbados, furthermore, she not only becomes the legendary figure that she never was in Salem, but she does so by assuming the role that she had always refused to assume in Salem: that of 'witch'.³³ Indeed, it is witchcraft which links both parts of her story: it is for witchcraft, as the colonial authorities make clear, 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'.³⁴ 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

³³ Before arriving in Salem, Tituba had never heard of Satan, with whom she is accused of having commerce, and references to broomsticks and evil are lost on her entirely: 'qu'est-ce qu'une sorcière? J'apercevais que le mot était entaché d'opprobre. Comment cela? Comment? La faculté de communiquer avec les invisibles, de garder un lien constant avec les disparus, de soigner, de guérir n'est-elle pas une grâce supérieure de nature à inspirer respect, admiration et gratitude?' (*Tituba*, pp. 34-5).

³⁴ Catherine Clément and Hélène Cixous, *La Jeune née*, p. 12.

blanc le dit des autres ethnies'.³⁵ 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' (Gauthier, p. 5). 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, as she provides help to the women of her household. She tells 'magical' tales to Samuel Parris's daughter Betsey and niece Abigail in order to provide them with an outlet for the energies and desires repressed by the religious education provided by the reverend. More radically, she vows upon her arrival in the Parris household that she will use her knowledge in order to cure her mistress, Elizabeth Parris, who suffers from a long-term, and indefinable illness. No doctor has ever been able to diagnose Elizabeth's illness: she is suffering, 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. Through her knowledge of herbal remedies however, and, above all, of the female body, Tituba succeeds in curing Elizabeth. Paradoxically, of course, it is this success which leads to her denunciation as a witch: her knowledge is too powerful, too threatening, and too 'feminine', and it is therefore necessarily punished.

³⁵ Xavière Gauthier, 'Pourquoi Sorcières?', *Sorcières*, 1 (1976), pp. 2-5 (p. 2).

'Speaking in Tongues'³⁶

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 precisely 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 voulait 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. (Gauthier, p. 2)

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, indeed, 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

³⁶ 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. It is a term which refers, as Henderson explains, to the practice of 'speaking unknown tongues' - 'languages' which are multiple, secretive and associated with women. Though specifically associated also with the Church - with 'tongues known only by God' - these are 'languages' associated by Henderson with forms of black female 'spirituality' generally (Henderson, 'Speaking in Tongues', p. 22).

sur le mode d'une gestualité paralysée, d'une parole impossible et aussi interdite'.³⁷ 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'.³⁸ That is, positioned simply as commodities upon whose exchange the functioning of patriarchy - the world of 'between men' - depends, women not only have no access to the position of subject but, crucially, they have no access to the position of speaking subject. As Irigaray asks: 'comment cet objet d'usage et de transaction peut-il revendiquer un droit à la parole et, plus généralement, une participation aux échanges?'³⁹.

Language, for Irigaray, is inevitably part of the social order of 'between men', it is a 'cultural discourse of the "he" and "between hes"':⁴⁰ it is one of the many 'commodities' exchanged between men to maintain the smooth functioning of the hom(m)osexual economy.⁴¹ Though ostensibly 'neutral' and 'universal' language is in fact, therefore, masculine: it is phallogocentric, premised upon the repression of all that is 'feminine' in order to operate. That is, 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

³⁷ Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, pp. 134-135.

³⁸ Interview with Luce Irigaray in Raoul Mortley, *French Philosophers in Conversation* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 63-78 (p. 74).

³⁹ Luce Irigaray, *Ce sexe*, p. 81.

⁴⁰ Mortley, *French Philosophers*, p. 74.

⁴¹ See, for example, *Ce sexe*, pp. 68-9.

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. 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, 'qui la désapproprient de son rapport à elle-même, et aux autres femmes'.⁴² That is, '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'.⁴³

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. It is only when this becomes possible that they may begin to heal that separation which is necessary to, and occasioned by, patriarchy. 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'.⁴⁴ What is more, of course, the creation of this new, 'feminine plural

⁴² 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, "'Phallogomorphic Power' and the Psychology of 'Woman'", *Ideology and Consciousness*, 4 (1978), pp. 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). However, like Elizabeth Grosz, we may interpret this slippage as one which mirrors - or even employs as deliberate strategy - a conflation always inherent in phallogocentric discourse. As Grosz explains, those terms repressed within phallogocentric language in order for their binary opposites to be validated are terms which occupy 'a position of passivity and dependence in the same way as femininity does in relation to masculinity. Not only do these terms serve as an historical analogy with women's subordination, they are instrumental in providing whatever associations culturally code femininity and masculinity' (Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989, p. 127).

⁴³ Irigaray, *Ethique de la différence sexuelle*, p. 105.

⁴⁴ Margaret Whitford, *Philosophy in the Feminine*, p. 43.

gender'⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶ It was Man Yaya who initiated her into the art of 'witchcraft', teaching her 'les plantes', 'la mer', 'les sacrifices' and 'une connaissance plus haute': how to contact the 'invisibles'; 'les morts [qui] ne meurent que s'ils meurent dans nos coeurs' (*Tituba*, pp. 22-3). It is this latter power which is most enabling for Tituba, for it means that, throughout her life, she is able to remain in contact with both Abena and Man Yaya, long after their deaths. Before leaving Barbados, Tituba is visited and constantly advised by Man Yaya and by Abena and though they are unable to cross the ocean in order to visit her once she is in Salem, she is still able to feel their presence around her, 'à tel moment ou à tel autre... je reconnaissais alors Abena à la fragrance de chèvrefeuille qui se répandait dans mon misérable réduit. L'odeur de Man Yaya était plus forte, presque poivrée, plus insidieuse aussi... Man Yaya m'apportait l'espoir et Abena ma mère, la tendresse' (*Tituba*, p. 133). When she is at her most desperate, Tituba uses the powers possessed by Man Yaya, but never taught to her: she makes an animal sacrifice and calls 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

⁴⁵ Mortley, *French Philosophers*, p. 73.

⁴⁶ Another classic - and much written about - Guadeloupean woman's text, and one written in a form similarly reminiscent of slave narrative, is Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Pluie et vent sur Têlémée Miracle*. This is a text which, like *Tituba*, tells the story of a lineage of resisting women - women who, like Tituba and her maternal ancestors, are both characterised and linked by their role as 'witches', or healers.

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, it is Abena and Man Yaya who are awaiting her there as she arrives 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' reconnection 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 we learn not only of the way in which she accedes to 'heroic' status after her death, but also of the way in which the knowledge passed down to her by her mothers is passed down once more to Tituba's own female descendant. After her death, Tituba continues her work as healer to slaves and maroons, visiting those who need her help in different parts of the island as well as helping to incite numerous slave rebellions. One day, she is called to the side of Délices, a slave woman about to give birth, and who has lost all of her previous children during labour. Tituba saves both the life of Délices herself, and that of her child, Samantha. What is

more, having been killed while pregnant with her own daughter,⁴⁷ Tituba chooses as her descendant this 'daughter' whose life she has saved. 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.

Tituba teaches Samantha everything that she herself had been taught by Man Yaya: 'la force cachée des plantes et le langage des animaux... la forme invisible du monde, le réseau de communications qui le parcourt et les signes-symboles' (*Tituba*, p. 270). 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 descentance. What is more, this is in fact a chain of excluded, marginalised and disruptive women which goes far beyond that of Tituba's own immediate - and itself chosen rather than necessarily biological - maternal family. As Clément points out, the disruptive power of the witch not only resembles that of the 'madwoman' or hysteric, for example, but the two figures are themselves related. The witch is, in fact, the foremother of the hysteric, of what both Irigaray and Clément consider to be the example *par excellence* of the contemporary 'disruptive woman'. Contemporary disruptive figures, like the 'madwoman' can, according to Clément, be seen to have inherited 'le passé refoulé... [les] réminiscence[s]' of resisting and marginalised women, like the witch, who have come before her (Clément, p. 13). She, and women like her, 'reprend et assume les souvenirs des autres' (Clément, p. 12). All these women belong to what Clément calls '[la] zone imaginaire', in which all that is feared and thus rejected or

⁴⁷ That Tituba, like the Jamaican maroon heroine Nanny or the Guadeloupean maroon Solitude, is pregnant when she undertakes revolutionary action is, itself significant. It demonstrates even further how, in this version of slave narrative, the mother functions not as 'silent ground' of male heroism, but as revolutionary subject in her own right. What is more, it may be seen to demonstrate, too, that Tituba's desire to abolish slavery is, in part at least, motivated by her impending motherhood itself. This is supported by the fact that, earlier in the text, she chose to abort her child rather than allow it to be born into slavery (*Tituba*, pp. 82-3): here, she attempts instead to end slavery before giving birth to her child.

marginalised by 'culture' is contained - 'mythes... fantasmes... fragments de témoignages, ces bouts de l'histoire' (Clément, p. 15). They belong to what Tituba herself refers to as 'the hidden side of things':

Nos pays ont deux faces. L'une que parcourent les calèches des maîtres et... l'autre, mystérieuse et secrète, faite de mots de passe, de conseils chuchotés et de conspirations de silence. C'est sur cette face-là que je vivais. (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' (Clément, pp. 15-16). 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 (Clément, p. 16). 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, is one associated in many cultures with women, women who, hitherto, 'n'avaient pas de fonction culturelle dans la transmission du savoir' (Clément, p. 13). 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'.⁴⁸ 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

⁴⁸ 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 healer - a 'witch' - as the name 'Man' signifies.

for Linda Anderson, 'a series of stories that characters tell themselves and each other about their lives'.⁴⁹

In *Tituba*, many of the alliances built through storytelling are, interestingly, alliances between black and white women. The wives of plantation owners, for example, are depicted throughout 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. Thus the wife of Abena's first owner, Darnell Davis, is described in such terms: 'Jennifer... n'était guère plus âgée que ma mère. On l'avait mariée à cette homme rude qu'elle haïssait, qui la laissait seule le soir pour aller boire et qui avait déjà une meute d'enfants bâtards. Jennifer et ma mère se lièrent d'amitié. Après tout, ce n'était que deux enfants effrayées' (*Tituba*, p. 13). Their relationship is cemented and sustained when her mother 'contait les histoires que sa mère lui avait contées à Akwapim, son village natal' (*Tituba*, p. 14). Tituba's own relationship with Elizabeth Parris, similarly, is in part sustained by the Caribbean tales which Tituba tells to her mistress and her daughter, 'contes... d'Ananse l'araignée, des gens gagés, des soukougans, de la bête à Man Hibé' (*Tituba*, p. 70).⁵⁰ Much later, in the maroon camp, Tituba finally succeeds in establishing a relationship with the other women in the camp - women who have treated her with hostility since

⁴⁹ 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. 129-144 (p. 138).

⁵⁰ Significantly, Elizabeth repays Tituba's devotion also with compassion, and surprises her on their first meeting by expressing sympathy at Tituba's enforced exile, and then by telling her that she is beautiful (*Tituba*, pp. 64-6). This is a positive, white female gaze which provides an alternative to that of Tituba's first mistress Susanna Endicott who, as Tituba explains: 'me paralysait..., me terrifiait' (*Tituba*, p. 47). In a manner which recalls the experiences of Cajou and of Sapotille under the white gaze, Tituba reveals how, 'sous son regard d'eau marine, je perdais mes moyens. Je n'étais plus que ce qu'elle voulait que je sois. Une grande bringue à la peau d'une couleur repoussante' (*Tituba*, p. 47). However, as positive as it may be, her relationship with Elizabeth Parris, as we shall see later, proves not to be as enduring as is another, more mutual, black-white relationship in Tituba's life.

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 (for that with Elizabeth does not survive Tituba's trial), is that between Tituba and Hester, a white woman imprisoned for adultery at the same time as is Tituba for witchcraft. Hester (who in both name and biography would seem to resemble Hester Prynne from Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*) 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). Unlike Tituba, Hester is apparently much more aware of her own position, as a woman, within such a culture. Indeed, at their first meeting, Hester asks Tituba whether her name is a matronym, for she presumes that Tituba comes from a culture which is African and matrifocal. Tituba makes it clear both that she is not African, and that her name was given to her by her father at birth. We are aware, as Hester is not, that this 'father' is Yao, the man who adopted her and who named her not with a patronym but with an invented name, in an effort to assure her that she was not merely the product of violence and rape. What is clear, is that a family name - as a sign of 'belonging' in all senses - signals something quite different in the context of slavery than does a patronym in Hester's analysis from what would appear to be a white, Western 'feminist' perspective.⁵¹

⁵¹ It is clear that for Tituba her name once more signals the importance of chosen, rather than necessarily biological, family links. It is also 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 characterises 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).

With a similar lack of awareness about the differences which separate her from Tituba, 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). She asks Tituba whether she has ever read authors such as Milton, but is then reminded that Tituba is unable to read. Despite these initial misunderstandings, however - and despite Hester's initially too-ready assimilation of her alienation within patriarchy with/as the same as that of Tituba, 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 prepare her statement for the coming trial by encouraging her to use her own skills as a storyteller to her advantage. Together, they invent stories which can be used by Tituba to denounce those who denounced her, and to escape hanging by admitting her 'guilt' as a witch. It is Hester, familiar with the Western conception of 'the witch', who provides the material for these stories, stories of 'les réunions de sorcières, chacune arrivant sur son balai, les mâchoires dégoulinantes de désir à la pensée du banquet de fœtus et d'enfants nouveau-nés qui serait servi avec force chopes de sang frais...' (*Tituba*, pp. 157-8).

When not preparing for Tituba's trial, the two women spend their time talking about themselves, telling their own stories to each other as a substitute for not being able to write them down. They discover a common past of betrayal, of exile, of imprisonment and of aborted pregnancies. In stark contrast to other black-white female relationships which we have so far examined, and notably those experienced by Cajou and by 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 who tells her - like Elizabeth before her - that she is beautiful ('quelle couleur magnifique a [ta

peau', *Tituba*, p. 151). Tituba, likewise, finds Hester to be equally beautiful, and this has everything to do with the fact that Hester's 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 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 sexualised. Indeed, once again in stark contrast to the experience, more particularly, of Cajou, the sexual aspect of their relationship is initiated by Hester - as, all along, have been the other aspects of their relationship.

Hester continues to visit and to give support to Tituba 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 coeurs que les miens garderont mon souvenir... C'est dans leurs têtes. Dans leurs coeurs 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 confiées à personne'. It is by 'appearing' to Condé as her mothers have always appeared to her, that Tituba tells her story to Condé 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)'.⁵² 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".⁵³ Fictionalising, storytelling are therefore associated with 'untruth', in order that History alone may represent itself as true and authoritative. Trinh makes a similar point:

As long as the transformation, manipulations, or redistributions inherent in the collection of events are overlooked, the division continues its course... Story-writing becomes history-writing, and history quickly sets itself apart, consigning story to the realm of tale, legend, myth, fiction, literature. Then, since fictional and factual have come to a point where they mutually exclude one another, fiction, not infrequently, means lies, and fact, truth.⁵⁴

It is via an incident which takes place between Tituba and Hester, as they make up stories and recount their own stories to each other, that Condé's rather different investment in 'story' and 'truth' is signalled. Hester asks Tituba, referring to the daughter with whom she is still pregnant: 'Tu sais ce qu'elle désire? Que tu nous racontes une histoire! Une histoire de ton pays!' (Tituba, p. 156). Tituba replies as would a traditional Antillean conteuse: 'Tim tim, bois sèche! La cour dort?' and Hester replies: 'Non, la cour dort pas!' With that, Tituba proceeds: 'au temps longtemps, quand le diable avait encore ses culottes courtes, découvrant des genoux nouveaux et bosselés de cicatrices, vivait au village de Wagabaha... une jeune fille...' (Tituba, p. 156). However, as Tituba's conte continues, Hester realises that it is more than an ordinary story, invented by Tituba to amuse and entertain her. Though Hester has recounted her own past to Tituba, and though Tituba has told

⁵² Olney, "I was born", p. 150.

⁵³ Olney, *ibid.*, p. 150.

⁵⁴ Trinh, Woman, Native, Other, p. 120.

her of her immediate past in Salem, Hester knows little of Tituba's life in Barbados. Here, Hester suspects, Tituba is recounting her own story - beginning with her birth - in fictionalised 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, that it is a 'fictionalised' history. 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 fictionalisation 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 'authentication' of the story's veracity. In Condé's text, however, it serves instead 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 discusses also how Anne Petry, an African-American writer who has already written Tituba's story believed that she was bought by a

weaver and remained in Boston.⁵⁵ Condé, however, declares that she has preferred to draw upon 'une vague tradition [qui] assure qu'elle fut vendue à un marchand d'esclaves qui la ramena à la Barbade. Je lui ai offert, quant à moi, 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'.⁵⁶

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, as we have seen, 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 is not simply associated with women - and especially in the Antilles⁵⁷ - but, more generally, with the Antillean tradition itself.

As we saw in both chapters three and four, the oral tradition in the Antilles - 'contes, proverbes, "titim", comptines, chansons...',⁵⁸ - has always been an important part of Antillean culture and of the collective Antillean imagination. As we have also seen, however, it has been an

⁵⁵ See Ann Petry, *Tituba of Salem Village* (New York: HarperTrophy, 1964).

⁵⁶ Anderson, 'The Re-Imagining of History', p. 129.

⁵⁷ As Ina Césaire and Joëlle Laurent point out in the introduction to their collection *Contes de vie et de mort aux Antilles* (Paris: Nubia, 1976, p. 11), public conteurs are traditionally men while women tell stories, at night, to children. Women are thus the marginalised conteuses of an already marginalised tradition.

⁵⁸ Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, *Eloge de la créolité*, p. 33.

aspect of Antillean culture consistently decoded as mere diversion or, at best, as a precursor to 'real', written history rather than 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. However, 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 of 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 (Eloge, p. 35). 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 the remnants of the multiple cultures which make up 'Antillean culture'. The coexistence, for example, of elements from Carib mythology, from African contes, from European oral and written traditions, or from Indian mythology (again oral and

written), as well as elements, more recently, of Chinese, Syrian and Libyan cultural forms,⁵⁹ 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' (Eloge, pp. 32-3). 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' (Eloge, p. 28). 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 colonised and transplanted peoples - the peoples of the rest of the Caribbean, those of South America, and African-Americans, for example (Eloge, p. 33).

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

⁵⁹ One of the most popular figures of the Antillean oral tradition, Manman Dlo, - 'mère de l'eau au chanté diabolique' (Chamoiseau and Confiant, Lettres créoles, p. 22) - would seem to be the only figure to have survived from Carib mythology. African characters and stories are more common - Ti Jean l'horizon, Ananse l'araignée, Compè Lapin - as are figures rooted in European stories and traditions - Ti Jean, Diable, Nantiquita (Chamoiseau and Confiant, *ibid.*, p. 58). Indeed, as is the case with Ti Jean, many figures have survived from more than one culture: Manman Dlo, for example, recalls also the European tradition of mermaid figures. As far as Indian mythology is concerned, stories of gods and goddesses have survived and, like that of Mariammam, referred to by Léonora, have become integrated into the religious practices of many rural Guadeloupean areas (see Léonora, p. 305).

negritude's characteristic obsession with singularity, for example, (though they acknowledge its historical necessity),⁶⁰ 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' (*Eloge*, p. 36). 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 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, who sustains and supports Tituba in the absence of Man Yaya and Abena; with the Native Americans who work with John Indien;⁶¹ and even with white women such as Hester⁶² - 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'.

⁶⁰ See *Eloge de la créolité*, p. 20.

⁶¹ Returning from his first day at work with these 'deux Indiens', John Indien tells Tituba: 'tu verrais comme on les traite. Ils m'ont raconté comment ils ont été dépossédés de leurs terres, comment les Blancs ont décimé leurs troupes et ont répandu parmi eux "l'eau de feu" qui en peu de temps conduit un homme à sa tombe' (*Tituba*, p. 78).

⁶² Condé's very inclusion of Hester's story may be seen to be part of her text's literary *créolité*, as well as to be part of her attempt to rewrite existing stories of marginalised and disruptive women.

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 stories - often about exemplary women, or else cautionary tales to girls - which circulate in Léonora's village. We are told of evenings spent by Léonora listening to storytellers with the other members of her village: to tales of Persillette, 'la vaillante petite négresse' (Léonora, p. 33), of Dioudji, 'l'esclave que son maître aimait bien' (Léonora, p. 60), of 'la Diabliesse. Une belle femme à la peau claire' (Léonora, p. 156), or even of Delgrès at Matouba.⁶³ Much 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. Song, especially, is important throughout, and Leonora's recalls one song in particular, sung to her by her mother and by her grandmother before her, and which she now sings to her own children. This is a song which is at

⁶³ The storyteller, Simon Laigle, initially recalls how Delgrès committed suicide in the company of three hundred men, and then goes on to recall how some versions of the story tell of three hundred and two people who jumped at Matouba, 'qu'il y avait trois cents hommes plus deux femmes... [qui] toutes deux attendaient un enfant' These women - who, like Tituba or Nanny or Solitude, committed their revolutionary act while pregnant - are usually erased from histories of Matouba: here, however, they are reinserted into those histories as 'deux femmes vaillantes' (Léonora, p. 60)

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 - that is, which becomes the mediator of her relationship with Bébel-Gisler. This we discover in both Le Défi culture! 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), and it is for this reason, as she continues to explain, that: 'jamais, en écoutant Léonora, je ne me suis sentie étrangère, absente de ses interrogations, de ses doutes, de ses recherches. Une grande part de ce qu'elle me disait répondait en moi, résonnait dans mon corps, faisait resurgir des sensations oubliées' (Léonora, p. 298).

It is through this shared background that, as Bébel-Gisler points out, 'a pu naître cette complicité entre Léonora et moi' (Léonora, p. 298), and it is this complicity which, in turn, has enabled the writing of the text of Léonora's narrative. It is this complicity, too, which helps Bébel-Gisler to come to terms with her own position as black, 'assimilated' intellectual⁶⁴ and, more

⁶⁴ See Bébel-Gisler, Le Défi culturel, pp. 36-7.

importantly, which enables her, more obviously than Condé, to enter the text as part of the chain of Antillean women whose story she is recording.⁶⁵ Thus she tells of her own childhood, of her peasant background and, above all, of how important for her, too, was 'la branche maternelle' of her family (*Léonora*, p. 298).⁶⁶ What is vital about the relationship between Léonora and Bébel-Gisler, however - indeed, what is vital about their shared Guadeloupean inheritance itself - is the issue of language. What is made obvious in Bébel-Gisler's text, and in a way that is not true for that of Condé, is that, like all of the stories told throughout *Leonora*, that told by Leonora to Bébel-Gisler 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, the most important aspect 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

⁶⁵ This chain includes, of course, not only the other women who have enabled and sustained Léonora throughout her life, but also Anmann, 'paysanne guadeloupéenne de quatre-vingt-dix-huit ans' whose story precedes Léonora's narrative and which situates it within a history of slavery and resistance. As Bébel-Gisler explains in the notes which follow the text, Anmann lived in the same region as Léonora and was married to 'un "Africain" dont les parents furent parmi les derniers esclaves ravis à l'Afrique' (*Léonora*, p. 301). Her short story tells of ways in which, during slavery, the slaves knew ways of resisting and of escaping, of 'returning' to Africa via magic, by death, or by storytelling.

⁶⁶ Both *Léonora* and *Tituba* can be seen to be disrupting the conventions of slave narrative in a further, and radical, way for in both cases the relationship between writer and narrator is one which distances itself from the relationship of exploitation which so often characterised that of slave narrative, and towards a more enabling relationship of solidarity. In this way they can be seen also to be disrupting more recent examples of oral history or collaborative autobiography - what Spivak terms the 'information-retrieval approach' to work by third world women writers, and what is usually termed 'ethnobiography'. Such work, as Carole Boyce Davies points out, too often falls into problems of 'manipulated chronologies' and of interviewees rendered passive, the objects rather than subjects of their text (Boyce Davies, 'Collaboration and the Ordering Imperative in Life Story Production,' in Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, eds., *De/Colonising the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography*, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1992, (pp. 3-19), p. 4). Caren Kaplan, too, examines the power relationship at work in ethnobiographies undertaken by white feminist historians about the lives of black or third world women, and draws attention to the latter's 'no-win choice between commodification and erasure' (Kaplan, 'Resisting Autobiography: Out-Law Genres and Transnational Feminist Subjects,' in Smith and Watson, *ibid.* (pp. 115-138), p. 124).

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 crucially points out in Le Défi culturel is that it is only the dominant language which is conceptualised 'comme symbole d'accès à l'humain' (Le Défi, p. 151). As Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant point out, in the specific context of the Antilles 'seule la Francité (adoption conjointe de la langue française et de ses valeurs) nommait l'Homme' (Eloge, p. 34). As we shall see, for Bébel-Gisler and for Léonora, to assert oneself as 'human', to say 'I' in the dominant language is not necessarily liberatory.

It must thus be remembered 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, a vital part of the colonial policy of assimilation. The necessary corollary to such linguistic imposition was, of course, the suppression of any indigenous or vernacular languages. In the Antilles, such languages were initially African languages and, eventually, Creole, which grew out of African languages themselves and out of petit-nègre, the simplified form of French used by the slaveowners to the slaves.⁶⁷ It was when Creole began to develop and to be widely used by the slaves that it was banned. 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' (Le Défi, p.

⁶⁷ What is significant to note, here, is that the imposing of French in its 'debased' form, as petit-nègre, served multiple functions. Ostensibly serving to protect the slaveowners from the threat of insurrection being plotted without their knowledge, in languages which they did not understand (which it of course did not), petit-nègre served also, and principally, to perpetuate the notion that slaves - as 'things' rather than women and men - were incapable of speaking 'correct' French. In other words, it contributed to the idea that the dominant language - simultaneously imposed and denied - was the only means of access to 'humanity'.

107), she is therefore evoking not the bodily punishment imposed upon slaves for speaking French, but that for speaking either native African languages or, more probably, 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, and which has been examined in chapter one. Thus in 1957, over a century after the abolition of slavery as a legal institution, Fanon describes how Creole, in the Antilles, continues to be seen as nothing more than 'un moyen terme entre le petit-nègre et le français' (Peau noire, p. 15), while French continues 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' (Peau noire, p. 14). 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' (Le Défi, pp. 150-1). For her, as for Fanon, language is at the root of contemporary Antillean 'neuroses':

La France a façonné notre esprit, s'est emparée de nous dès l'école, nous imposant sa langue, son monde, nous arrachant à tout ce qui nous a fait pour nous remodeler à son image. Méfions-nous de nous-mêmes. Qui pense? Qui parle? Est-ce vraiment moi? Personne, aucun colonisé, ne peut s'échapper totalement à cette aliénation, à cette zombification. (Léonora, p. 299)

This, too, is the thesis of Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, '[que] la francisation nous a forcés à l'autodénigrement: lot commun des colonisés'.⁶⁸ 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 it is possible to become 'French' in the same way as 'les Français de France'. For Bébel-Gisler as for the writers of Eloge de la créolité, it is through Creole - learning to write it and learning to use it in situations hitherto reserved for French - which represents 'le devenir' of the Guadeloupean people, the mode of enabling Antilleans to discover their identity as Guadeloupean. For Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, Creole represents the means of access to 'ce nous-mêmes enfoui sous la francisation' (Eloge, p. 22). It is 'la voie royale vers l'assomption de nous-mêmes' (Eloge, p. 29), 'le véhicule originel de notre moi profond' (Eloge, p. 43) - the manifestation par excellence of créolité. For Bébel-Gisler, quite simply, it is Creole, and not French, which represents 'la possibilité d'être' (Le Défi, p. 121) - and especially for those Antilleans who, Creolophone rather than Francophone, are illiterate because their language is never taught in a written or institutionalised form.

That Creole is not a formal, institutionalised 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, according to Bébel-Gisler, explained his reasons thus: "tout discours est une oeuvre de réflexion, c'est une

⁶⁸ Eloge, p. 14. For them too, as for Fanon and, similarly, in terms of 'the gaze': 'nous avons vu le monde à travers le filtre des valeurs occidentales, et notre fondement s'est trouvé "exotisé" par la vision française que nous avons dû adopter. Condition terrible que celle de percevoir son architecture intérieure, son monde, les instants de ses jours, ses valeurs propres, avec le regard de l'Autre' (Eloge, p. 14).

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" (Le Défi, p. 29). For Césaire, Creole is 'la langue de l'affectivité', incapable of being associated with 'rationalité, rigueur, cohérence, pureté' (Le Défi, p. 54). It is, rather, 'langage de la "folie"... Langage de la déraison, de l'illogisme, de l'irrationalité' (Le Défi, p. 91).⁶⁹ Trinh, too, associates 'madness' and 'unreason' with non-formalised vernacular languages. For her, however, it is a positive attribute of the vernacular that it is associated with irrationality, with a lack of clarity, that because it is 'not acquired through institutions - schools, churches, professions etc - [it is] therefore not repressed by either grammatical rules, technical terms, or key words'. For Trinh, clarity is merely another 'means of subjection'.⁷⁰

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'.⁷¹ 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 culture* speak of the liberating effects of Creole, of attending meetings organised by Bébel-Gisler in which they learned to speak and to write Creole. They describe these effects, furthermore, in terms primarily of the

⁶⁹ 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).

⁷⁰ Trinh, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 16.

⁷¹ 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).

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 instead of French 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' (Le Défi, p. 148). 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' (Le Défi, p. 154). However, in perhaps a more complex way, one 'marchande de boudin' tells Bébel-Gisler of her own experience of bodily liberation via learning to write Creole thus:

Moi, plus je fais des progrès, plus je sens ce qui se passe dans mon corps. Il y a des lettres, des mots, qui donnent des démangeaisons dans la tête, d'autres que je sens directement dans mon ventre. Parfois, c'est un seul vacarme. Je ne sais pas, mais on dirait que la langue et le corps, c'est une seule et même chose. (Le Défi, p. 148)

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 toute entière, c'est-à-dire son corps' (Le Défi, p. 151).⁷² 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 in Creole, 'corps' ('ko') means 'la personne consciente d'elle-même, de sa particularité, de sa place, de son rôle joué dans le monde' (Le Défi, p. 94). Thus, the word 'corps' can be seen to represent a practice of 'marronnage culturel': 'retirer son corps', in Creole, means 's'enfuir' - and not only in the literal sense of depriving the master of the capital that is one's body, but in the sense that to take away one's body is to take away one's whole self. As Bébel-Gisler explains: 'le lexème ko, en

⁷² For still another woman interviewed in Le Défi culturel, it is 'comme si j'étais malade et que j'ai fini par trouver la guérison' (Le Défi, p. 154). For many of those who follow Bébel-Gisler's literacy classes, she becomes a 'kenbwazè' ('quimboiseur') 'quelqu'un qui utilise ses dons... pour faire du bien, soigner, guérir' (Le Défi, p. 149, emphasis mine).

créole, correspondant de corps en français, véhicule une philosophie tout à fait différente de celle qui est liée à ce concept en Occident' (Le Défi, p. 158). Ko means 'la personne entière': in Creole, according to Bébel-Gisler, 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 aux 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. (Le Défi, p. 159)

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' described 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' (Le Défi, p. 105). That is, Creole is made up of:

Paroles qui nous parlent de la pénétration coloniale qui, partout, a entraîné morts et blessures. Blessures qu'on aurait pu croire cicatrisées et qui réapparaissent là, à l'alphabétisation, avec cette violence sourde, diffuse, qui vient nous rappeler l'histoire même des corps aux Antilles. (Le Défi, p. 155)

(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 French history - to which Guadelopeans have been subjected - but of hitherto marginalised Guadeloupean histories: 'prendre la parole c'est s'engager à faire l'Histoire' (Le Défi, p. 119). For the Antillean, Creole represents, according to Bébel-Gisler, 'le chemin qui le mènera à devenir soi-même, à se poser comme sujet de cette histoire nouvelle' (Le Défi, p. 132).

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, to Bébel-Gisler, 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. Léonora, like the people interviewed by Bébel-Gisler in Le Défi culturel, tells of how, for the men and women with whom she lives and works, it is still the case that, everywhere, 'les paroles valables doivent sonner en français' (Léonora, p. 180). Similarly, Léonora speaks of the (self-)imposition of French in terms, primarily, of bodily violence: 'dans leur école, seul le français existait, le créole était interdit. Tu devais parler le français, bien, mal, en te décrochant la mâchoire à coups de roche, mais le parler' (Léonora, p. 43). Indeed, in terms which illustrate the place of language for her in what Fanon would describe as 'le névrose antillais', she goes on to tell of someone she knew who, 'en voulant parler le français, s'était tellement arraché la mâchoire qu'il lui en était resté un tic de "bouche demie"' (Léonora, p. 54). It is only when Léonora herself is made aware of this situation that it becomes possible for her to contemplate the possibility of seeking a way out of the exploitation from which, at every level, she has suffered.

It is, apparently paradoxically, 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 a new priest, 'le père Céleste' arrives at Léonora's 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 were 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 explains:

Lorsqu'on commentait l'évangile en français, on ne pouvait pas dire grand-chose, on ne pouvait aller très loin. Le texte est déjà écrit... En créole, c'est autre chose. Tu peux t'exprimer, toutes tes idées sortent librement, et tu fais parler le texte. Si tu veux vraiment expliquer les effets du texte sur toi, en français, tu ne le peux. Tu cherches quels mots employer, tu ne trouves pas, tu t'embrouilles. Tu n'arrives pas à dire ce que tu ressens, et les autres ne te comprennent pas. Plutôt que de patauger en français miganné, parle ton créole! (Léonora, p. 245)

Léonora goes on, then, to explain how this experience 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 organised at the church and at meetings organised by Céleste outside of the church. These are meetings which begin as Bible-study groups and which, eventually, become forums for the discussion of other issues: unfair working conditions on the plantations, economic exploitation, the relationship between France and Guadeloupe. 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).⁷³ 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 illness⁷⁴ - by putting her own dispossession into the context 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.⁷⁵ In *Léonora*, it is therefore by no means the slave who is the first to read and write in the dominant language who is 'the first to run away'. 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 conceptualise 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.

⁷³ In *Le Défi culturel*, too, a woman interviewed by Bébel-Gisler explains, in similar terms to Léonora, what she has gained from attending the meetings, organised by Bébel-Gisler to promote the speaking and writing of Creole: 'Qui sommes-nous? Je veux savoir qui je suis. Avant ces séances, je croyais que j'étais française. J'ai commencé à comprendre pourquoi je ne suis pas française, mais guadeloupéenne' (*Le Défi*, p. 154).

⁷⁴ Léonora tells of how she spends 'dix-huit ans de lutte contre la maladie et la souffrance' (*Léonora*, p. 166), a life-long effort of 'repre[n]ant [un] corps en main', 'à reprendre le gouvernail de mon corps' (*Léonora*, p. 169, p. 170). Regaining bodily control, fighting against an inability to 'master' her life because of illness thus runs alongside an effort to regain control in other ways.

⁷⁵ The Church, historically one of the few places - like the wake - at which 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.

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'⁷⁶ - 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).⁷⁷ 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).⁷⁸ Either way, it is language

⁷⁶ 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).

⁷⁷ In *Le Défi culturel* Bébel-Gisler, too, refers to the way in which, 'logée dans la "matrice existentielle", la langue créole fait partie intégrante de nous-mêmes' (*Le Défi*, p. 23).

⁷⁸ This is true also for Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant who, 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, which was examined in chapter three, Creole can further be seen to be associated with the maternal side, for it has typically been decoded as an 'illegitimate' - that is, not 'pure' - language, a bastardised version of French for a bastardised 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 (pp. 599-605), p. 603). Indeed, in similar terms, Bernabé,

which, like the song sung to her - in Creole - by her mother and by her 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 singularise' (Le Défi, p. 56).

Given the obvious investment of both Léonora and Bébel-Gisler in the liberatory potential of Creole as 'mothertongue', it is apparently paradoxical that though Léonora tells her story to Bébel-Gisler in Creole, the latter chooses, when writing up Léonora's narrative, to translate it 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 ghostwriter who felt obliged to translate the slave's narrative as s/he wrote it down, thus masking the power-relationship in operation, concealing it in a guise of benevolence. At the same time, and within a more Antillean context, she would seem to be joining Césaire - 'référence obligée et père spirituel' (Le Défi, p. 54) - 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 standardised 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' (Le Défi, p. 32).

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).

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 both apparent and illuminating.⁷⁹ 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 - beyond the 'trickster strategy' which marked its development during slavery and into a language of production.⁸⁰ As the language of the plantations Creole began to evolve in relation to production - of cane, bananas, pineapples. However, when that system disappeared, never to be replaced with any other mode of production, 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' (Discours antillais, p. 353). It has, instead, remained merely 'une attitude linguistique': a form of 'le détour', 'le camouflage', of 'le zézaiement, la traîne, l'idiotie' (Discours antillais, p. 33). It is because of this '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': '[une] langue créée... [et] crispée' (Discours antillais, p. 242).

⁷⁹ In Le Défi culturel, Bébel-Gisler describes her attitude towards the problem of language as one which risks leading her 'sur un terrain glissant' (Le Défi, 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.

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' to describe the function of Creole during slavery (see Edouard Glissant, Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays, trans. J. Michael J. Dash, p. 21). As Glissant himself explains: 'l'esclave confisque le langage que le maître lui a imposé, langage simplifié, approprié aux exigences du travail (un petit nègre) et poussé à l'extrême de la simplification. Tu veux me réduire au bégaiement, je vais systématiser le bégaiement, nous verrons si tu t'y retrouveras' (Discours antillais, p. 32). Glissant also describes how, driven by the necessity to confuse the slaveowners, spoken Creole became '[un] heurtement précipité', '[un] déroulé-continu qui fait de la phrase un seul mot indivisible' (Discours antillais, p. 238). Thus, even though the béké masters knew Creole perfectly, when it was used by the slaves in a specific way they could not manage 'cet usage "dérégulé" de la langue' (Discours antillais, p. 238)

Unlike Césaire, however, Glissant does not find French to be the obvious alternative: if Creole is characterised by ‘verbal excess’ so too, in the Antilles, is French. Like Fanon and like Bébel-Gisler, Glissant points to the alienated manner in which 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’ (Discours antillais, p. 279). 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. It is not ‘un fait linguistique patent... qui aurait précédé l’acte dénaturant de la francisation et qui attendrait le moment de sa renaissance. Le créole ne fut pas, dans un auparavant édenique, et n’est pas encore notre langue nationale’ (Discours antillais, p. 282). Rather, Creole remains, indelibly, everywhere marked by French.⁸¹

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,

⁸¹ See Le Discours antillais, p. 240. For Glissant, too, there is no question of discovering the ‘origin’ of Creole: ‘il est patent que le créole est “francophone”, c’est-à-dire essentiellement que son lexique dérive du vocabulaire français pour la plupart’ (Discours antillais, p. 344).

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: standardisation thus represents one more move to claim Creole as a 'pure', repressed alternative to French.⁸² Such an undertaking thus betrays an obsession - equally as excessive as that with 'overmastering' French - with the impossible task of separating Creole entirely from its relationship with French. 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.⁸³ Ultimately, however, such projects should not represent an end in themselves but, rather 'une préparation aux floraisons futures' (*Discours antillais*, p. 353). For Glissant, the real answer to the current impasse entailed by binary

⁸² Glissant gives the example of the replacement of the French 'r', in spelling Creole, with a 'w' - so 'parole' becomes 'pawol', for example. He feels that while it may be justified in other cases - 'mwin' for 'moin', for example - 'il introduit une difficulté supplémentaire de lecture qui ne semble pas justifiée' (*Discours antillais*, p. 280).

⁸³ As Glissant explains: 'il faut pourtant dégager de cette alternative, qui interroge l'histoire, l'usage actuel du créole dans les revendications populaires. Cet usage en effet dégrappe la langue créole de l'irresponsabilité, la constitue en arme de sa propre combat' (*Discours antillais*, p. 283).

thinking 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:

Notre perspective est de nous forger..., à partir des usages débilisés de deux langues dont le contrôle ne nous fut jamais collectivement acquis, un langage par quoi nous poserions volontairement l'ambigu et enracinerions carrément l'incertain de notre parole. (*Discours antillais*, p. 282)⁸⁴

Glissant recognises, however, the difficulty, if not impossibility, of undertaking such a move without simply reversing and repeating existing hierarchical and binary structures. However, for the ambiguity of the relationship of French to Creole to disappear, 'il faut au préalable un bouleversement de structures tel qu'il serait puéride d'en traiter [ici]' (*Discours antillais*, p. 282). For the moment, Glissant 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 very binary 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'. For her, such a language remains as yet impossible, even as it is urgent and desirable. 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, again in a similar way to Glissant, the strategy of the

⁸⁴ Following Glissant, Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant similarly look forward to the possibility of creating a new language out of the existing situation of bilingualism, envisaging 'de ces langues bâtir notre langage' (*Eloge*, p. 43).

present moment should be one of disruption, of working on the dominant (linguistic) order from within:

Enrayer la machinerie théorique elle-même, de suspendre sa prétention à la production d'une vérité et d'un sens par trop univoques... répétant-interprétant la façon dont, à l'intérieur du discours, le féminin se trouve déterminé: comme manque, défaut, ou comme mime et reproduction inversée du sujet, elles signifient qu'à cette logique un excès, dérangeant, est possible du côté du féminin.⁸⁵

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 "mente", elle "trompe", ce qui est toujours attribué aux femmes'.⁸⁶

To return to the Antilles once more, the 'feminine excess' which characterises Creole - its 'madness', 'delirium', 'irrationality' - may similarly be put to use. As Glissant explains, Creole as 'strategy of trickery' 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.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Irigaray, Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un, p. 75. As Elizabeth Grosz explains, Irigaray aims 'excessively to overburden existing forms of language and dominant discourses with their own ambiguities, the affirmations they unconsciously make, the materiality they refuse to acknowledge - in other words, the processes of their production (including the sexually coded positions of enunciation)' (Grosz, Sexual Subversions, p. 127).

⁸⁶ Irigaray, Ce sexe, pp. 134-5.

⁸⁷ Glissant, Le Discours antillais, p. 239. Glissant writes similarly of the way in which, in contemporary Martinique, 'le grain de l'inconscient baratté dépose pour nous dans la trame du langage. La démesure, qu'il faut acclimater. Le mot comme incertitude, le mot comme chuchotis, bruit' (Discours antillais, p. 278).

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 standardise 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' (Discours antillais, p. 347). 'Le vacarme' can come to function as 'le discours', 'le bruit' as 'la parole' (Discours antillais, p. 238). 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.⁸⁸ 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.

It is in the light of these observations that the language of Léonora may 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).⁸⁹ 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

⁸⁸ 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. 321-345 (pp. 331-2).

⁸⁹ In Le Défi culturel Bébel-Gisler writes, in a way which might easily describe her agenda in Léonora, of the necessity 'd'intégrer la population au processus même de recherche... d'éviter une série de pièges liés... au fonctionnement hiérarchique de la recherche' (Le Défi, p. 38).

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 and is sent to live with her cousins, proceeds by association, as Léonora recounts various episodes of her life in no apparent order. She describes her first job in Pointe-à-Pitre, and then jumps forward to describe her first period when she was seventeen; she alludes to a later part of the story - to her illness and to her problems with Joseph - and then goes back to recall incidents which occurred when she was fifteen (*Léonora*, pp. 88-112). 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.⁹⁰ 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.⁹¹ However, Bébel-Gisler explains how, more than simply integrating actual Creole into her written text, she attempted

⁹⁰ Much of Léonora's narrative consists of advice about housekeeping and childcare, and is frequently offered in an informal style. For example: 'Zip! un petit coup de Jex, mais quand vous avez fait cuire des haricots rouges, ça attache, il faut froter... Et le cul de mes canaris, on devrait s'y mirer!' (*Léonora*, p. 189). Equally however, her 'maternal', and often witty, advice may suddenly be transformed into a much more overtly serious discussion of a specific point. For example, when her son tells her that her neighbour 'exploits' her children Léonora, in an aside to the particular story in hand, informs Bébel-Gisler: 'je ne suis pas tout à fait d'accord avec ce mot "exploiter". Ce sont des capitalistes qui exploitent, pas les parents' (*Léonora*, p. 186).

⁹¹ 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 çanari (= 'faitout')... elle sert à Persillette un plein çouï (= 'demi-calabasse servant de plat')' (*Léonora*, p. 27).

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' (Le Défi, p. 32).⁹² Thus it is, indeed, with several of the proverbs or traditional sayings, for while some remain in Creole ('pawol a Nèg pa ni bout', Léonora, p. 207) with translation provided ('paroles de nègres, paroles sans fin'), 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"'.⁹³ 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 characterised - that is, by repressing from it all that is 'unclear', 'irrational', and so on. Used in such a way, Creole surfaces to threaten

⁹² 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).

⁹³ Lionnet, Autobiographical Voices, p. 333.

the apparent stability of that mode of functioning, thus resisting once more absorption and neutralisation as oppositional language.⁹⁴

Thus Bébel-Gisler 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' (Eloge, p. 36). 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, it would seem, are engaged in demonstrating the way in which the acceptance and promotion of créolité may be a potentially powerful mode of imagining liberation from the unitary and monologic structures and discourses which have been imposed upon the Antilles. At the same time, however - and here the radical difference between the projects of Tituba and Léonora and those of Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant becomes evident - Bébel-Gisler and Condé are engaged also, as we have seen, in

⁹⁴ It would, of course, be both 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 unable to discern anything 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 to this thesis.

demonstrating the power of 'la parole créole' as a 'feminine' mode of disruption. At last, and as perspectives are generally extended beyond the Antilles towards new and wider 'solidarities', women are beginning to be included within, rather than excluded by, contemporary attempts to redefine notions of what it may mean to be Antillean.

Afterword

As I hope to have shown during the course of this thesis, 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.

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).

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. Very recently, however - and just prior to the submission of this thesis - Condé has published yet another novel, La Migration des coeurs.² This is a novel which is very similar in its concerns to many of her latest novels, but which goes beyond and consolidates those concerns in a manner which suggests the idea of progression and development much more strongly once again. Indeed, it is a novel which not only brings together the concerns of her own oeuvre, but which brings together those general concerns of Guadeloupean women's writing which have been examined throughout this thesis. For this reason, it is via an examination of this novel - an examination which is necessarily rather brief, and which by no means allows La Migration des coeurs the space that it might otherwise have occupied - that I should like to draw this thesis to a close.

La Migration des coeurs is, I would suggest, Condé's most wide-ranging text to date - and certainly her most 'creole'. 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 most recent 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

² Condé, La Migration des coeurs (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1995).

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: La Migration des coeurs begins, for example, with the figure of Melchior during 'la procession du jour des rois' (La Migration des coeurs, 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 course of this thesis: 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 coeurs, p. 78), an archetypal Antillean hero who assures his wife: 'mon histoire passera dans celle de ce pays' (La Migration des coeurs, p. 110).

La Migration des coeurs 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 coeurs 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 coeurs, p. 56). More than this, La Migration des coeurs - 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 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 Condé's text 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 most recent of Guadeloupean women's texts is concerned also 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 during the course of this thesis, Condé's most recent novel 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, as we began to see in Bébel-Gisler's Léonora is, of course, linguistic; a movement towards the use of Creole as the paradigmatic expression of créolité. La Migration des coeurs - once more instructive because so recent - 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 (such as myself) 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 could quite readily be regarded as 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 coeurs 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.³

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

³ Vèvè Clark, 'Je me suis réconciliée avec mon île: une interview de Maryse Condé', pp. 110-12.

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 thematisation of similar attempts, that has rendered her an emblematic figure both within the field of Antillean women's writing and within this thesis itself. This suggestion, however, and my use of La Migration des coeurs as a means of bringing together the disparate concerns of this dissertation, 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 Lacrosil has published nothing since Demain Jab-Herma and though Manicom died in 1976 (apparently having committed suicide), 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,⁴ has switched her attention to theatre - a still-emerging, and radical, genre in the Antilles.⁵

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

⁴ Simone Schwarz-Bart, Ton beau capitaine (Paris: Seuil, 1987).

⁵ Unlike the novel, theatre has not been the dominant literary genre in the Antilles, but there is nonetheless an ever-growing 'tradition' of dramatic writing and performance. Césaire, of course, wrote several plays, including La tragédie du roi Christophe (1963), Une Saison au Congo (1966) and La Tempête (1969). To this earlier period, too, belongs the work of Daniel Boukman (Chants pour hâter la mort du temps des Orphée ou Madinina île esclave, 1967) and Vincent Placolty (La mort douloureuse et tragique d'André Alikér, 1969). It was the 1970s and 1980s, however, which saw the growth of theatre as an important genre in the Antilles, with the work, for example, of Condé, Placolty, Boukman and Chamoiseau. This was the period, especially in Guadeloupe, of the most militant pro-independence action and, for many, theatre has continued to represent the most radical of genres in the Antilles. (On Antillean theatre see, for example, Ghislaine Gadjar, 'Aspects du théâtre en Guadeloupe', Bulletin d'information du CENNADOM, 73, 1984, and Juris Sileniaks, '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).

migrant worker - as well as examining issues of language, orality and literacy. Not only does Wilnor, who is apparently 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 thesis. There are numerous Antillean women writers - either younger or simply less well-known than those investigated here - 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.⁶ Other writers, too, such as Gisèle Pineau and Lucie Julia from Guadeloupe, or Marie-Reine de Jaham, a békée, and Suzanne Dracius-Pinalie, from Martinique, may be included within the still-emergent 'maternal genealogy' of Antillean women writers.

⁶ Sylviane Telchid is perhaps best-known for her collections of Antillean folktales, such as Ti-Chika... et d'autres contes antillais (Paris: Editions Caribéennes, 1985), though her most evidently creole works include 'Mondésir', a short story which draws heavily on the oral tradition (published in Ralph Ludwig, ed., Ecrire la 'parole de nuit', op. cit.), and her recent novel Throvia de la Dominique (Paris: Présence africaine, 1994). Michelle Gargar de Fortfalaise's novel Le Flamboyant aux yeux bleus (Paris: La Pensée Universelle, 1993) is, similarly, a semi-realist and semi-magical Antillean tale.

These are women who, 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. At the same time, it is becoming abundantly clear that these women writers are themselves no longer prepared to be excluded from the Antillean tradition, and neither are they prepared simply to be 'included' within it. Rather, they are coming to occupy a position at the very forefront of contemporary efforts to expand and to redefine a literary and theoretical tradition which, after all, remains in its infancy.

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