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Displacements in Contemporary Caribbean Writing

by

Doris Hambuch



A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

Comparative Literature

Department of Comparative Literature, Religion, and Film/Media Studies

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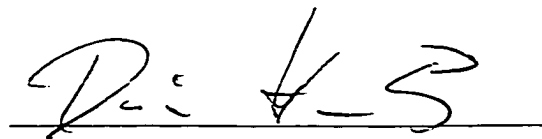
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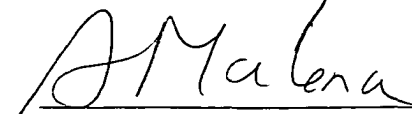
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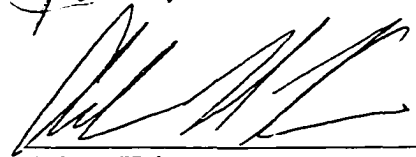
The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Displacements in Contemporary Caribbean Writing* submitted by Doris Hambuch in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature.



George Lang, Supervisor


Anne Malena


Milan V. Dimić


Jerry Varsava


Adam Krims


J. Michael Dash, External Reader

for

To my parents, Inge and Erich Hambuch,
to my sister Ingrid Kronenberger and
her family Thomas, Nadja, and Nina,
and to the memory of my brother, Stefan Hambuch

Abstract

Through comparative analyses of Anglophone, Francophone, Hispanic, as well as Dutch Caribbean texts, this study discusses the theme of displacement and its relation to exile and migration as one of the crucial characteristics of a Caribbean regional consciousness, of what has come to be called Caribbeanness. Tracing the importance of theoretical movements such as *négritude*, *créolité*, transculturation, and creolization for contemporary Caribbean writing, and engaging the discourses of postcoloniality as well as postmodernity, I situate the region within (post)modern global dispersion. I thereby contrast the concepts of transculturation and creolization, as they are envisioned by Caribbean intellectuals such as Édouard Glissant, Antonio Benítez-Rojo, Wilson Harris, and Astrid Roemer, with a US-centred notion of globalization.

Structured in three parts, this dissertation first concentrates on the sense of displacement which results from a history of colonization, of slavery and indentured labor, and which is thus located within the region itself. The hybridity engendered by this history always dominates the development of the area's identity and subjectivity. Among the texts discussed in this first part are Derek Walcott's *Omeros*, Glissant's *Les Indes*, Frank Martinus Arion's *De laatste vrijheid*, Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*, and Guillermo Cabrera Infante's *Tres tristes tigres*. The constructive concepts of the theories are at this point as important as the disillusionments of the region's reality.

The study's second part concentrates on migrations to the so-called 'Old World', specifically Africa and the European colonial powers. Analyses of Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, Astrid Roemer's *Nergens ergens*, and Daniel Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil* foreground the situation of immigrant communities in European metropolises. The relationship between The Netherlands and former Dutch Guiana is singled out in the context of Astrid Roemer's *Suriname Trilogy*. The movement to the north of the Americas is the object of study in my final part. Here, I focus on a neo-colonial ethos created by economic rather than constitutional dependencies. Analyses include those of Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*, of Emile Ollivier's *Passages*, of Ana Lydia Vega's "Pollito Chicken," and of Walcott's *The Bounty*.

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Introduction

The 1998-edition of *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* includes an entry on “Caribbean literature,” which it defines as “literary works of the Caribbean area written in Spanish, French, or English” (866). As a scholar of Caribbean studies, I obviously welcome the inclusion of a literature which is popularly and internationally still little known in such a classic reference work. I can, however, not help but be alarmed by the fact that the contributor trusted with this entry should be ignorant of the considerable number of Dutch texts, as well as of the importance the Creole languages play in the literary landscape of the Caribbean. Unfortunately, this neglect reflects the general academic treatment of the area’s cultures. In my own attempt to provide a comparative study of Caribbean writing, I therefore emphasize the inclusion of texts from the Dutch-language part of the region.

I agree with Franklin W. Knight that “the Caribbean reality at the end of the twentieth century is tantalizingly difficult to define” (Knight 308) without claiming that the realities of other parts of the world are necessarily less complicated. In his comprehensive *The Caribbean: The Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism*, Knight continues that “the nearly thirty million inhabitants scattered across hundreds of islands and the mainland enclaves of Belize, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana represent an eclectic blend of almost all the peoples and cultures of the world.” Despite all linguistic, geographic, and political differences between individual parts of the area, I hold that a common history of colonization, of slavery and indentured labor, which is largely responsible for the great cultural diversity in this relatively small space, has engendered similar themes as well as ways of treating them in what I therefore call “Caribbean” texts, be they written and/or set

within the region itself or within the exile communities in Europe or North America. One such theme, that of displacement, prevails in all the texts discussed in the present study.

Some fifteen years ago, Katie Jones completed a dissertation entitled “A Comparative History of Caribbean Poetry in English, French, and Spanish” in the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Alberta. Covering the time from Columbus’ arrival in the area until the mid 1980s, Jones regards the Caribbean as a distinct literary space, thus anticipating the approach taken up in the few comparative monographs published on Caribbean writing to date. Applying polysystem theory, Jones identifies Caribbean literature as a ‘sub-system’ on the European periphery until the turn of the twentieth century. With a focus on the Negritude movement, she continues to outline the development of a protest-poetry, which would now be commonly attributed to the category of ‘postcolonial’ writing, a category I challenge in the course of my second chapter. In the closing paragraphs of her conclusion, Jones addresses the progressing emigration from the islands, as well as its literary representation. She suggests that “a study of this diaspora literature is one of the many areas in the neglected field of Caribbean letters which demand the attention of the literary scholar” (Jones 158). While my own focus is on the diaspora in question, my study is less concerned with justifications of the category ‘Caribbean literature’ as such, or consequently with its history. Building on the work carried forth by scholars like Jones, and taking the category for granted, I am today able to present the specific thematic approach I explain below. Including theories developed by Caribbean intellectuals, I demonstrate how the concept of displacement is crucial to the area’s regional/cultural consciousness, to what has come to be called Caribbeanness.

If my study had to be attributed to one of the critical approaches currently cultivated in North American academia, then its classification would certainly be ‘postcolonial discourse’ with a leaning toward Marxist and feminist criticism. Since the leading figures of the respective movements, for example Homi K. Bhabha, Frederic Jameson, or Gayatri Spivak, are missing from my bibliography, I feel pressured to explain my affiliation with the discourse in question. The term ‘postcolonial’ has by now been widely challenged. Several areas of the Caribbean, for example the French Overseas Departments, or the Netherlands Antilles, are still constitutionally linked to the European colonizers. Other, officially independent, countries have become the object of a new form of economic colonialism. Nevertheless, postcolonial discourse was obviously crucial for the recognition of artistic creation as well as the expression of independent identities and subjectivities of those parts of the world that are more or less dominated and oppressed by European/US powers. These parts of the world are numerous enough that to study them with regard to categories such as “New English,” “Commonwealth,” “Third World,” or “Postcolonial” necessarily implies to treat them superficially and ignorant of their specific identities and subjectivities postcolonial discourse initially meant to make aware of. I agree with Ania Loomba when she writes in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* that “neither pre-colonial cultures nor processes of colonisation, let alone colonised subjects are identical. Not only have anti-colonial resistances therefore taken on many forms and drawn upon many different resources, they have also created controversies within one ‘colonised’ population” (Loomba 184-5). In order to explore the specifically Caribbean situation I find it thus more helpful to discuss Caribbean thinkers such as Frank Martinus Arion, Édouard Glissant, Dionne Brand, and

Astrid Roemer rather than theoreticians whose discourse, for one reason or another often more popular in our (“Western”) academies, is more abstract and thus less concerned with individual spaces. I propose to consider Martinus Arion’s as well as Glissant’s texts as representative of Marxist criticism as Brand’s and Roemer’s are of a feminist one, whereby the latter movement is often enough strongly informed by the former. I should at this point also indicate that these writers are then discussed with regard to two types of text. They are the artists whose fictions are analyzed alongside their critical, theoretical writing, whereby the blurred borderlines between both types have been commonly acknowledged. However fluent these borders might be, my preference of philosophers active on both ends of the ‘primary-secondary’ spectrum over those whose theories are more abstract not only with regard to space but also with regard to fiction provokes a further methodological characteristic. Throughout the work on this study I always departed from Caribbean fictions. It was the prose, the poetry, the prose-poetry, or poetic prose which lead to and informed the theoretical background, and not vice versa.

Whereas an interest in the region seems to be growing in either English, French, Spanish, or Dutch departments at universities, and there are by now many collections of essays devoted to Caribbean writing,¹ the number of comparative monographs is very limited. Notable exceptions are Barbara Webb’s *Myth and History in Caribbean Fiction: Alejo Carpentier, Wilson Harris and Édouard Glissant* (1992), Colette Maximin’s

¹ First and foremost, there is A. James Arnold’s extensive three-volume *History of Literature in the Caribbean*. Furthermore there are Ineke Phaf’s *Creole Presence/Presencia criolla*, Marlies Glaser and Marion Pausch’s *Caribbean Writers/Les auteurs caribéens*, or Belinda Edmondson’s *Caribbean Romances*.

Littératures caribéennes comparées (1996), Silvio Torres-Saillant's *Caribbean Poetics: Toward an Aesthetic of West Indian Literature* (1997), and J. Michael Dash's *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context* (1998). In his introduction to the latter, Dash departs from a vision of the so-called "New World," a term which has become "an unavoidable compromise," (1) as a *provisional* center, in a universe where there is no single center, where everything is therefore marginal. Considering the Caribbean an entity within this 'New World', Dash rightly states that "no survey of attempts to conceptualize the region as a whole would be complete without a consideration of the extent to which Caribbean thought has attempted over time to grapple with the issue of a regional ethos" (9). Relying on one of the most prominent representatives of Caribbean thought, on Édouard Glissant, Dash bases Caribbean discourse on heterogeneity and interrelating, on fluidity and movement, on 'becoming' as opposed to 'being'. It is within this idea of movement that I situate my concept of 'displacement', which is, as I explain below, linked closely to 'exile', but more inclusive than my understanding of the latter. While my concern is less with historicity and I therefore limit my choice of primary sources to the second half of the twentieth century, I do, like Dash, attempt "as full-blown a comparative study of Caribbean literature as is possible" (17). In this context, I perceive of my thesis as supplementary to the works by Webb, Maximin, Torres-Saillant, and Dash in that my analyses also include authors from the Dutch-speaking part of the area.

Before I outline the individual chapters of my study, I turn to the theme of 'displacement' and its relation to 'exile'. 'Exile' has always been a prominent topic in literary studies. Claudio Guillén is right when he begins *El sol de los desterrados: Literatura*

y *exilio* by stating that exiles are innumerable (“Innumerables, los desterrados,” Guillén 11). Accordingly, the number of literary representations of the theme, as Guillén has it, is infinite. Nevertheless, Harry Levin attributes a still increasing importance to the concept of exile in his introduction to “Literature and Exile.” Referring to Georg Brandes’ study on émigrés in the late nineteenth century, Levin concludes that “it will take many such volumes [...] to chronicle the literary migrations of the twentieth century” (Levin 62). Although the literatures of the Caribbean would provide an extremely rich contribution to these volumes, they have been largely neglected in comparative book-length studies of literary exile. Neither Michael Seidel’s *Exile and the Narrative Imagination* (1986), nor María Lagos-Pope’s *Exile in Literature* (1988), nor Bettina L. Knapp’s *Exile and the Writer: Exoteric and Esoteric Experiences: A Jungian Approach* (1991) acknowledge the prominence of the subject matter in Caribbean writing. *The Literature of Emigration and Exile* (1992), edited by James Whitlark and Wendell Aycock, includes one essay on *Raining Backwards* by Cuban/US-American Roberto G. Fernández, which is also dealt with in *Literature and Exile* (1990), edited by David Bevan. King Russell, John Connell, and Paul White include an essay on George Lamming as well as one on French West Indian literature in their more recent *Writing Across Worlds: Literature and Migration* (1995).

The notion of ‘exile’ is presented with only negative connotations by Paul Tabori in *The Anatomy of Exile: A Semantic and Historical Study*, along with very thorough distinctions between ‘emigrant’, ‘refugee’, ‘displaced person’, ‘deportee’, ‘evacuee’ and ‘asylum seeker’. In his definition of ‘exile’ Tabori does, however, allow for the possibility of a “voluntary separation from one’s native country” (Tabori 23). Along these lines, Lagos-

Pope separates “true” from voluntary exile, as well as a ‘physical’ from a ‘spiritual’ one (Lagos-Pope 8-10). It is the latter binary which serves as a basis for Knapp’s definition of ‘exoteric exile’ as a permanent physical departure, in contrast to ‘esoteric exile’ as a withdrawal from an outer world (Knapp 1-2). While the emphasis in the present study lies on the former type of exile, the second type and especially its interrelation with the first one is also relevant.

In *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question*, Angelika Bammer defines ‘displacement’ as “the separation of people from their native culture either through physical dislocation (as refugees, immigrants, migrants, exiles, or expatriates) or the colonizing imposition of a foreign culture” (Bammer xi). While I discuss the latter phenomenon in the first part of this study, “**Displacements Within the Caribbean**,” I concentrate on the former in the following two parts, “**Migration to the ‘Old World’**” and “**Movement to the North of the Americas**.” Without much interest in most recent periodizations, Bammer continues that displacement “is one of the most formative experiences of our century.” Caren Kaplan, on the other hand, distinguishes between ‘travel’ and ‘displacement’ to separate modern from postmodern phenomena related to exile in *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*. Arguing that “Euro-American modernisms and postmodernisms are as linked as they are distinct and discontinuous” (Kaplan 8), Kaplan juxtaposes rather than opposes the two terms when she writes that “travel is very much a modern concept, signifying both commercial and leisure movement in an era of expanding Western capitalism, while displacement refers us to the more mass migrations that modernity has engendered” (3). More in favor of Bammer’s vision, I do think that Kaplan’s division is helpful in that it

suggests an increasing rapidity of global mobility. While I discuss the relevance of ‘postmodernism’ and ‘postmodernity’ for ‘postcoloniality’ and a Caribbean regional consciousness in “Caribbeanness in *De laatste vrijheid*,” the literary representation of the more recent mobility, of actual migration, is the subject of chapters four to nine. Because this representation is not favored by certain genres, I include poetry as well as short and long prose. In what is left of this introduction, I situate my primary sources as well as their authors within their Caribbean or exile environment and with regard to the notion of displacement.

“**Displacement Within the Caribbean,**” addresses the regional dispersion of cultural influences, due to the area’s common history of colonization, slavery, and indentured labor. Accounting for linguistic borders as well as differences in political status or geographic conditions, this part concentrates on the theoretical background with which to visualize the area as an entity with a certain regional consciousness. Such a consciousness is often expressed through references to the natural environment, to Caribbean landscapes. Texts can therefore *create* a vision of the area in that they celebrate its landscapes, which I demonstrate in the first chapter, “Creating and Celebrating a Caribbean Environment: *Omeros* and *Les Indes* (The Indies).” Both texts at the center of this chapter, Derek Walcott’s and Édouard Glissant’s long poems, can be attributed a foundational quality of epic character. Both the St. Lucian Nobel Prize winner as well as the Martinican author of the seminal *Discours antillais* (*Caribbean Discourse*) are concerned with alternative histories of the area. While they never lose sight of either colonial legacies or universal phenomena, they concentrate on the specifics of the Caribbean, on Caribbean heroes such as Delgrès or

Dessalines, or on new categories of heroism altogether. Both poets point out new ways in which to employ the colonizers' languages and, alternatively, the creoles in order to describe, to (re)name their native environments. Both Glissant's language of a 'free poetics' and Walcott's use of the local Creole to emphasize an unmistakably St. Lucian atmosphere, is taken up again in "Choosing a Language: Polyglossia and the Caribbean Writer."

While "Creating and Celebrating a Caribbean Environment" is then more interested in tangible landscapes, in the physical situation of the region, "Caribbeanness in *De laatste vrijheid* (The Ultimate Freedom)" explores the theoretical background of a regional consciousness. Introducing concepts such as 'creolization' and *antillanité* or 'Caribbeanness' and situating them within contemporary discourses of postmodernity and postcoloniality, I use this second chapter to establish the premises to which I return throughout the course of my study. Curaçaoan Frank Martinus Arion's utopian novel revolves around ideas of a Caribbean identity and subjectivity, ideas developed most prominently by Caribbean thinkers such as Glissant, Antonio Benítez-Rojo, or Wilson Harris. Although Torres-Saillant may be carried a little too far when he speaks about an "organic whole" of Caribbean literature in his introduction to *Caribbean Poetics*, the concept of a cultural Caribbean consciousness, and thus of Caribbean unity, underlies the idea that Caribbean writing is as interrelated with, as it is distinct from the literatures of the rest of the world in general, and from European, North and Latin American ones in particular (Torres-Saillant 2).

Whereas celebrations of the natural environment as well as the theories about a regional consciousness suggest primarily positive prospects, the last chapter of "**Displacements Within the Caribbean**" presents a more negative perspective of the area's

developments. “*Tres tristes tigres (Three Trapped Tigers), A Small Place, and Other Disillusionments*” concentrates on the notion of neo-colonialism, on a continuing or new dependence on the so-called ‘First World’, as well as on rivalries and a lack of cooperation within the region. Theoretical concepts are challenged by the archipelago’s reality through analyses of Guillermo Cabrera Infante’s novel and Jamaica Kincaid’s non-fictional text. While Cabrera Infante, a very vocal critic of Castro’s socialism, is one of the few forced exiles of this study, Kincaid chose to leave Antigua at seventeen and became successful as a staff writer of *The New Yorker*. While Cabrera Infante’s vision of Cuba is then mainly generated from the distance, Kincaid’s description of Antigua is based on a visit after several years in the United States. Be they positive or negative, stressing the cooperation or the quarrels within the region, all the writers discussed in “**Displacements Within the Caribbean**” present a particular vision either of the entire region or of a certain part seen within the larger Caribbean environment. To be sure, the three chapters of this first part of my study attest that it is precisely a sense of displacement, of dispersion and diversity, which is crucial to a Caribbean regional consciousness.

While “**Displacements Within the Caribbean**” concentrates on the region itself, and thus on texts set within it, “**Migration to the ‘Old World’**” addresses physical departures from the Caribbean. It analyses texts in which characters migrate to those parts of the world from which a majority of the Caribbean population originates. Challenging the division between ‘Old’ and ‘New World’ in “Destination Africa: *Heremakhonon* (Waiting for Happiness) and *Stemmen uit Afrika* (Voices from Africa),” I suggest that if the division

is to be made, it can not only be Europe of which the ‘Old World’ consists. Tracing the history of Negritude, I emphasize the importance African traditions have for African-Americans, by which I mean all inhabitants of the Americas of African descent. Whereas Frank Martinus Arion’s long poem still subscribes explicitly to the Negritude ideology, Maryse Condé’s novel presents a subtle criticism. While Martinus Arion’s scenarios in the epic poem reach back to the times of slavery and generally refuse temporal specification, let alone the identification of a story line, Guadeloupean Condé’s protagonist is presented on a tangible journey, via Paris, in search of her personal roots and ancestors. Yet, both texts equally underline the significance of the African element in Caribbean culture.

“Islands Within the European Metropolis: *L’Isolé soleil* (Lone Sun), *Nergens ergens* (Nowhere somewhere), *The Lonely Londoners*,” then focuses on the colonial powers. The three novels each present exile communities in European metropolises, which are islands in themselves, as Guadeloupean Daniel Maximin phrases it in *L’Isolé soleil*. Astrid Roemer’s protagonist in *Nergens ergens* leaves Suriname for Utrecht and Amsterdam, and Sam Selvon’s characters from the Anglophone Caribbean meet in London. All of them equally experience alienation and discrimination in these countries whose cultures had once been imposed on the societies Maximin’s, Roemer’s and Selvon’s characters depart from. It is this alienation which makes them aware of their ‘otherness’, which enforces a sense of Caribbeanness abroad. The migration of the fictional characters in the three novels reflects the journeys of their creators, the authors of the three texts. Maximin moved with his family from Guadeloupe to Paris, Roemer left Suriname for the Netherlands, and Selvon spent many years in London after leaving Trinidad and before moving on to Canada. The experience of

the European metropolis, as well as of the distance to the home culture, is therefore also theorized in critical articles by and interviews with the three writers discussed in this chapter.

“Exile and Caribbean Transculturation in Astrid Roemer’s Suriname Trilogy” finally concentrates exclusively on the relationship between former Dutch Guiana and the Netherlands. Roemer’s trilogy traces the developments which lead to Suriname’s independence as well as the following turmoil, the military coup, dictatorship, and rebellions. Suriname’s fate functions as one example of revolutionary activity in the region whose consequences lead the still constitutionalized linked territories to retain their status rather than aim for independence. In short, **“Migration to the ‘Old World’”** studies the ties to some of those continents from which people arrived in or were forced to the Caribbean in the centuries succeeding Columbus’ voyages. Negritude ideas were developed during the first half of the twentieth century, and mark a first emancipatory movement to be followed by ideas of Creoleness and Caribbeanness. Different parts of the region have realized such ideas differently. More radical, political independence sometimes cautioned neighboring territories to keep European ties and concentrate on cultural values instead. With regard to the Anglophone Caribbean, emigration to Europe is commonly considered a ‘first wave’ in the 1950s and ‘60s, preceding the movement to the United States or Canada, which is the subject of the final part of my study.

“Movement to the North of the Americas” begins with settings located in the continent’s extreme North, in Canada. An official policy of multiculturalism has here been established since the 1980s to support all ethnic minorities and to retain the model of a

mosaic society as opposed to the US melting pot. Controversies about this policy precede my analyses of Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* and of Émile Ollivier's *Passages*. While the story of the former moves between an unidentified Caribbean island and Toronto, that of the latter is set in Haiti, Miami, and Montréal. The comparison of the two texts thus also addresses Canadian bilingualism, a concept which created the basis for Canadian multiculturalism. While the migration to the so-called 'Old World' implied the encounter with cultural influences brought to the Caribbean during its colonization, Canada constitutes another part of the so-called 'New World' which includes the Caribbean. While the idea of Europe, Africa, or East India and China alludes to the sources of traditions interacting in the Antilles, Canada is itself a place to which all these traditions were carried. The same applies to the United States, though multiculturalism is officially dealt with differently there. The fact that the US melting pot denotes a policy of assimilation does not necessarily mean that individual immigrant communities do not preserve their respective customs as much as they do in Canada. Some of these communities in the US, most prominently Hispanic ones, also retain their languages, which is the subject of "Choosing a Language: Polyglossia and the Caribbean Writer."

Anglophone Caribbeans who migrate to the primarily Anglophone part of Canada, or to Great Britain, like Francophone Caribbeans who depart for Québec or France, as well as Dutch Caribbeans in the Netherlands are not forced to learn a different language. Such is the case, however, for many Caribbeans who move to the United States. Chapter eight is therefore concerned with language switching. While Puerto Rican Rosario Ferré only occasionally turns to English rather than Spanish, Haitian Edwidge Danticat has chosen to

write in English rather than in her mother tongue French. Another Puerto Rican, Ana Lydia Vega, presents a stylized version of the ‘Spanglish’, spoken by Cuban communities in Miami or by the so-called ‘Nuyoricans’, in one of her short stories. Through my analysis of “Pollito Chicken” as well as of the linguistic situation within the region and within exile communities, I explore the implications of linguistic choices. No matter whether the alienation from their native cultures is accompanied by the choice of another language as literary medium, all the writers discussed in this study sooner or later find themselves ‘in between’ cultures. This dilemma is the subject of my closing chapter “Homecomings Without Home? Commuting Within a *chaos monde*.”

No matter which destination or destinations the writers consulted throughout my study ended up in, most of them have more or less often made the experience of a return. Sometimes this experience is addressed in the works mentioned above, for example in Kincaid’s *A Small Place* or in Dionne Brand’s *In Another Place*. Some writers, like Martinus Arion, have returned permanently. Others, like Walcott, Roemer, Glissant, or Condé commute more or less regularly. After all his journeying to Europe and Canada, Selvon died in Trinidad in 1994. In my final chapter I situate this circular movement, this individual *nomadisme circulaire*, to use Glissant’s expression, within a larger context of (post)modern globalization. In his book-length study on Glissant, Dash writes that “the Caribbean has become exemplary in this creative global ‘chaos’ which proliferates everywhere” (Dash 1995, 23). Glissant’s notion of *chaos monde*, which he defines as a constructive as opposed to the apocalyptic chaos in *Introduction à une Poétique du Divers* (71), corresponds to his idea of creolization and transculturation. Far from suggesting superior and inferior elements,

Glissant's concepts based on hybridity, dispersion, and displacement are forcefully anti-imperialist. It is precisely this quality which leads me to prefer Glissantian creolization and transculturation from the seemingly more popular globalization, which I consider Euro/US-American dominated.

"Displacements in Contemporary Caribbean Writing," then, seeks to contribute to Caribbean literary studies which include the area's four main linguistic parts, Anglophone, Francophone, Dutch, and Hispanic, which are therefore comparative in their approach. Regarding the region's common history of colonization, of slavery and indentured labor, as well as its current (post/neo)colonial statuses and societies characterized by creolization and transculturation, as underlying common themes in Caribbean literary creation, I pursue one such theme, that of displacement, in texts from the second half of the twentieth century. Departing from a poetic as well as a theoretical definition of the space in question, I follow the concept of displacement from its implications within the area to its connections with exile in the 'Old' as well as in the North of the 'New World'. In doing so, I continuously locate the Caribbean environment within a context of global dispersion, within a context of postmodernity as well as postcoloniality.

I Displacements Within the Caribbean

1. Creating and Celebrating a Caribbean Environment: *Omeros* and *Les Indes*

Combien de cyclones faudra-t-il pour nous réconcilier
avec notre paysage?

- Daniel Maximin, *L'Isolé soleil*

Both Derek Walcott's *Omeros* and Édouard Glissant's *Les Indes* are poetic texts of epic length. According to Bakhtin the epic genre died with the emergence of the novel (Bakhtin 3-40). There are, however, critics who insist on labeling *Omeros* a '(post)modern epic'¹, despite the fact that its author has rejected such a label on several occasions. In his lucid article "'With No Homeric Shadow': The Disavowal of Epic in Derek Walcott's *Omeros*," Gregson Davis analyzes how the author's distancing himself from the Homeric genre is paralleled with and questioned through constant evocation of Homer. Davis juxtaposes Walcott's explicit rejections of the epic label in published interviews with generic disavowals within *Omeros* itself. Evoking Marianne Moore who opens "Poetry" by stating that she, too, dislikes it --"there are things more important beyond all this fiddle" (Davis 1997, 321)-- Davis speaks of a "paradoxical rhetoric of (dis)avowal," of a "rhetoric of inclusion/exclusion" which has "aesthetic, linguistic, and philosophical implications, among others" (Davis 1997, 322).

Davis' article was inspired by Walcott's visit to Duke University in the spring of

¹ See for example Joseph Farrell, "The Classical Epic in a Postmodern World" or Robert D. Hamner's *Epic of the Dispossessed*. According to Aleid Fokkema it is partly Walcott's craftsmanship "that makes 'epic' an appropriate epithet" (Fokkema 339).

1995. On this occasion Walcott reflected on *Omeros* while surrounded by an exhibition of Romare Bearden's paintings.² Situating the roots of Bearden's as well as his own art in a specific immigrant, in what he calls "the whole American experience" (Walcott 1997, 229), Walcott particularly praises Bearden's collages based on the *Odyssey*: "I'm not sure that [the set] didn't influence me when I undertook to do that long poem [*Omeros*], which I had no idea was going to be so long, but which became longer because it was such a joy to work on." In the course of these reflections Walcott grants that "the story of wandering is the classical epic. Epic is about wandering in search of something and finding (or not finding) it" (235), and indicates that his problem with the term lies in its twentieth century sense (230). In contrast to what "they," i.e. contemporary critics, call an epic he calls *Omeros* "a very intimate work" (240). It is certainly inappropriate to blame one monolithic bloc of 'contemporary critics' for the misuse of a generic term. Especially in the light of a discourse which emphasizes the intricate connection of the private with the public, it should be obvious that even "a very intimate work" can still have epic, in particular foundational qualities. While I focus on these qualities in the first part of this chapter, I turn to the notion of 'history' and its impact on both long poems in the second part. The subject of the final two parts is the importance of natural landscapes and the role they play with regard to the literary creation of a Caribbean environment, as well as to its history.

² A collection which combines the work of both artists, introduced by the late Joseph Brodsky, is *The Caribbean Poetry of Derek Walcott and the Art of Romare Bearden* (New York: The Limited Editions Club, 1983).

Walcott's reservations against the epic label include associations with great wars and legendary heroes. In this sense Robert D. Hamner is right in stating that Walcott protests "against the conventions of an entrenched classical tradition" (Hamner 3), though it strikes as too simplistic to conclude that "Walcott has joined the extensive list of Western writers who have adapted the venerable genre to fit their own purposes" (9).³ While critics who insist on the epic label usually emphasize its elevated style, Walcott, in "The Muse of History," reminds of the genre's roots in oral traditions: "The epic concept was compressed in folk lyric, the mass longing in chanter and chorus, couplet and refrain" (*Muse* 9), "the epic poem is not a literary project. It is already written; it was written in the mouths of the tribe, a tribe which had courageously yielded its history." I turn to the notion of 'history' in the following part of this chapter. At this point I merely want to emphasize how the fact that epic poetry originates in oral traditions illustrates the selective nature of 'history'. Walcott explains the spontaneity of oral poetry which allows every new poet to add lines to the form and assumes that "the history of the tribe is endless" (11).

The image of the 'flux' into which the poet enters as well as from which he or she withdraws --"No history, but flux, and the only sustenance, myth" (ibid 12)-- recalls the image of the sea⁴, the predominance of which is at the center of the last part of this chapter.

³ For an excellent review of Hamner's *Epic of the Dispossessed* see Gregson Davis in *South Central Review* (15.2 (1998): 59-61).

⁴ Walcott problematizes (the winners') history's obsession with monuments in "The Sea Is History": "Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?/Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,/in that grey vault. The sea. The sea/has locked them up. The sea is History" (*CP* 364). Glissant chose Walcott's "sea is history" as a motto for *Poétique de la Relation*.

The following passage from *Omeros* illustrates how the sea symbolizes the need for a multitude of versions instead of one authorized story of the past:

All thunderous myths of that ocean were blown
up with the spray that dragged from the lacy bulwarks
of Cap's bracing headland. The sea had never known

any of them, nor had the illiterate rocks,
nor the circling frigates, nor even the white mesh
that knitted the Golden Fleece. The ocean had

no memory of the wanderings of Gilgamesh,
of whose sword severed whose head in the *Iliad*.
It was an epic where every line was erased

yet freshly written in sheets of exploding surf (295-6)

The image of the sea which erases and rewrites symbolizes Walcott's idea of circularity, as opposed to historical linearity. This idea corresponds to Glissant's theory of "nomadisme circulaire" or "errance" as opposed to "nomadisme en flèche" (*PR* 24). In "The Essay and/in History" A. James Arnold links the temporal with a spatial aspect when he states that Glissant chooses "the spiral as the figure that best represents Antillian culture in time and space" (Arnold 1994, 563). Neither for Glissant nor for Walcott is the idea of circularity meant to express "the jaded cynicism which sees nothing new under the sun, it is an elation which sees everything as renewed" (*Muse* 3). Walcott also distinguishes his suspicion of progress from Sartrean existentialism: "Adamic, elemental man cannot be existential. His first impulse is not self-indulgence but awe; and existentialism is simply the myth of the noble savage gone baroque" (6). While the Caribbean sensibility is not exhausted but new, "it is its complexity, not its historically explained simplicities which is new" (18) and deserves expression. The emphasis lies thereby not on the self-indulged individual or even

his or her community, but rather on his or her environment. It is first and foremost this environment which defines the community celebrated in *Omeros* and implied in *Les Indes*.

Whereas Glissant also stresses the role of the “eternal sea” and the idea of circularity, his contrast between contemporary epic literature and the atavistic foundation epics does suggest a dialectical progress for the world’s societies. Glissant states that contemporary epic literature reflects multilingualism and excludes the need for an expiating victim (*Introduction* 67). In Glissant’s view this “littérature épique nouvelle” has to be seen in the light of a new global community in which multilingualism –much like occasional radical interpretations of Bakhtin’s ‘intertexts’– is omnipresent. Whereas Walcott’s *Omeros* does include patois as well as French Creole, Glissant’s idea of multilingualism does not demand such a coexistence of several languages: “... le multilinguisme ne suppose pas la coexistence des langues ni la connaissance de plusieurs langues mais la présence des langues du monde dans la pratique de la sienne” (ibid 41; ... multilingualism does not assume the coexistence of languages nor the knowledge of several languages, but the presence of the world’s languages in the practice of one’s own). Rather than contribute to the genre debate, Glissant’s contrast between traditional epics and contemporary epic literature thus serves to support his idealistic vision of creolized societies in a *chaos monde*, a concept I return to in the final chapter of this study.

Arnold devotes one chapter of *Modernism and Negritude: The Poetry and Poetics of Aimé Césaire* to ‘the epic of negritude’, i.e. *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*,⁵ the

⁵ In *Aimé Césaire* Gregson Davis chooses to translate *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* as “Journal of a Homecoming.” Stressing the difficulties inherent in any

conclusion of which is that in “the loose, modern sense Césaire created in the *Notebook* the epic of negritude” (Arnold 1981, 168). This conclusion is preceded by references to Ezra Pound’s definition of epic as “a long poem including history” as well as to Friedrich Schlegel’s notes on the traditional epic beginning *in medias res*. Césaire’s deviation from the ancient genre parallels that of both Glissant and Walcott. As Arnold puts it, “if Césaire does not conform to Hegel’s notion that the epic is expressive of nationalism per se, we observe nonetheless that the arousal of ethnic consciousness in the poem serves a similar end.” I argue that the same is true for both *Les Indes* and *Omeros*.

While the problem with the label depends on defining and possibly redefining the term ‘epic’, what *Omeros* and *Les Indes* as well as their precursor, Césaire’s *Cahier*, share with traditional epics is that they go to great length in poetically describing, explaining, and creating a space as their point of departure and of arrival. This space, the Caribbean land- and especially seascapes, dominates the three long poems. Whereas Césaire’s as well as Glissant’s emphases lie on the imaginary, Walcott’s presentations are very tangible and recall his notion of ‘Adam’s task’.

Situating himself in the tradition of Whitman, Neruda, and St.-John Perse, a ‘New World’ tradition that seeks “spaces where praise of the earth is ancestral” (*Muse* 3), his

homecoming, Davis establishes a connection between *Cahier* and the *Odyssey*: “... Césaire’s poem is far removed in style and tone from the measured cadences of Homeric verse; on the other hand, the heroic paradigm remains in the background of the poem as a kind of shadowy presence that occasionally traverses its surface” (Davis 1998, 22).

vision of man in the “New World” is Adamic.⁶ Walcott claims this vision most prominently in the last stanza of “Another Life”: “We were blest with a virginal, unpainted world/with Adam’s task of giving things their names” (CP 294). In Césaire’s text this idea is expressed in the conditional: “j’aurais des mots assez vastes pour vous contenir et toi terre tendue/terre sâoule” (*Cahier* 38-40⁷: I would have words vast enough to contain you and you, tense earth, toasted earth). The use of the conditional is significant for the ambiguity in Césaire’s surrealist text which never gives away whether the ‘native land’ is really Martinique, Europe, Africa, or these three together. Whereas *Cahier*, as Davis puts it, “describes not a single return, but a series of abortive returns that are superimposed on each other” and the homecoming becomes “a recurrent event that is continually in the process of rehearsal” (Davis 1998, 22), *Omeros* is very explicit about locations and directions. Walcott introduces his father Warwick, who evokes Adam’s task at the end of book one and urges his son to be aware of his obligations as a poet from a distinct environment.

Glissant’s “Indies” resemble Césaire’s “native land” in that they represent the realization of a dream. In Glissant’s text it is the dream of European adventurers introduced in the first chapter “L’Appel”: “voici le port en fête, l’aventure qui se noue; le rêve s’épuise dans son projet. L’homme a peur de son désir, au moment de le satisfaire” (105; 5: here is the harbour in celebration, the adventure taking shape; the dream exhausts itself in its

⁶ In *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* R.W.B. Lewis recounts a similarly Adamic treatment of the early New England states.

⁷ The second figure refers to the translation by Emile Snyders included in this bilingual edition. Where such a source is not given the translations are mine.

scheme. Man is afraid of his desire, as he is about to satisfy it). Another entire chapter, “Le Voyage,” precedes the actual arrival in the Indies in “La Conquête.” At this point, however, the abstract ‘Indies’ do become the concrete ‘Caribbean’ with its heroes Toussaint, Dessalines, and Delgrès. Glissant moves from the idea of a universal dream to one particular space. In the poem’s closure this space is addressed as “Our Indies” which are then “par delà toute rage et toute acclamation sur le rivage délaissées” (199; 99⁸: beyond all rage an all acclamation abandoned on the shore).

Walcott’s *Omeros*, on the other hand, opens in the Caribbean, specifically in St. Lucia, and the conquest is addressed in his opening chapter. Glissant’s focus on the Europeans preparing, departing, and crossing the Atlantic Ocean is here reversed. Mingling past with present and future, Walcott first presents characters already living in ‘the Indies’, witnessing the arrival of those whom Glissant’s text begins with. The fisherman Philoctete tells the tourists in his patois: ““This is how, one sunrise, we cut down them canoes”” (3). The iguana, after whom the island was once called ‘Iounalao’ represents more explicitly the progress of time:

... The slit pods of its eyes

ripened in a pause that lasted for centuries,
that rose with the Aruacs’ smoke till a new race
unknown to the lizard stood measuring the trees. (5)

Whereas Glissant moves from the abstract dream to the concrete Indies, Walcott departs from a tangible St. Lucian environment to arrive at times at abstract and universal

⁸ The translation in this bilingual edition is provided by Dominique O’Neill.

phenomena. As Jahan Ramazani writes in his examination of the wound trope: “Walcott devises a ‘transnational allegory’ about both the wound of black Saint Lucian history and a larger subject - what he calls the ‘incurable//wound of time’” (Ramazani 412). In so doing Walcott succeeds in blurring and thus questioning the borders between history and myth, between fact and fiction. While both Walcott and Glissant challenge traditionally ‘Western’ notions of history, while they celebrate specific characters which have not entered the colonizers’ historical accounts, they create their own type of long poem with epic qualities. Among the more obvious of these qualities is the foundational function, expressed by Walcott in the idea of ‘Adam’s task’. Whereas the genre debate was in the foreground of my discussion above, I turn to the notion of ‘history’ in the following part of this chapter.

History or Collective Memory⁹

In *Derek Walcott’s Poetry: American Mimicry* Rei Terada rightly points out that it is never clear in all of Walcott’s work “where history or the ‘historical’ begins and ends” (Terada 202). To enact Adam’s task, to name, describe, and thus create an environment also means to provide it with new histories. Neither Walcott nor Glissant are proposing ‘Counter-histories’ in this context. They merely challenge the notion of one authorized ‘History’, a

⁹ Some of the ideas in this part are developed in my “‘Rester au pays natal’: Derek Walcott’s *Omeros* and Édouard Glissant’s *Les Indes*. (*Proceedings of the XVth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association*. Vol. 2. Forthcoming)

challenge also suggested by Hayden White and the 'New Historicists',¹⁰ among others. Advocating Marx' 'historical materialism' in "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" (About the Notion of History) Walter Benjamin states that "Vergangenes historisch artikulieren heißt nicht, es erkennen 'wie es denn eigentlich gewesen ist'. Es heißt, sich einer Erinnerung bemächtigen, wie sie im Augenblick einer Gefahr aufblitzt" (Benjamin 695; To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'how it really was'. It means to seize a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger). Benjamin reacts, with Marx, to the kind of historiography which employs empathy as its method. The representatives of this historiography necessarily empathize with the 'winners' (696). The task of the historical materialist is thus "die Geschichte gegen den Strich zu bürsten" (697: to turn history upside down), to provide a 'Counter-history'. Instead of such a Counter-history Walcott and Glissant suggest a multitude of versions. As J. Michael Dash puts it in *Édouard Glissant, Les Indes* "demonstrates the poet's insistence on manipulating historical and political reality imaginatively" (Dash 1995, 50). Instead of the historical materialist's involvement Glissant demands the involvement of the poet when he redefines what he calls "la vision prophétique du passé": "Le passé ne doit pas seulement être recomposé de manière objective (ou même

¹⁰ In "New Historicism: A Comment" Hayden White summarizes several offenses --against formalist tenets by studying historical contexts along with literary texts; against post-structuralists by distinguishing between text and context; against historians by considering the "cultural system" the historical context-- to arrive at the New Historicists' intertextual understanding of the relationship between literature and culture (White 294). Concerning the notion of history therein he remarks that "whether 'history' is considered simply as 'the past', the documentary record of this past, or the body of reliable information about the past established by professional historians, there is no such thing as a distinctively 'historical' method by which to study this 'history'" (295).

de manière subjective) par l'historien, il doit être aussi rêvé de manière prophétique, pour les gens, les communautés et les cultures dont le passé, justement, a été occulté (*Introduction* 86; the past should not only be recalled objectively (or even subjectively) through the historian, it should also be dreamt prophetically for the people, the communities, and the cultures in which the past has been conceived). Inseparable from the cultures in question is their environment, specifically its land- and seascapes. The Caribbean environment, in Glissant's terms "l'entour" or *le lieu* (*Discours* 137), equally dominates *Omeros*, *Les Indes*, and *Cahier*.

Walcott writes in "The Muse of History" that "in time every event becomes an exertion of memory and is thus subject to invention. The further the facts, the more history petrifies into myth" (*Muse* 2). The relationship between history and myth is the subject of Barbara J. Webb's *Myth and History in Caribbean Fiction*. Webb opens the introduction to her comparative study of Alejo Carpentier's, Wilson Harris', and Glissant' *oeuvres* with a reference to the above quoted essay by Walcott, which she interprets as a rejection of "the concept of historical time in favor of the presumably timeless universality of myth" (Webb 3). I argue that Walcott does not, as Webb suggests, advocate a mutual exclusiveness of history and myth. Instead he demands a blurring of the two. Walcott's rejection of "the concept of historical time" in "The Muse of History" has to be read as a defense mechanism. The entire essay reacts to early attacks against 'the classicist' or even 'humanist' of the Caribbean¹¹ as opposed to the figure of a revolutionary representative of an empire writing

¹¹ See for example Patricia Ismond, "Walcott versus Brathwaite" (*Caribbean Quarterly* 17 (1971): 54-71).

back. In his ironic tone Walcott begins by juxtaposing “them,” the “patrician writers” who remind *us* “that those who break a tradition first hold it in awe” (*Muse* 1), with “we,” supposedly the author and his readers. At the same time he obviously counts himself among those writers “who pretend indifference to change” because they “reject the idea of history as time for its original concept as myth, the partial recall of the race” (2).

In “Caribbean Sublime: On Transport” Aleid Fokkema relates a challenged notion of ‘history’ to the impossibility of representation and categorizes it as a postmodern idea: “History, the postmoderns claim, is narrative” (Fokkema 343). Whereas the questioning of notions of ‘truth’ and the crisis in representation doubtlessly dominate postmodern thought, the latter should not be credited exclusively with the reevaluations of one authorized ‘history’. While I quote Benjamin above, Webb refers to Vico’s concept of “myth as both a form of historical knowledge and a method of historical inquiry” (Webb 5). As George Lang puts it in his review of Webb’s study, while the Caribbeans “find themselves, for reasons of their own, engaged in the process of incessant reinterpretation and *remise en cause* of historical ‘truth’ that European and [North] American critics have dubbed postmodernist” they “have arrived at this stage by their own devises and with a logic of their own” (Lang 1995, 446-7).

Providing comparative analyses of *Omeros*, *Les Indes*, David Dabydeen’s *Turner*, and Frank Martinus Arion’s *Stemmen uit Afrika*, Fokkema focuses on the sublime, which becomes identical with the unrepresentable or the uncanny (Fokkema 343). In agreement with her I think that the epic motif of wandering, of journeying or homecoming as I have addressed it above, aptly reflects both that migration which functions as “a stock theme in

Caribbean literature” and the “idea of spiritual transport”: “... the history of displacement acquires a reverberating depth in the (e)motion of the sublime” (340). At the same time, in that it fulfills the epic function of creating a space, the combination of fact and fiction, of history and myth does cater to a post-colonial quest for subjectivity. Referring to Glissant’s vision of the rhizome --which I discuss more thoroughly in chapter two of this study-- Fokkema rightly points out that “rootlessness does not necessarily undermine identity” (341). Fokkema also recognizes that Glissant really explores this idea in *Les Indes* before he develops it as a theoretical concept: “The process of evoking and merging historical personae highlights, by implication, the rhizomatic relations among contemporary Caribbean peoples” (342). It is, again, the space which remains as defining element. And, as Fokkema puts it, “the lack of history is exposed, paradoxically as a pertinent constitutive element of historical identity” (343).

“The sigh of History rises over ruins, not over landscapes,” Walcott writes in “The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory,” (Walcott 1993, 262) once more mocking the historian’s obsession with monuments. In the course of this text Walcott similarly attacks the tourist’s vision of the tropics: “...in the unending summer of the tropics not even poverty or poetry (in the Antilles poverty is poetry with a V, *une vie*, a condition of life as well as of imagination) seems capable of being profound because the nature around it is so exultant, so resolutely ecstatic, like its music” (263). The irony is obvious, and the “depth and darkness” he attributes to the winter which is lacking in the Caribbean dominates the very first book of *Omeros* in which the personified landscape itself appears profound, in which the ferns agree that the trees have to die, cedars are wounded (3), and the rays of the sunrise

are compared to splashing blood (5).

More passive and not necessarily personified, but nevertheless alive and profound, Glissant's "rivage sommeillait" (146; 46: shore slumbered), his "forêt bruissait" (148; 48: forest rustled), and his "montagne tressaillait dans son éternité" (150; 50: mountain shuddered in its eternity). All these parts of the landscape are united at the closure of "La Conquête" in one unambiguous personification: "Or la terre pleurait, sachant quelle est l'éternité" (162; Now the earth wept, knowing that it is eternity). Be the progress of time linear or circular, be it subject to four or to only two seasons, unlike its inhabitants --who enter in and withdraw from a flux, who journey and return-- the earth is not able to escape, unless it is seen in its own much broader environment, its cosmos.

In *Les Indes* the horizon is referred to occasionally (154, 173), but it is in *Omeros* where the cosmic context is emphasized. When the blind poet Seven Seas is first introduced, the full moon is compared to "his plate" (11). When Achille leaves the beach at the close of the poem, it shines "like a slice of raw onion" while the sea is "still going on" (325). Helen is compared to a meteor (112) as well as to the sun (318), while Mars is compared to a face (314). To Achille "there was heaven/and earth and the sea" (114), a scenario in which nameless stars "fitted his own design." His "cosmology had been erased/by the crossing" (113), i.e. the Middle Passage. The hobby astronomer Plunkett, on the other hand, follows a more scientific approach when he counts "the stars/like buttons through the orchids." To him "they were the usual wonder." However, the situation of the setting in its cosmic context culminates in the passage in which the sea-swift --which does everything "in a circular pattern" (188)-- allows for the comparison between the text itself and a globe:

I followed a sea-swift to both sides of this text;
her hyphen stitched its seam, like the interlocking
basins of a globe in which one half fits the next

into an equator, both shores neatly clicking
into a globe; except that its meridian
was not North and South but East and West. One, the New

World, made exactly like the Old, halves of one brain,
or the beat of both hands rowing that bear the two
vessels of the heart with balance, weight, and design. (319)

Through the comparison of the brain, the hands, and the heart with parts of a globe, this self-referential passage suggests the metaphor of a human body for the entire earth and thus situates both the planet as well as its inhabitants within the universe. The special significance of the metaphor is its symmetry. Pairs of hands, of brain and heart halves reflect dualities between North and South, East and West, or ‘Old’ and ‘New’. The fact that these pairs all belong to the same body indicates the futility of such dualities. The sewing of the sea-swift, the “recurrent emblem” of which Davis rightly interprets as Omeros’ muse, recalls the image of Penelope. It thus links Omeros’ Caribbean archipelago once more with Homer’s Hellenic one. The two parts of the earth appear accordingly as the two sides of the text mentioned in the opening line of the passage. However, whether in a cosmic context or in its eternal parts the Caribbean space participates actively in both *Omeros* and *Les Indes*. Its personifications culminate in the metaphor of the female body, which I focus on in the following part of this chapter.

Landscape or Territory

Walcott and Glissant as well as Césaire employ the metaphor of the female body for their environments. Again, Glissant and Césaire are more abstract. For Césaire ‘Woman’ represents the tormented land with fat breasts of hills on which the sea is sucking hysterically (*Cahier* 22-25). Or she represents the city in its misery and abandonment: “une femme, toute on eût cru à sa cadence lyrique, interpelle brusquement une pluie hypothétique et lui intime l’ordre de ne pas tomber” (*Cahier* 14-15; a woman who, fascinated by the lyric rhythm of her thighs, suddenly hails a hypothetical rain and commands it not to fall) or “une paysanne, urinant debout, les jambes écartées, roides” (ibid; a peasant woman urinating standing, legs parted, stiff).

In *Les Indes* ‘woman’ appears as a virgin, a rape victim, and as mother. The conquest is seen in terms of sexual desire, the landscape is warned about the adventurers’ arrival:

Amour! ô beauté nue! où sont les sentinelles? Voici
que paraissent les amants.

Ils ont, pour allouer l’or de la vierge, une balance; et pour
tuer, ils sont peseurs de foudres. (143)

(43: Love! O nude beauty! Where are the sentinels? Behold, the
lovers appear.

To apportion the virgin’s gold, they have a scale; and to kill,
they weigh thunderbolts.)

Following this warning an anonymous captain delivers long speeches in which he seduces and penetrates the shore, the woods, the hills, and the city. As I point out in the preceding part of this chapter, in the context of personifications of the landscape, each of these parts

responds by remaining silent “dans son éternité” (in its eternity) and finally presents refusal: “Plus outre, et c’est le désir, le même chaque fois, de cette chair qui se refuse, habile/En son horizon, corps noué...” (154;54: Further yet, and it is desire, the same each time, of this flesh that refuses itself, clever/In its horizon, twisted body...). Facing the captain’s rage, the rebelling parts of the landscape unite and turn into ‘the earth’ which rests in its eternity: “Mais la terre gardait, si nue, le voeu de son éternité” (158;¹² But the earth guarded, so nude, the vow of its eternity).

In Walcott’s St. Lucian environment, on the other hand, Helen symbolizes the island as a character with a distinct personality. Dennis Plunkett, the expatriate ex-major knows that “the island was once/named Helen” (31). Hamner points out that the beauty of the island as well as of women is often described in terms of seduction (Hamner 48). Such is the case when the poet/narrator first encounters Helen:

I saw her once after that moment on the beach
when her face shook my heart, and that incredible
stare paralyzed me past any figure of speech,

when, because they thought her moods uncontrollable,
her tongue too tart for a waitress to take orders,
she set up shop: beads, hair-pick, and trestle table. (36)

In an interview with J.P. White, Walcott addresses the connection between Helen and the anonymous “beauty” who plays the role of a muse in “The Light of the World” (Baer 174). As in this earlier poem Walcott employs the metaphor of a panther in *Omeros*: “... I saw the rage/of her measuring eyes, and felt again the chill/of a panther hidden in the dark of its

¹² The pages 55-70 are missing in the otherwise excellent bilingual GREF edition of *Les Indes*.

cage/that drew me towards its shape as it did Achille” (36). Alluding to its title, the poet/narrator of the earlier poem exclaims at the end of the first stanza: “... O Beauty, you are the light of the world” (*AT* 48). Watching a falling star while Helen is partying at Gros Îlet, Achille contemplates that “... Bright Helen/was like a meteor too, ...”. And his observations evoke the voice of the poet/narrator when he continues:

... her light remained unknown in this backward place,
falling unobserved, the way he watched the meteor
at one in the morning track the night of her race,
then fade, forgotten, as sunrise forgets a star. (112)

All these passages simultaneously describe Helen, the woman as well as the island she personifies, her environment so to speak. In the interview with White Walcott states that “the Caribbean people have a dignity, a suppleness and a beauty that [he] would like to articulate” (Baer 165). This intention corresponds to Adam’s task referred to in the first part of this chapter if the landscape and its inhabitants are seen in union. In order to name, create an environment one also has to account for its population. Helen’s pride, her search for independence, as well as her being ignored symbolize characteristics of the former colony in a post-colonial scenario. In terms of both the woman as well as her environment these characteristics are paralleled with a remarkable ‘natural’ appearance.

Because of her stubborn- and assertiveness Helen does not only lose her job as waitress. She is also dismissed as housemaid at the Plunkett’s. This stresses the ultimate lack of power of the suppressed: “... the maid turns into the mistress and destroys/her own possibilities” (64). The symbol of this master/slave conflict is Helen’s yellow dress which she thinks of as Maud Plunkett’s gift while the latter considers it stolen. Dennis is as drawn

to Helen as Achille, Hector, and the poet/narrator are. He avoids involvement in the quarrel but makes the colonial context explicit: "... that dress/had an empire's tag on it, mistress to slave." Therefore I only partly agree with Julie A. Minkler when she writes in "Helen's Calibans: A Study of Gender Hierarchy in Derek Walcott's *Omeros*" that "this new Antillean Helen should not be seen as a victim but rather as the axis about which the entire 'horned island' (1.7.2) and its elemental men rotate" (Minkler 272). Inasmuch as Helen *is* the island she still remains the victim of its history of colonization.

Whereas Achille and Hector are the fictional lovers, one of them the father of the child Helen carries, the poet/narrator possesses her as creator. Yet, in his text, the poet has also created the ex-major Dennis who, in turn, wants to write Helen's history, "her story" (30). With Maud representing the colonial power, Dennis' research turns into betrayal: "So he edged the glass over the historic point,/but it magnified the peaks of the island's breasts//and it buried stiff factions" (103). Like that of Glissant's 'Woman' Helen's body personifies the landscape of the island. For Glissant's adventurers this landscape is the territory to be conquered. For Plunkett it is the home of his choice. For Walcott's Achille, Hector, and poet/narrator it is the familiar environment in which they have grown up. Yet, all of them seem equally seduced.

Glissant's anonymous woman appears most prominently in the chapter entitled "La Conquête." Her resistance to abuse and exploitation is marked by eternal silence. Walcott's Helen on the other hand is openly rebellious and very vocal about her rights. It is precisely this trait which continues to leave her jobless. She always seems to trade one form of dependence for another. Escaping the tourists she has to serve as waitress, she ends up

relying on them again, albeit in her own shop (36). Leaving Achille after an argument, she ends up with Hector (38-9). Desperate for money she visits her former employer Maud. When Maud asks about Achille and Hector, Helen's response implies her unique pride: "I am vexed with both of them, *oui*" (124). At the end of this encounter Maud agrees on lending but returns with her money to a Helen who has already left. Glissant's 'eternity' is being echoed: "But she'd last forever, Helen" (125).

At the end of the poem Helen is back waiting on tables, but she now appears as a symbol of national or ethnic consciousness. She is wearing the national costume and is contrasted with the Hellenic Helen. Whereas the latter "lies in a room with olive-eyed mosaics" the former lies "in a beach shack with its straw mattress" (313). Achille, to whom the Creole Helen has returned after Hector's death, wants to give her child an African name. Ma Kilman, the owner of the No Pain Café, agrees that "that Helen must learn where she from" (318). By implication, the island must learn to develop its own identity in the future, which is symbolized by Helen's child.

Helen shares the function of the mother with Glissant's anonymous 'Woman'. The latter is mother earth or nature as well as the mother of the Caribbean heroes Delgrès, Toussaint, and Dessalines: "Auparavant, et elle traverse la parole, c'est la mère inaltérable - une Femme fut vue, qui se leva dans l'aube. Quelle fut-elle encore? C'est ce qu'enfin le chant dira" (175; 75: Previously, and she traverses speech, it is the steadfast mother - a Woman, who arose in the dawn. What else was she? This is what at last the song will tell). The other announced roles are those of the priestess or prophetess. In *Omeros* they are played by Ma Kilman who succeeds at last in curing Philoctete's wound (243-5), "the wound of

black Saint Lucian history,” to repeat Ramazani (Ramazani 412).

The question why it is not Eve who names and celebrates her environment in epic length, why it is generally not a male body which metaphorizes a landscape, why a landscape does not appear as *father* earth or nature, requires a separate study. Suffice it at this point to refer to a modification concerning Adam’s task included in a *New York Times* interview from October 1990. Walcott admits there that he “learned what a noun is, writing [*Omeros*]. No one is Adam. A noun is not a name you give something. It is something you watch becoming itself, and you have to have the patience to find out what it is” (Davis 1997, 331). Having discussed roles of landscape in general and its personification by a female body in particular, I focus on specific apparent qualities of the Caribbean landscape in what is left of this chapter.

Familiar and Unfamiliar Nature

To portray a landscape as a body means to count it among its inhabitants or vice versa, to see the inhabitants as an inseparable part of their landscape. In both *Les Indes* and *Omeros* this landscape, the Caribbean environment is the dominating character. It is an environment which had been admired and cherished by numerous prominent visitors, such as André Breton, Ernest Hemingway, and Federico García Lorca.¹³ Almost all the early

¹³ Hemingway is quoted in *Mea Cuba* to have confessed that “all he wanted in life was ‘to stay [in Cuba]’ for ever” (Cabrera Infante 1994, 97). Lorca had warned his

writings of arriving European colonists contain the words “paradise,” “marvellous,” and “wonders” in nature descriptions (Antoine 350). However, such enthusiasm is obviously conditioned by certain forms of displacement, such as the dream described in *Les Indes*. Glissant emphasizes the universality of such dreams in the introduction to his final chapter, “La Relation.” There, the European adventurers have returned and the benefit of their undertaking is questioned: “Mais peut-être enfin l’homme n’a-t-il que même désir et même ardeur, n’importe soit-il?” (191; 91: But perhaps in the end man has the same desire and the same ardour, whoever he may be?).

In *Die Nähe und die Ferne* (The Near and the Far) Hans Christoph Buch underlines the force a desire for adventure, for distraction from the familiar, for encounters with the “other” can have. He shows how the excitement about a new place can be considerably stronger than any possible doubts: “Der Wunsch, das Paradies auf Erden gefunden zu haben, ist mächtiger als die das idyllische Bild störende Wirklichkeit” (Buch 24; The desire to have found the terrestrial paradise is stronger than the reality which disturbs the idyllic picture). Buch describes the journey driven by a dream as “Ausbruchsversuch aus einer vorgegebenen Ordnung, die das Abenteuer des Reisens durch geographische Distanz negiert und zugleich transzendiert” (12; an attempt to escape a given order which the adventure of the journey negates and simultaneously transcends through geographical distance). It has been widely discussed how Columbus thought to have found the site of the Garden of Eden upon his

parents that should he ever get lost they were to look for him in Cuba (90). In “The Caribbean in Metropolitan French Writing,” Régis Antoine points out that “Breton, conscious of the social drama that Martinique was undergoing, nevertheless revived the tired motif of the feminization of the islands that remained French” (Antoine 359).

arrival in what he then misnamed, enacting another version of Adam's task, the "West Indies."¹⁴

To Césaire, Glissant, and Walcott, on the other hand, the Caribbean environment represents the familiar. It represents the familiar which their compatriots, in turn, are striving to leave behind, as the texts I discuss in the following chapters illustrate. The migrants who populate these texts quite frequently provide perspectives which contrast the celebratory tone underlying the three long poems of epic character, which are at the center of the present chapter. However, as some of the discussed passages have already shown, *Cahier, Les Indes*, and *Omeros* do not spare a balance either. Especially Césaire creates a strong sense of hostility and rebellion, for example when he writes that "les volcans éclateront, l'eau nue emportera les taches mûres du soleil et il ne restera plus qu'un bouillonnement tiède picoré d'oiseaux marins - la plage des songes et l'insensé réveil" (10-13: the volcanoes will salvo, the bare waves will carry off ripe stains of sun, and nothing shall remain but a lukewarm bubbling pecked by sea-birds - the beach of dreams and the absurd awakening). This passage justifies in an exemplary manner Dash's comparison of Césaire's poem to a scream of "Rimbaldian explosiveness" which Glissant needs to transcend (Dash 1995, 31). The passage follows the first introduction of the Caribbean archipelago into Césaire's narrative. The region is presented as a site of misery, "as a site of culture 'run aground' (*échoué*) and

¹⁴ O.R. Dathorne situates Columbus' travels within a history of exported European myths in *Imagining the World: Mythical Belief versus Reality in Global Encounters*. In "Europe Invents a New World" he writes that "the goal of New World exploration was to find Paradise" (Dathorne 37). Tzvetan Todorov states in *La Conquête de l'Amérique* that "la croyance la plus frappante de Colon est, il est vrai, d'origine chrétienne: elle concerne le Paradis terrestre" (Todorov 23).

floundering in the mud” (*Cahier* 10 and Davis 1998, 26). However, as the description of the region’s present condition is balanced by the anaphora “Au bout du petit matin” (At the end of dawn) which, as Arnold is right in pointing out, suggests hope beyond the night as well as beyond the poem (Arnold 1981, 143), so is the volcano’s destruction balanced by the water’s purification in the above quoted passage. In his very thorough annotations Abiola Irélé indicates that this balance reflects a fundamental principle of harmony in nature, that the destructive possibilities of a volcanic explosion concur with its restorative potential (Irélé 38). Irélé concludes that the void, the sense of erasure described in the stanza expresses Césaire’s “imaginative anticipation of a *grandiose avenir* for his people, in consonance with the active qualities of its physical environment” (39). This link between the environment and its inhabitants corresponds to my emphasis on the importance on the former in *Cahier*, *Les Indes*, as well as *Omeros*.

Torment in *Les Indes* is for example metaphorized by the abused ‘woman’. Whereas the torturers are here always the European colonizers, Walcott applies the theme of exploitation and suppression to the present, for example to contemporary economic imperialism, which is exemplified during the weekly party at Gros Îlet when Achille observes that “the village did not seem to care//that it was dying in its change, the way it whored away a simple life” (111). It is the disgust with such change, along with or generated by the fact that Helen has left him for Hector, which makes Achille as restless as Glissant’s adventurers driven by their dream. Dwelling on Seven Seas’ prophecy that “once men were satisfied//with destroying men they would move on to Nature” (300), Achille wonders whether he is the only fisherman left to worry about his environment:

was he the only fisherman left in the world
using the old ways, who believed his work was prayer,
who caught only enough, since the sea had to live,

because it was life? So he sailed down to Soufrière
along and close to the coast. He might have to leave
the village for good, its hotels and marinas,

the ice-packed shrimps of pink tourists, and find someplace,
some cove he could settle like another Aeneas,
founding not Rome but home, to survive in its peace,

far from the discos, the transports, the greed, the noise. (301)

Such thoughts evoke, for example, Rousseau's agonizing over civilization, over its progressing destruction of its natural environment. They may even recall Thoreau's decision for his *Walden* project. In Achille's case, however, it is obvious that his frustration is equally grounded in the fact that Helen has left their (domestic) home, thus allowing for the painful awareness of the state of home in the broader sense. Significantly, she has left him and their home for Hector, who gave up fishing to be a cab driver and thus represents the transports, tourism, and the destruction of nature.

Unlike Glissant's adventurers Achille leaves without plans to return. Rather than out of curiosity for what he might encounter, he departs driven by the urge to leave what he knows behind. Nevertheless, his attempt to get away from the seemingly unbearable familiar fails. Accompanied by Philoctete "he found no cove he likes as much as his own/village" (301) and after they almost drown and are killed by whales their "sail/turned home" (303). The development of a disliking of the familiar does not necessarily support the liking of the unfamiliar.

In "Das Unheimliche" (The Uncanny) Sigmund Freud thoroughly discusses the

relation between the German adjectives “heimlich” (homely; secret¹⁵) and “unheimlich” (uncanny, spooky; overwhelming). I claim that in its first sense, ‘homely’, “heimlich” it is no longer being used, but could be substituted with “gemütlich” (cozy) and thus linked with ‘familiar’. The unfamiliar then becomes the uncanny, *das Unheimliche*, which is not to say that the unfamiliar has to be uncanny. Though even without its uncanny aspect the unfamiliar often engenders a new appreciation of the familiar. Achille’s encounter with the whales certainly does have an uncanny effect, and it is this effect which ultimately leads him to return ‘home’, a notion questioned by the poet/narrator when he states that he “had nowhere to go but home. Yet [he] was lost” (172). This statement is made between two much longer trips, one of them to the underworld, both leading to diverse ancestral origins. Concerning Achille’s shorter trip it is significant that his uncanny experience takes place at sea, the omnipresent part of nature in an insular space such as the Caribbean. Achille knows that the sea “had to live,/because it was life” (301). The sea similarly functions as metaphor for challenges in *Les Indes*.

At the end of *Les Indes* the European adventurers who initiated the colonization of the Caribbean have returned from their journey. They have closed one cycle, simultaneously suggesting another one. Another representative adventurer is bound to be driven by similar dreams: “... si son rêve n’est déjà qu’une passionnée raison, quel océan pourtant s’impose entre elle et lui? - Nul ne peut dire en certitude; mais chacun tente la nouvelle traversée! La

¹⁵ Used in this sense it is an adverb rather than an adjective which Freud does not acknowledge when he concludes that “unheimlich ist irgendwie eine Art von heimlich” (Freud 53: uncanny is somehow a kind of secret).

mer est éternelle” (191; 91: ... if his dream is already merely passionate reason, which ocean nonetheless must rise between it and him? - No one can say for sure; but each attempts the new crossing! The sea is eternal).

If both *Les Indes* and *Omeros* are dominated by the Caribbean environment, it is the sea which, in turn, dominates this space. Both texts emphasize the fact that the sea divides and connects at the same time. In *Les Indes* it is the obstacle to the realization of the dream. Early in “L’Appel” the preference of sea salt to the Bishop’s holy waters establishes the importance of the ocean (107). During the voyage the sea is perceived as an arena (130), and after the ‘conquest’ it is the sea which will always remember the trade (163). Like the landscape the sea is personified in both texts. In *Les Indes* there is the notion of its face (163) as well as of its speech (113) and it is admired for its wisdom: “Mer ô savante!” (115; 15: Sea O wise one). In *Omeros* the sea is seen to be feeding the fishermen (3). Its hand is shaken by the sunset (12). And Helen’s “coral earrings/reflected the sea’s patience” (36). While the sea is presented in *Les Indes* as the mother of “les héros sombres” (185; 85: the dark heroes), the poet/narrator remarks in *Omeros* that “*mer* was/both mother and sea in [his] Antillean patois” (14) and that “a man who cursed the sea had cursed his own mother” (231). The metaphor of the mother recalls the theory of evolution according to which all life has its origin in the ocean. This capacity is emphasized in the opening chapter of *Les Indes* where it is the wise sea “par où commencent d’être sues, et la folie de l’homme, et sa rapine, et sa beauté” (115; 15: from which begin to be known the madness of man, and his plunder, and his beauty). In *Omeros* the meteorological cycle is described in which “rain/rose upwards from the sea, and the corrugated iron/of the sea glittered with nailheads” (234).

However, seen as origin and preserver of life on the one hand, it is presented as giant grave on the other: The “ocean of death” (*Les Indes* 73) “returns the wreaths of the dead” during the hurricane season (*Omeros* 52). Where, as has been established above, the sea is eternal in *Les Indes* (91), it is “without time” (36) in *Omeros* where diverse attributes such as “encouraging” (10), “racing” (49), “white” (65) or “blue” (108), “flecked” (224), and “grooved” (234) also provide it with a distinct character. Walcott goes as far as to present the sea as a synecdoche of the entire environment: “I sang our wide country, the Caribbean Sea” (320) and, to repeat the last line, it keeps “going on” at the poem’s closure. At the close of *Les Indes* there is a contrast between the sea which advances heavily at the new beach, the destination of a new dream (99), and the abandoned “Indies” with “L’âpre douceur de l’horizon en la rumeur du flot,/Et l’éternelle fixation des jours et des sanglots” (199; 99: the harsh gentleness of the horizon in the water’s murmur,/And the eternal fixation of days and of weeping).

To summarize the points made in this chapter, both Glissant’s *Les Indes* and Walcott’s *Omeros*, as well as Césaire’s earlier *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* share with traditional epics their foundational character in that they create and celebrate a specific space, the Caribbean environment, and in that they provide this space with alternative histories, or new perspectives on an established history. The notion of one authorized history is thereby challenged, and the role of related concepts, such as myth and collective memory, is emphasized. In the foreground of the three Caribbean writers’ texts is the natural environment, the Caribbean landscape itself. This landscape is, in turn, dominated by an

omnipresent sea which emphasizes the insular character of the space in question. Whereas Glissant's text is closer to Césaire's surrealist *Cahier* and thus more abstract in its narrative, Walcott's environment is very tangible. Nevertheless, both Glissant and Walcott underline the existential character the environment has for its inhabitants. Employing the metaphor of a (mostly female) body they show how the environment is inseparable from its inhabitants as well as how it seduces them. The country comes alive among its population, and the population appears vice versa inseparable from its country. The metaphor of the female body moreover illustrates how nature nourishes, in the role of the mother, how it is cherished and celebrated on the one hand, and abused and exploited on the other. As Glissant puts it in a conversation with Barbadian Kamau Brathwaite, in Caribbean literature, "landscape is not a decor but a character of its own" (Phaf 1996, 26). The theme of wandering or journeying –another link with the epic genre-- suggests a history of colonialism, of slavery and indentured labor as well as a present of migration. The latter is at the center of "Migration to the 'Old World'" and "Movement to the North of the Americas."

2. Caribbeanness in *De laatste vrijheid* (The Ultimate Freedom)

Si bo por a papia Papiamentu
Lo m'a yamabu dushi
Pidibu un sunchi pa sakami
Ma bo n' por bira pretu

- Frank Martinus Arion

The point of departure in this first part of my study is a sense of displacement within the Caribbean region, a displacement at the base of the actual migrations which are at the center of the following two parts, "Migration to the 'Old World'" and "Movement to the North of the Americas." Whereas, in my first chapter, I analyze two poems of epic length, one from the Anglophone and the other from the Francophone Caribbean, I focus on a novel from the Dutch part of the region in this second. While this novel, *De laatste vrijheid* by Frank Martinus Arion, also celebrates the Caribbean environment, my interest is now the nature of this environment's cultural identity rather than its creation. From poetic praise, I move to theoretical conceptualization. As I indicate at the close of "Creating and Celebrating a Caribbean Environment," displacement and exile play a crucial role in terms of a Caribbean identity, or Caribbeanness. In the course of the present chapter I show how Caribbeanness relates to the kind of dispersion which I also see at the root of postmodernity.

Discussing the notion of 'exile' in the twentieth century Harry Levin writes: "We should be grateful for all the cross-fertilization that has been brought about by this new Diaspora; the dispersion of talents, the dissemination of ideas in the arts and sciences, and

the notable enrichment of our universities” (Levin 78). Some thirty years later and about ten years before the end of the century in question Stuart Hall, a scholar of Cultural Studies who emigrated from Jamaica in 1951, says at a conference on “Postmodernism and the Question of Identity”: “My own sense of identity has always depended on the fact of being a migrant... (now) I find myself centred at last. Now that, in this postmodern age, you all feel so dispersed, I become centred: what I’ve thought of as dispersed and fragmented comes, paradoxically, to be *the* representative modern experience” (Morley/Chen 15). One might remark here that Hall’s sense of being centered within dispersion depends on the space in which the discourses of identity and (post)modernity are taking place, i.e. the metropolis, a phenomenon I discuss in “Islands within the European Metropolis.” However, there is no doubt about the fact that ‘dispersion’, ‘displacement’, and ‘dislocation’ have become catchwords for our contemporary *Zeitgeist*. As Joseph Brodsky has it, “displacements and misplacements are this century’s commonplace” (Brodsky 23). My analysis of Frank Martinus Arion’s *De laatste vrijheid* emphasizes the role a relatively small insular space, the Caribbean, plays in a global (post)modern scenario of dispersion. It studies the consequences of a history of colonization, of slavery and indentured labor, as well as resulting concepts of Caribbeanness.

“All arrived in this Caribbean sea like an epidemic ignorant of its specific target: human heroes and victims of an imagination and a quest shot through with gold. And all have remained in the complexions of their descendants who now inhabit these lands,” Barbadian George Lamming writes in *The Pleasures of Exile* (Lamming 17). Cuban Antonio

Benítez-Rojo counts “fragmentation,” “instability,” “uprootedness,” and “cultural heterogeneity” among the “main obstacles to any global study of the Caribbean’s societies” in his introduction to *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (Benítez-Rojo 1). Although Édouard Glissant’s differentiation between ‘créolisation’ and ‘métissage’ seems questionable,¹ I consider his definition of the former one of the most precise and lucid ones: “des éléments hétérogènes mis en relation sans dégradation ou diminution, soit de l’intérieur, soit de l’extérieur” (*Introduction* 18; heterogeneous elements, relating without degradation or diminution, be that from the inside or from the outside). For Glissant, the roots of creolization, a phenomenon spreading throughout the Americas and subsequently throughout the world (15), are in the Caribbean. Distancing himself from the notion of exemplarity, he considers the Caribbean in this respect at least ‘significant’ for the ‘American universe’ (12).

The three critical texts referred to in the preceding paragraph follow very different aims. The first portrays the personal experience of its author’s migration as one among many, including Hall, whom I quote in the introduction of this chapter, who left the Anglophone Caribbean in the 1950s for London, an experience I turn to with more depth in the second part of this study. The second text, demanding a “rereading [of] the Caribbean” (Benítez-Rojo 2), suggests applications of contemporary critical theories to Caribbean literatures,

¹ Glissant claims that ‘créolisation’ differs from ‘métissage’ in that it is unpredictable: “Et pourquoi la créolisation et pas le métissage? Parce que la créolisation est imprévisible alors que l’on pourrait calculer les effets d’un métissage” (*Introduction* 181). In my opinion, this distinction does not hold as there are limits to prediction even for the result of a cross between apples and pears, which serves as his symbolic example for ‘métissage’.

while the third operates on a more global philosophical level, despite its point of departure in the Caribbean. Nevertheless, the three texts equally present cultural diversity as one major element of a specific regional consciousness.

Martinus Arion addresses this diversity in the context of his two Caribbean protagonists in *De laatste vrijheid*. Daryll Guenepou gives up teaching in Curaçao when he is not permitted to conduct his classes in the local Creole, Papiamentu, the language far more familiar to his pupils than the official Dutch. He works as painter until his wife, Aideline, leaves him and their twins to develop her talents at composing in Amsterdam. Daryll moves to Amber, a fictive and to some extent utopian Caribbean island where Daryll's friend Bernard Cheri, the Minister of Education, is about to introduce Creole as language of instruction.

Amber's independence in 1974 was followed by a 15-year-reign of a nationalist party. The succeeding RCC (Reform and Creole Culture) with its leaning towards Cuba forms a coalition with the party for Progress and Renewal after the end of the Cold War. Only the resorts of Education and Human Resources remain occupied by RCC members, one of them Daryll's friend. Cheri is not only the Minister of Education, he is also the owner of a bed and breakfast, the *Sunrise Inn*, and employs Daryll as its manager.

Daryll is described as "typically Curaçaoan": "een beetje Dominicaans bloed, een beetje Colombiaans bloed, tamelijk veel Arubaans bloed, tamelijk veel Surinaams bloed" (73; a little Dominican blood, a little Colombian blood, quite a bit of Aruban blood, quite a bit of Surinamese blood). The listing of these origins only implies a continuation of their trace on to Europe, Africa, and Asia. Aideline's St. Maarten heritage is presented similarly:

“een moeder uit Anguila, een vader uit het Amerikaanse St. Croix, een grootvader van vaderskant uit St. Kitts, een grootmoeder van moederskant uit Nevis” (108; a mother from Anguila, a father from St. Croix, a grandfather on the father’s side from St. Kitts, a grandmother on the mother’s side from Nevis). This seemingly arbitrary enumeration of home islands expresses the manner in which “de meeste St. Maartenaren van St. Maarten zijn” (most people from St. Maarten are from St. Maarten). Martinus Arion obviously challenges the notion of one fixed unquestionable point of origin, simultaneously supporting the idea of an identity based on heterogeneity within the entity of the Caribbean region.

Relying on Deleuze and Guattari’s theories Glissant refers to the metaphor of the ‘rhizome’ to replace that of the ‘root’: “[le rhizome] est une racine démultipliée, étendue en réseaux dans la terre ou dans l’air, sans qu’aucune souche y intervienne en prédateur irrémédiable” (*PR* 23: the rhizome is a reduced root, extended in networks which spread either in the ground or in the air, without incurable predatory interventions of a stem). This earlier, more radical definition from *Poétique de la Relation* appears somewhat revised in *Introduction à une Poétique du Divers*: “... une identité rhizome, c’est-à-dire racine, mais allant à la rencontre des autres racines, alors ce qui devient important n’est pas tellement un prétendu absolu de chaque racine, mais le mode, la manière dont elle entre en contact avec d’autres racines: la Relation” (*Introduction* 31: a rhizomatic identity is one which is rooted but in constant contact with other roots. What remains important, then, is not so much the presumed essence of every root, but the mode, the way of its interaction with other roots: *la Relation*). Whereas the earlier vision stresses the separation of both terms, the replacement of ‘root’ by ‘rhizome’, the later definition accepts the existence of the one within the other.

The extension of this idea onto the entire globe, the spreading of creolization, allows for Glissant's vision of the *chaos monde*, a concept I concentrate on in my final chapter, "Homecomings Without Home? Commuting Within a *chaos monde*." With regard to this vision, Glissant is painfully aware of the persistent dilemma of an underlying "désordre du monde": "comment être soi sans se fermer à l'autre, et comment s'ouvrir à l'autre sans se perdre soi-même" (23; how to be oneself without shutting the other out, and how to open to the other without losing oneself). This conflict is valid for the individual as much as for respective communities.

In "*Adyosi versus Sunrise Inn: El paisaje alternativo del Caribe no-hispánico*" Ineke Phaf begins by reading *De laatste vrijheid* along with Simon Schama's *Landscape and Memory*. She compares Daryll to Schama's Lithuanian bison. Schama explains how Nicolaus Hussovianus (Mikołaj Hussowski) celebrates "the awesome beast as a symbol of the heroic tenacity of his native land and landscape" (Phaf 1996, 102) in a poem composed for Pope Leo X. Phaf finds an excellent link between Schama's bison and the Caribbean context in Bob Marley's "Buffalo soldier." Both the bison as well as Daryll, who resembles Marley's rebel, represent resistance and survival of oppression. However, while *Landscape and Memory* provides a large-scale historical, critical view of the relationship between "Western" culture and nature (Schama 14), Martinus Arion's novel presents a positive, at times utopian prospect for its comparatively small Caribbean space, commonly not considered 'Western', though it is as West as North America of whichever fixed-point which established the binary between 'West' and 'Other'. In Martinus Arion's scenario this binary is challenged. As Phaf rightly points out, Daryll and Amber embody an information age

(“una contemporaneidad de computadoras, televisión, turismo e informaciones noticieras”) in which the racism of the past has disappeared. By the same token, previous geographic divisions become superfluous.

The parallel between Daryll’s Caribbean and Schama’s Lithuanian space is suggested by Martinus Arion himself: both are formerly colonized regions, both are rich on amber which is, as Phaf underlines, a life preserving material (103). It is thus significant that the parents of the famous CIN journalist Joan Mikolai, the third protagonist, are from Lithuania. Especially the mother’s Jewish origin serves Joan to situate herself within a tradition of solidarity with the suppressed. Prior to her career as a journalist, Joan had been a student of anthropology. While working on a dissertation about the cosmology of the Dogon in Mali she becomes involved in the Tuareg’s struggle against the French. It is her encounter with Daryll which leads to a reevaluation of her Tuareg lover’s ‘*stambewustzijn*’ (tribal identity).

Seven years after Amadou’s death Joan is able to ask “of er tussen de trots van de Tuaregs, die ze zo bewonderd had, en de zogenaamde trots van de Kroaten en de Serviërs, die ze *niet* bewonderde, zoveel verschil was. Was het niet allemaal een gevaarlijk *stambewustzijn* dat door de hele geschiedenis heen alleen maar tot verschrikkelijk grote wreedheden heeft geleid?!” (210; whether there was such a great difference between the pride of the Tuaregs, which she had greatly admired, and the so-called pride of the Croats and the Serbs, which she did *not* admire. Wasn’t it always a dangerous tribal consciousness which has led to enormous cruelties all through history?!). Daryll, in contrast to Amadou, does not rely on a people or a tribe, not even on his African descent (211). He enacts Glissant’s idea of a rhizomatic as opposed to rooted identity. Consequently, Daryll relies

only on himself and thus has to be convinced by Joan, ironically enough, to share his beliefs with his fellow Amberians.

Benedict Anderson wisely opens his introduction to *Imagined Communities* by emphasizing that notions of 'nation', 'nationality', and 'nationalism' "all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyse" (Anderson 3). Anderson's premises include the fact that an end of the 'era of nationalism', the beginning of which he dates at the end of the eighteenth century (4), is "not remotely in sight" (3). He considers 'nation-ness' and 'nationalism' "cultural artifacts of a particular kind" (4). On these grounds he arrives at his definition of 'nation' as "an imagined political community -- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). In "Apprehensions of Time" Anderson summarizes three historical phenomena as the origins of "imagined communities of nations." The emergence of the latter is not only seen to succeed religious communities and "dynastic realms," but also conditioned by new "modes of apprehending the world" based on the idea of progressing time (22)². Anderson goes on to isolate the location in time as one defining aspect of any sum of associated individuals, be it called 'nation', 'community', or 'society': "The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history" (26). The preceding chapter of this study

² Anderson opposes the idea of calendrical progress, as it underlies the conception of "imagined communities of nations," to Benjamin's notion of 'Messianic time'. This notion recalls Walcott's presentation of time in *Omeros* in its "simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present" (Anderson 24). By implication, it adheres to the idea of circularity which I discuss in the context of historicity above.

underlines the location in space as another such defining aspect.

At some point Daryll explains to Joan how several Caribbean islands celebrate an arbitrary day for want of an independence day (181). Other islands do obtain independence days and even Days of the Creole. It is, however, obvious that such expressions of an autonomous subjectivity, resulting from postcoloniality, bear no similarity to the kind of nationalism I consider one major force behind the former colonizers' imperialism. Unable to use the term 'nationalism' bereft of its negative connotations, such as excessive patriotism and *Sendungsbewußtsein*, I prefer to speak of Caribbean 'countries' or 'states' rather than of 'new nations'. By the same token, I discuss a 'regional consciousness' rather than a national identity.

For Daryll, Amber is his home of choice. Having left Curaçao in search for the ideal independent country, having been disappointed in Suriname as well as in Grenada, he has decided that Amber comes closest to meeting his demands. The fact that it also distracts him from the awareness of Aideline's absence (186), should not be underestimated. Nevertheless, whichever the reasons for his obsession with the place, his desire to stay in it is stronger than the fear to die during a volcano eruption. Unlike that of soldiers willing to sacrifice their lives for their nation, Daryll's logic is an individualistic one. Rather than with the prospect of dying in a place he is uncomfortable in (178) he wants to live with the presence of the volcano. Having made this decision for himself and for his children, Daryll explicitly rejects the role of a leader: "Moest hij in een groot stadion soms een vergadering beleggen en urenlang woorden in hun oren blazen zoals Fidel dat deed om te zorgen, dat de mensen niet op krakkemikkige vlotjes naar Miami roeiden?" (207: Did he perhaps have to call an

assembly in a big stadium and fill their ears for hours, like Fidel does to prevent people from rowing to Miami on shaky floats). Cuba, like Suriname and Grenada, exemplifies how independence can take the wrong turns. Another such example is Haiti, which is not mentioned as often, but the fact that Amber has gained independence from France makes it a utopian alternative to the Haitian reality. Haitian boat people, refugees who leave Haiti on 'shaky floats', play a crucial role in Émile Ollivier's *Passage*, a novel I discuss in "Pieces of a Canadian Mosaic."

Regarding Postcoloniality

In anticipation of the volcano's eruption Amber's official capital Constance has been evacuated. Located in the Highlands, this first French fortress is rivaled by Richelieu, which is equipped with a new international airport in the Lowlands (12). Like the name of the island itself, the names of these villages are not accidental. As Phaf points out, the reference to the French cardinal symbolizes the rigidity of the European Enlightenment (Phaf 1996, 108-9). In its function of commercial, as opposed to official or traditional capital, Richelieu suggests *postcolonial* dependencies. While it thus exists on a progressing time scale in the capitalist sense, Constance symbolizes freedom from such progress, which is by no means synonymous with 'change'. On the contrary, the name of its bed and breakfast, "Sunrise Inn," does propose the idea of a new day and thus a fresh start. It symbolizes the "*verandering*" (101-3; change) Daryll and Aideline had hoped for in Suriname and in

Grenada, which is to say that this change marks a rejection of Richelieu's progress. It is Lambert, the van driver who smuggles Joan past the barricades, who brings the relation between capitalist progress (characteristic of modernity) and time to the point: "We zijn een modern land. De meesten van ons houden ervan vroeg te zijn. Zonder tijd is niets te beginnen" (48: We are a modern country. Most of us like to be early. Nothing can be done without time).

Martinus Arion's distinct irony, which prevails in most of the novel, and which Frans van Rosevelt completely misses in his review³, culminates when Aideline ridicules capitalist obsession with progress:

[The American Dream] maakt dat duizenden Cubanen, die in hun land twintig uur per dag niets anders doen dan de *son montuno* dansen en achter vrouwen aan zitten, hun leven riskeren om in Amerika vier uur te slapen en twintig uur te werken! Het maakt dat Haïtianen, die iets hardere werkers zijn dan Cubanen, twee uur slapen en tweeëntwintig uur werken. (233)

([The American Dream] causes thousands of Cubans, who do nothing but dance the *son montuno* and chase after women in their own country, to risk their lives to end up sleeping for four and working for twenty hours in Amerika! It causes that Haitians, who work a little harder than Cubans, sleep two and work twenty-two hours.)

Opposing ambition and efficiency in the North with the stereotype of the procrastinating inhabitant of the tropics, Aideline concludes that the *American Dream* with its *Great Society* was the greatest "verzinsel" (invention or *imagination*) in history. While she addresses the destination of the movement which is the subject of the final part of this study, the movement to the North of the Americas, Daryll attacks remaining ties with the former European

³ Cf. *World Literature Today* 70.4 (1996): 1012-3.

colonizers in his speech for Joan's documentary:

Ik kom van een redelijk mooi eiland. Maar ik ben daar niet gelukkig. Ik ben daar niet gelukkig omdat ik een onafhankelijk voelend mens ben, die het liefste leeft in een onafhankelijk en vrij land. En dat kan op Curaçao niet. Het eiland is van Holland. Het leek erop dat het op weg naar de vrijheid was, maar dat is nu teruggedraaid. De Hollanders zien een kans om de bepalingen van de Economische Gemeenschap, die ze zelf hebben helpen opstellen, te ontduiken en halen de banden steeds meer aan. Het wordt zoals Martinique en Guadeloupe voor de Fransen. (246)

(I come from a relatively beautiful island. But I am not happy there. I'm not happy there because I am someone who appreciates independence, someone who prefers to live in an independent and free country. And that is impossible in Curaçao. The island belongs to the Netherlands. It seemed to have been on its way to freedom, but that has now been reversed. The Dutch are seeing a chance to ignore the regulations of the Economic Community which they have helped establish themselves, and they continue to shorten the ties. It will be like Martinique and Guadeloupe for France.)

In today's Caribbean reality Daryll's complaints are shared only by a minority.

Relying on a large-scale opinion poll carried out in the six islands in question (Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, St. Maarten, Saba and St. Eustatius) Gert Oostindie and Peter Verton document in "Ki sorto di reino/What Kind of Kingdom? Antillian and Aruban Views and Expectations of the Kingdom of the Netherlands" that "neither the Netherlands Antilles nor Aruba want independence" (Oostindie/Verton 43). Situating these islands within their Caribbean environment the two scholars observe that the inhabitants of those countries which still have a direct constitutional link with the former colonizer (Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the French Overseas Departments, the British Dependent Territories, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba) generally enjoy better living conditions than the population of the independent countries (44). Therefore, and "contrary to previous expectations, there is nothing to suggest that these remaining 'not yet' independent Caribbean territories and islands will opt for constitutional independence in the near future."

What Martinus Arion suggests in his novel is that it takes individuals like Daryll or his friend Cheri to make local majorities, like the ones represented in above quoted opinion poll, aware of their own potentials. The danger of the volcano thereby metaphorizes the risk of Amber's independence. Once the population of Constance has returned, they also survive the minor volcano eruption. Joan reminds earlier of the dilemma between the liberation from an oppressor and the fate of the newly independent community: "onafhankelijkheidsfeesten zijn altijd mooi. Maar daarna. Het gaat om wat daarna komt (43: independence celebrations are always nice. But afterwards. What follows is at stake). Respecting the predictions of the English geologist Brouce, Constance's community has been displaced. Its members are allowed only controlled visits to tend to their deserted properties. In the end it is Daryll, albeit encouraged by Joan, who reminds his fellow citizens of their option and thus initiates a communal civil disobedience. The inhabitants of Constance return in time to witness a minor eruption which kills three of the scientists and three fishermen.

Coincidentally, Robert J.C. Young uses the metaphor of a volcano in "The Overwritten Unwritten: Nationalism and its Doubles in Post-Colonial Theory" for nationalism: "like a volcano, [nationalism] sometimes goes dormant, for so long that it is thought to be dead - as was assumed to be the case in Europe until recently - until a neighbouring volcano, such as communism, dies down for a while and its political energies resurface through ancient nationalist peaks" (Young 15). Like Walcott in *Omeros* and Glissant in *Les Indes*, Young suggests a circular quality of historical developments in that he compares them to natural cycles. He uses the example of the ANC in South Africa to illustrate how anti-colonialism links nationalism with Marxism, the latter traditionally

suspicious of the former (19). Young further isolates “nations and nationalism” at the center of postcolonial theory, with all its other issues (colonialism itself, theories of race, gender hierarchies) inseparably related.⁴ Such a characterization of postcolonial thought certainly depends on which theoreticians one includes among its contributors. It seems a futile task to me to look for a centrality of nationalism in, for example, Benítez-Rojo’s, Glissant’s, or Wilson Harris’ theoretical work.

As I indicate in my introduction, the usefulness of the term ‘postcolonial’ has by now been widely questioned.⁵ As shown above, a considerable part of the Caribbean still remains constitutionally linked to the former colonizers. Officially independent states, on the other hand, have become the object of a new dependence. As Bruce King puts it, “post-colonial should mean the period beginning with national independence in contrast to the colonial, but in recent theory the new nations are regarded skeptically as neo-colonialist” (King 17). I entirely agree when he goes on to argue that the study of postcolonial theory “has more often been concerned with the West’s view of the Other [...] than with actual writing from the new nations” (18), though I would substitute ‘nation’ with ‘country’ or ‘state’ for reasons I

⁴ The impact of this statement resembles Fredric Jameson’s claim that “all third-world texts [...] are to be read as what [he calls] *national allegories*” (*Social Text* 15 (1986): 69). For an excellent response to this categorization see Aijaz Ahmad, “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory’” (*Social Text* 17 (1987): 3-25). For a critical discussion of the term “national allegory” itself see Jean Franco, “The Nation as Imagined Community” (Veese 204-12).

⁵ Cf. Ella Shohat’s “Notes on the Postcolonial” and Anne McClintock’s “The Myth of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term Post-colonialism,” both in *Social Text* 31/32 (1992). Characterized as “the taker to task of all post-colonial critics” (Young 26), Aijaz Ahmad provides a thorough critique throughout *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*.

explain above.

In search for the ideal independent country Aideline and Daryll moved across the Caribbean. Daryll has realized that “het juiste model vind je nooit verstandelijk. Je *voelt* dat het er is” (177: you never find the perfect model through reasoning. You *feel* where it is). In his utopian Amber the recognition of the local Creole as official language, as language of instruction, symbolizes the autonomy of the relatively small community. However, Amber is never portrayed from a nationalist point of view. It is rather posited in opposition to those, often large nations whose nationalism engenders imperialism. What is being celebrated, as it is in *Omeros* and *Les Indes*, is the natural as opposed to the political environment. Amber is said to offer all desired types of landscape (11), and its “prachtige, natuurlijke omgeving” (72: precious, natural environment) is contrasted with the damage the oil business has done to Curaçao. While the refinery, established there in 1915, created jobs and an elaborate infrastructure, it has at the same time polluted the ground and the air among other conditions for agricultural businesses. Curaçao is thus one example of a country which is not ‘postcolonial’ in the political sense, but which otherwise shares all the symptoms of postcoloniality with the constitutionally independent countries.

Given the lack of an alternative, then, I accept the term ‘postcolonial’ to describe a certain body of criticism, though I tend to consider this body more inclusive than, for example, Young does in the essay quoted above. The term seems similarly acceptable as a marker for the last third of this century, as the respective decades did witness the official independence of a certain number of former colonies. It is in this respect that one can establish a connection between the postcolonial and the postmodern, a connection I turn to

in the following part of this chapter. Hans Bertens rightly argues in “The Debate on Postmodernism” that there is a postmodern framework for most of what is termed ‘postcolonial literature’ (Bertens 3). To summarize the usefulness of the terminology derived from ‘postcolonial’, it fits in with what Dash remarks about the notion “New World”, and I would add “new literatures”: it “has become an unavoidable compromise” (Dash 1998, 1). I argue, however, that there is no set of aesthetic characteristics to define ‘postcolonialism’ as a period in literature. Accordingly, there is no such thing as a ‘postcolonial’ poem in the sense that there is, for example, a surrealist one. Similarly, there are no ‘postcolonial’ writers in the sense that there are postmodern ones.

Regarding Postmodernity

Kwame Anthony Appiah has brilliantly demonstrated that “the Post- in Postmodernism” is not “the Post- in Postcolonial.” However, I also agree with Bertens when he points out that it is that postmodernism which established that representations are vehicles of power which “after the mid-1980s has informed what are now termed postcolonial and cultural studies” (Bertens 6). In “(Post)Modernity and Caribbean Discourse,” Theo D’haen sketches the main slants on postmodernity as well as its derivation from the aesthetic phenomenon, postmodernism, before he turns to the connection between these (post)modern discourses and the Caribbean context. Elaborating on Appiah’s argument, D’haen defines the relationship between postmodernism and postcolonialism as complementary or

‘supplemental’ rather than antagonistic: “I see postcolonialism as a ‘counter-discourse’ to the discourse of the imperial or colonialist center” (D’haen 1997, 305). Apart from the fact that I would locate the *discourse* of postcolonialism in the same imperial or colonialist center, I agree with this statement only in view of a specific type of text created in the postcolonial environment.

In my attempt to do away with oppositions such as center versus periphery, at least on the cultural and socio-political level, I tend to see the literatures of different parts of the world less confrontational than D’haen does when he coins the term “counter-postmodernism” to signal “its genealogical rootedness in both modernism and postmodernism as well as its rejection of or resistance to the conjunction of aesthetics and ethics these two terms imply.” I argue instead that only a certain number of the entirety of postcolonial texts, if one wants to call them that, represent an ‘empire writing back’ and are thus “counter-modern” (309) or, by extension, “counter-postmodern.” Neither denying a universal intertextuality, nor the closer intellectual ties between colonizer and (formerly) colonized, I nevertheless advocate the option to study literatures such as those of the Caribbean in their own right and for their own aesthetics. This does not imply that I do not perceive them as contributors to a postmodern *Zeitgeist*. On the contrary, as I indicate in the introduction to this chapter I consider some of this *Zeitgeist*’s premises crucial to the development of Caribbeanness. I merely suggest a careful distinction between the aesthetic period ‘postmodernism’ and ‘postmodernity’, the contemporaneous philosophies derived, as D’haen rightly emphasizes (304), out of the former.

I will now focus on this *Zeitgeist* and its relation to creolization which I see at the

base of Caribbeanness. In the preceding chapter I emphasize, with Glissant and Fokkema, that rootlessness does not render a sense of identity impossible. This claim is applicable to the individual as well as to his or her community. What is more, Glissant considers an environment of dispersion and de-individualization crucial for what he calls ‘natural’ as opposed to ‘forced poetics’: “J’appelle poétique libre ou naturelle, toute tension collective vers une expression, et qui ne s’oppose à elle-même ni au niveau de ce qu’elle veut exprimer ni au niveau du langage qu’elle met en oeuvre” (*Discours* 236; 120⁶: I define as a free or natural poetics any collective yearning for expression that is not opposed to itself either at the level of what it wishes to express or at the level of the language that it puts into practice). Such free or natural poetics correspond to the right of *opacité* demanded at the very beginning of *Discours antillais*. They are at the root of ‘creolization’ (“Relating”), a process of relationship (“relais”) and relativity (“relatif”), a process Glissant ultimately considers a global one. He defines “le drame planétaire de la Relation” (the universal drama of cultural transformation) as “l’élán des peuples néantisés qui opposent aujourd’hui à l’universel de la transparence, imposé par l’Occident [which, in turn, he defines not as place but as project], une multiplicité sourde du Divers” (11-2; 2: the creativity of marginalized peoples who today confront the ideal of transparent universality, imposed by the West, with secretive and multiple manifestations of Diversity). Such a scenario of rhizomatic identities within heterogeneous communities in crosscultural relations removes all grounds for the kind of nationalism described by Anderson or Young, among others. Like Benítez-Rojo’s vision of

⁶ The second figure refers to the translation by J. Michael Dash.

the chaos within which an island proliferates endlessly, a chaos “without center and without limits” (Benítez-Rojo 9), Glissant’s scenario does not leave room for a concept such as ‘nation’ or ‘empire’⁷.

Like Glissant, the Guyanese Wilson Harris, employs the notion of ‘opaqueness’ or ‘obscurity’. In *The Womb of Space: The Cross-Cultural Imagination* Harris writes that “the true character of cosmic freedom is obscure, yet that obscurity or darkness may bring to imaginative fiction and poetry a luminous paradox, depth and tone” (Harris xv-xvi). The lack of boundaries as it underlies Glissant’s vision of creolization as well as Benítez-Rojo’s conceit of the ‘repeating island’ is symbolized by Harris’ ‘womb of space’. With Glissant and Benítez-Rojo, Harris analyses the dispersed self in a transcultural environment: “The paradox of cultural heterogeneity, or cross-cultural capacity, lies in the evolutionary thrust it restores to orders of the imagination, the ceaseless dialogue it inserts between hardened conventions and eclipsed or half-eclipsed otherness, within an intuitive self that moves endlessly into flexible patterns, arcs or bridges of community” (xviii).

Like Glissant and Benítez-Rojo, Harris also avoids to merely substitute given conventions --or divisions for that matter-- with their reversions. In what seems a postmodern vein all three of them reject oppositions such as those between ‘familiar’ and ‘other’, or ‘here’ and ‘there’. Instead of a new center/margin model they demand its deconstruction

⁷ In his introduction to *(Un)Writing Empire*, the collection which includes Young’s essay, Theo D’haen convincingly argues that Anderson’s term ‘imagined communities’ should be extended to cover not only ‘nation’ but also ‘empire’ (D’haen 1998, 6), which raises the question about a historically defined origin of nationalism. In what sense is, for example, Roman xenophobia really distinct from that of any central European nation in the nineteenth century?

altogether. Instead of another transparent 'sense of self' they propose its obscurity. Hall, whose play on center and periphery from the quotation in the introduction to this chapter should be remembered here, outlines the implications of these processes for human subjectivity in "The Question of Cultural Identity" by claiming that "in what is sometimes described as our post-modern world, we are also 'post' any fixed or essentialist conception of identity - something which, since the Enlightenment, has been taken to define the very core or essence of our being, and to ground our existence as human subjects (Hall/Held/McGrew 275).⁸

George Lang's premise in "Papiamentu, the Caribbean Paradigm and Cultural Fractality" is that the Caribbean can serve as a paradigm for universal cultural processes, no matter how different the degrees of their prominence may be (Lang 1997, 88). Aware that he is thus turning "on its head the widespread notion that Caribbean thought is inherently derivative - mimic, to borrow the well-worn image" from Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*, he points out, by way of reference to Benítez-Rojo's concept of 'chaos' as well as to Glissant's of the 'rhizome', that "the unity in diversity of the Caribbean" does not only suggest "the deep forms of order now called chaos, but vocabulary and imagery drawn from chaos theory have impinged on Caribbean cultural theory" (90) --granting that the latter is often developed in a metropole elsewhere. With the example of the Curaçaoan Creole Papiamentu, Lang shows how crosscultural identities, or identities of displacement, *enrich* rather than

⁸ Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant's manifesto *Éloge de la créolité* should finally be mentioned here. While it is largely based on Glissant's ideas, I agree with Dash's criticism that the *Éloge* "risks undoing the epistemological break with essentialist thinking that [Glissant] has always striven to conceptualise" (Dash 1995, 23).

impoverish Caribbean cultures (95).

I think it is in this sense that Daryll and his friend Cheri demand a recognition of local Creoles in addition to rather than as replacement of official or otherwise available languages. Like Joan, Daryll had been restless prior to his arrival in Amber. At some point Lambert, the van driver, wonders whether the two had already met somewhere else. After all, they are both *vreemdelingen* (173: foreigners or strangers) to some extent. Along with Aideline Daryll has not only traveled all through the Caribbean in search for the ideal independent country, but also out of interest in further aspects of Caribbean culture (96) which, by implication, he thus perceives as aspects of a Caribbean identity.

Glissant shares Daryll's perception of the region as a whole when he defines *antillanité* as the vision of a shared experience of "cultures issues du système des Plantations; civilisation insulaire [...]; peuplement pyramidal avec une origine africaine ou hindoue à la base, européenne au sommet; langues de compromis; phénomène général de créolisation" (*Discours* 422; 221: cultures derived from plantations; insular civilization [...]; social pyramids with an African or East Indian base and a European peak; languages of compromise; general cultural phenomenon of creolization). Whereas Glissant sees the process of creolization turning into a global one, King argues that it has always been universal when he points out that "traditions are yesterday's changes; the cultural is always intercultural" (King 23) or that change "has been taking place since the beginning of time and all cultures are mixtures of other cultures" (25). In agreement with the fact that "artists [...] always creatively respond to their environment in producing new forms suitable for their time" (23) I want to emphasize, however, that these processes of crossculturation or

creolization are sometimes more obvious in some places (for example an archipelago connecting the North of a “New World” with its South, characterized by the consequences of a history of colonization, of slavery and indentured labor) than they are in others. Furthermore, a temporal component can be added to the geographical one. With increasingly easier access to faster means of transportation as well as with a continuing development of means of communication these processes may today also be marked with a greater and growing rapidity than they used to be in the past.

While Glissant predicts the spreading of creolization throughout the world, he does not fail to point out the dangers for this phenomenon as it is part and parcel of his idea of Caribbeanness:

“Nous savons ce qui menace l’antillanité: la balkanisation historique des îles, l’apprentissage de langues véhiculaires différentes et souvent ‘opposées’ (la querelle du français et de l’anglo-américain), les cordons ombilicaux qui maintiennent ferme ou souple beaucoup de ces îles dans la réserve d’une métropole donnée, la présence d’inquiétants et puissants voisins, le Canada et surtout les États-Unis” (423)

(222: We know what threatens Caribbeanness: the historical balkanization of the islands, the inculcation of different and often ‘opposed’ major languages (the quarrel between French and Anglo-American English), the umbilical cords that maintain, in a rigid or flexible way, many of these islands within the sphere of influence of a particular metropolitan power, the presence of frightening and powerful neighbors, Canada and especially the United States.)

In this passage, Glissant points out the vexing discrepancy between theory and practice, between the ideal and its reality. This discrepancy also underlies Martinus Arion’s novel. While Daryll is able to convince his fellow Amberians to resist the orders of foreign geologists and thus learn to live with the presence of the volcano, the majority of people of the opinion poll’s reality reject this kind of independence. Nevertheless, in theory, as

creolization spreads and eliminates divisions between ‘West’ and ‘Other’, between superior and inferior cultures and elements of cultures, more communities will accept diversity as the main characteristic of their identities, and displacement would become an omnipresent and generally positive experience.

At this point I recall the distinction Caren Kaplan makes between ‘travel’ and ‘displacement’, a distinction I refer to in my introduction. In *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*, Kaplan separates modern from postmodern phenomena related to exile. Arguing that “Euro-American modernisms and postmodernisms are as linked and continuous as they are distinct and discontinuous” (Kaplan 8) Kaplan juxtaposes rather than opposes the two terms: “travel is very much a modern concept, signifying both commercial and leisure movements in an era of expanding Western capitalism, while displacement refers us to the more mass migrations that modernity has engendered” (3). I agree with the distinction inasmuch as it signals the increasing rapidity of migration and mobilization referred to above. The experience of travel and displacement, with notions of diaspora, migration, or nomadism implied, has thus become a paradigm for postmodernity and, as I argue, for the concept of Caribbeanness. To return to Lang’s associations with chaos theory, “just as chaos theory, even transposed into cultural terms, is too powerful to restrict to a specific parochial zone, so postmodernism, if the thing is more than an ephemeral intellectual fashion, must have crosscultural explanatory power, especially given its purport, global culture transformation” (Lang 1997, 95). In agreement with this statement, and often enough sympathizing with Jürgen Habermas’ conviction that the thing

is, precisely, “an ephemeral intellectual fashion,”⁹ I would obviously substitute ‘postmodernity’ for ‘postmodernism’ here. The fact that a postmodern *Zeitgeist* is a global one, does not necessarily imply that aesthetic characteristics commonly defined as postmodern¹⁰ are similarly popular in all the cultures on the planet. It is for this purpose that I prefer to strictly distinguish between ‘postmodernity’ and ‘postmodernism’. In fact, Cabrera Infante’s *Tres tristes tigres*, Maximin’s *L’isolé soleil*, or Marshall’s *Praisesong for the Widow*, to include one of D’haen’s examples (318), are currently among the few obviously postmodern examples of Caribbean writing. However, all the texts discussed in this study do express the same heterogeneity and dispersion, engendered by migration, displacement, and exile, which dominates the concept of postmodernity in the same way as it dominates that of Caribbeanness. In what remains of this chapter I therefore set the connection between the two as my point of departure.

⁹ In *The Discourse of Modernity*, Habermas argues that the idea of the postmodern can either be seen as a neo-conservative or an anarchist farewell to modernity. When Habermas argues that modernity is an unfinished project, one has to keep in mind, however, that his views originate from a historical and social scientist rather than artistic background, and that his definition of ‘modernity’ is therefore not that of a certain period in the literary and visual arts.

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of the terminology derived from ‘the postmodern’ see Hans Bertens, *The Idea of the Postmodern: A History* (New York/London: Routledge, 1995).

Caribbeanness Within the Realm of Postmodernity

Among the mass migrations Kaplan categorizes as *postmodern* displacement are those spreading from the Caribbean region. Whereas the borderline between voluntary and forced exile, between ‘fortunate traveler’ and ‘refugee’ is fluent, emigration from the Antilles is generally closer to the latter of these two poles. The fact that these refugees may not necessarily find better conditions in exile, is addressed early in *De laatste vrijheid* when the situation of the English geologist is compared to that of Caribbean immigrants in his home country: “Maar wat krijgen de mensen uit Amber, wat krijgen de meer dan een half miljoen mensen uit het Caribische gebied, die permanent in England verblijven? Slechte behuizing; slechte behandeling; ze hebben de allerlaatste banen” (21: But what do the people from Amber get, what do the more than half a million people from the Caribbean region get who remain permanently in England? Bad housing; bad treatment; they have the worst jobs). In Joan’s documentary Daryll therefore encourages his fellow Caribbeans to return:

... alle Caribische negers komen thuis! Ze hebben overal rondgezworven, vluchtend voor de slagen van mens en natuur. Hopend het paradijs te vinden in Amsterdam, Parijs, London. Bang voor hun eigen orkanen, zijn ze in de wereldsteden andere doden gaan sterven. Want het paradijs is niet te vinden. Het paradijs is alleen te maken. En voor het paradijs moet men willen sterven. (305)

(... all Caribbean negroes come home! They wandered everywhere, fleeing the blows of men and nature. Hoping to find paradise in Amsterdam, Paris, London. Afraid of their own hurricanes they went to die other deaths in the metropolises. Because paradise is not to be found. Paradise is only to be made. And humankind has to be ready to die for paradise.)

Just as Daryll makes Constance’s inhabitants aware of their option to return and face the presence of the volcano, he extends his appeal to the inhabitants of the entire region in this

statement. As Wim Rutgers points out in his brief analysis of *De laatste vrijheid*, in *Beneden en boven de wind: Antilliaanse literatuur*, a country can only exist, be *constant*, as long as its population remains in it (Rutgers 359). However, unless “Caribische negers” is read in a highly symbolic way, in the sense of ‘oppressed individual from a postcolonial environment’, Daryll’s appeal reflects a flaw of most theories about *antillanité* or Caribbeanness. Although its proponents, most prominently those of the underlying concept of *créolité* or Creoleness, emphasize hybridity and heterogeneity, it is usually the male of African descent who is foregrounded in this dispersed collective identity.

In “*Créolité: Cultural Nation-Building or Cultural Dependence?*” A. James Arnold emphasizes that “the *créolité* movement is so sharply gendered that it ought to be considered a masculinist cultural movement that has staked out its position in opposition to the emerging feminist or womanist culture of the region” (Arnold 1998, 39). I am neither suggesting here that Martinus Arion belongs to the movement in question, nor that the characters in *De laatste vrijheid* appear anti-feminist or -womanist. On the contrary, Daryll repeatedly demonstrates how he fought and overcame the image of the ‘super-male’, and Aideline is not condemned for choosing her career over her family. However, although Joan is treated with the same privileges of a protagonist as Daryll on the level of form (both their perspectives alternate between third and first person narration) the choices of the former, as Phaf rightly criticizes (Phaf 1996, 124) are far more limited than those of the latter. Neither Joan nor Aideline seem interested in men of other than African descent.

Although Rutgers is right when he states that *De laatste vrijheid* advocates Caribbeanness as it succeeds ‘Eurocentrism and Africanism’ (Rutgers 359), Daryll’s appeal

to “Caribische negers” is one example of the occasional relapse into negritude, an ideology I discuss in “Destination Africa.” Another such example occurs in the context of a critique on communism. Dwelling on Grenada before the invasion, Daryll’s hopes are contrasted by the situation in Cuba: “Want Cuba is hoe dan ook een land waar hoofdzakelijk de witte nakomelingen van Spanjaarden het voor het zeggen hebben. Ondanks het socialisme. Of juist dankzij het socialisme, dat immers predikt dat de elite de leiding van de revolutie moet hebben” (100; Because Cuba is, after all, a country where mainly the white progeny of Spaniards rules, despite socialism, or possibly just because of socialism, which preaches still that the elite has to take the lead of the revolution). In contrast to Glissant’s idea of creolization, where heterogeneous elements relate *without degradation and diminution*, Daryll’s criticism on the situation in Cuba emphasizes the pyramid Glissant indicates as point of departure for his vision of *antillanité*: it has an African or East Indian base and a European peak. Whereas in the extended vision of Caribbeanness such class differences would vanish, the texts I discuss in the following chapter concentrate on the reality in which borders between race, class, and linguistic entities are far from overcome. Daryll’s statement about Cuba also indicates a separation between that part of the region which had remained Spanish and therefore turned ‘postcolonial’ sooner than the British, let alone the French (with the exception of Haiti) and Dutch Antilles. It is not accidental that London, Paris, and Amsterdam, but not Madrid were destinations of mass migrations from the Caribbean during recent decades. For this reason, texts from the Hispanic Caribbean, which also belongs to Latin America, are far more prominent in the third part than they are in the second part of this study.

My analysis of *De laatste vrijheid* centers around its concern with the development of a Caribbean identity, with the concept of Caribbeanness. Underlying this concept is the theory of creolization, which extends the ideas of the earlier negritude movement to focus not merely on the African influences, but rather include all the traditions (for example the European and Asian ones) interacting in the region. Caribbeanness is thus based on a sense of displacement which also serves as a paradigm for postmodernity. As J. Michael Dash puts it in "Psychology, Creolization, and Hybridization," "post-modernism offers a general theoretical context that allows creolization and hybridity to evolve with a reinforced philosophical grounding" (Dash 1996, 52). Postmodernity, however, seems to inform postcoloniality only inasmuch as it draws attention to the discourse of power relations. Concepts such as Benítez-Rojo's 'culture chaos', Glissant's 'rhizomatic identity', or Harris' 'womb of space' abandon binaries between 'West' and 'Other', or center and periphery. Whereas the resulting crossculturation appears as a constructive prospect in Martinus Arion's utopian island Amber, the texts I discuss in the following chapter seem to reflect disillusionment with such theories.

3. *Tres tristes tigres (Three Trapped Tigers), A Small Place, and Other*

Disillusionments

Discóbolo que le da la razón a Carpentier (o a la Condesa de Marlín, no sé: tal vez a los dos) cuando dijo que los cubanos estaban todos grises, diciendo así quizás en francés que Cuba es una isla rodeada (por todas partes) por un mar de genios o genios del mar.

- Guillermo Cabrera Infante, *Ella cantaba boleros*

My analyses of Derek Walcott's *Omeros*, Édouard Glissant's *Les Indes*, and Frank Martinus Arion's *De laatste vrijheid*, as well as the theories of creolization and Caribbeanness foreground the positive potential of the dispersion and heterogeneity at the root of a Caribbean regional consciousness. Celebrations of the natural environment and the concepts of a cross- or transcultural identity indicate the constructive aspects of hybridity and unity within diversity, as they accompany postcoloniality. In the present chapter I turn to primarily negative perspectives, to the shortcomings of Caribbeanness, or to the reality of idealistic concepts.¹ Whereas in theory, the idea of Caribbeanness expresses a cooperation between the various entities within the area, rivalries persist in the region's reality. While

¹ The juxtaposition of a positive and negative perspective on the idea of Caribbeanness provides the basis of a forthcoming two-volume special issue of *Journal of Caribbean Studies*, edited by Anne Malena and Pascale De Souza. While the title of the first volume is "The Caribbean That Isn't?", the second is called "The Caribbean That Is."

independence from the European powers is meant to engender independent cultures within Caribbean unity, constitutional ties remain and new economic dependencies especially with the United States are added. Belinda J. Edmondson introduces the notion of “Caribbean romances” to distinguish “the idealized representations of Caribbean society” from its reality (Edmondson 2). Edmondson argues that the ideas which revolve around Caribbeanness, “have such power to shape the way the region now imagines itself that they have become mythic.” While my own study emphasizes the benefit of the “romances,” it always points out the discrepancy between them and the reality of the region.

While Martinus Arion creates a utopian scenario of the ideal independent Caribbean country in *De laatste vrijheid*, he appears very critical and even bitter about the reality of the region in “The Great Curassow or The Road to Caribbeanness.” While a Caribbean self-consciousness based on the concept of Creoleness functions constructively in his novel, the French Overseas Departments, once the origin of *créolité* ideas, are attacked for their *Francophonie* in the critical article. The authors of *Éloge de la créolité*, in turn, revise and further develop their ideas in a recent interview. One of them, Patrick Chamoiseau, emphasizes the oppression of the imaginary, rather than that of its expression, in his *Écrire en pays dominé*, thus belittling the role of the creole languages, which were once considered a major element of a uniquely Caribbean culture. I address the importance of these languages below in “Choosing a Language: Polyglossia and the Caribbean Writer.” Before I turn to my analyses of Guillermo Cabrera Infante’s *Tres tristes tigres*, which is specifically concerned with the situation in Cuba, and Jamaica Kincaid’s *A Small Place*, based on a visit of the author’s home country Antigua, I shall discuss the article by Martinus Arion and the

interview with the authors of the *Éloge* to point out more general (“other”) disillusionments with so-called postcolonial developments in the Caribbean.

De laatste vrijheid is set on the fictitious island Amber. Amber functions as ideal independent Caribbean country. Having gained its independence from France, it suggests a utopian alternative to the Haitian reality. Its volcano appears as a metaphor for all the risks of independence. Amber’s inhabitants, however, decide to face the risks rather than continue to submit to domination from abroad. The introduction of the local Creole as language of instruction in public schools symbolizes the attempt to rely on inherent strengths and on communal efforts within the region rather than to further depend on (post)colonial, that is constitutional and/or economic ties.

The bright, promising prospects of his novel are contrasted in Frank Martinus Arion’s gloomy non-fictional portrayal of the region in “The Great Curassow or The Road to Caribbeanness.” Living up to his ironic style even in combination with obvious bitterness, Martinus Arion writes that to his mind, “the region as a whole has not even reached the stage of Caribbeanness or even Americanness yet. [Caribbeans] may all still be only 16th-century simpletons, deadly afraid of falling into hellish ravines once [they] leave Spain and Portugal and get beyond Cape Bojador” (Martinus Arion 1998, 448). The negative conclusion of a talk during which he had “bent over backwards to try and find common Caribbean traits from as many angles as possible, including geological, historical, ethnological, cultural, religious ones” (449) seems unfortunately still valid: “only one criterion applies to the whole Caribbean region: complete ignorance of each other’s existence. There is more Europeanness

than Americanness and practically no Caribbeanness in sight.” The harshness of this judgement is balanced by the prevailing ironic tone of Martinus Arion’s critical article, and it leads one to suspect that his non-fictional portrayal of the region might be as exaggerated in one direction as the promising prospect of his utopian novel is into the other, but the criticism remains. Martinus Arion chooses three examples to illustrate how ‘Europeanness’ and a lack of interregional cooperation continues to separate the various parts of the Caribbean: Cuban José Martí’s impressions during a visit to Curaçao around 1890; the direction of the wind; and the bird which may have given Curaçao its name, but which is completely ignored there.

Quotations from *Nuestra América* demonstrate Martí’s ignorance of Curaçaoan culture. Contemporary celebrations of Martí as the symbol of Cuba’s struggle for independence, however, ignore his xenophobia directed to the Papiamentu-speaking comrades-in-arms to the South. Martinus Arion refers to Martí’s remarks about Curaçao’s population, architecture, and especially the language, “un español horrible” (450), to indicate the lack of tolerance in a work whose title suggests a certain regional collectivity.

The islands which the Dutch language labels ‘bovenwindse’ (above the wind) belong to the ‘leeward islands’ in English. Within the Netherlands Antilles, the *bovenwindse* islands are St. Eustatius, Saba, and St. Martin. In the Dutch division the so-called ABC-islands Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao are, accordingly, the ones called *benedenwindse* (below the wind) islands. Most of today’s geographic terminology was introduced by the colonizers. St. Lucia’s *Columbus Square* was only recently turned into *Walcott Square*. Other countries, such as Suriname, create their Independence Squares. Nevertheless, major distinctions like

those made according to the direction of the wind, still testify to the presence of the colonizers. Martinus Arion argues that, especially with regard to contradictions, the population of the Caribbean should together decide what parts they consider above and below the wind.

Finally, the name of the Curaçao bird appears in several variations, such as ‘Curassow’ or ‘Corrosou’ in the Oxford Dictionaries. The first sources date as far back as the 17th century, “while nobody in the Dutch kingdom, more specifically the Dutch section of the Caribbean, has the slightest notion of this” (451). This fact indicates that the Dutch island was once named by the British, a confusion which is common throughout the region. For example, St. Lucia’s official language is English, but most villages have French names, such as Vieuxfort, Babonneau, and Soufrière. If those names are kept, Martinus Arion seems to suggest, their origin and meaning should at least be explained to the local population.

Martinus Arion’s point of departure in “The Great Curassow or The Road to Caribbeanness” is the manifesto of Creoleness, *Éloge de la créolité*. Supporting the concepts of Americanness, Caribbeanness and Creoleness defined in this text, the Curaçaoan writer criticizes that its ideas and its authors, Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant are intellectually rooted in one of the French territories which “have been the very ones where Creoleness is hardest to get recognized, let alone officialized” (448). Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant are from Martinique, which, unlike Haiti, never recognized Creole as an official language. Confiant is the odd exception among contemporary writers from the French Overseas Departments in that he actually wrote entire texts in Creole. Another Martinican, Aimé Césaire, who co-founded the Negritude movement, later opted against

independence, a development I discuss in “Destination Africa.” To be sure, the majority of the population in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana seems more interested in adapting to French culture and in eventually moving to France than in preserving their French Creole and making it a characteristic of a regional consciousness.

As I have shown in the preceding chapter, and as I will emphasize below, Martinus Arion remains more attached to Negritude ideas than the authors of the *Éloge*, to whom Césaire serves only as a distant forerunner. A major part of Martinus Arion’s problem with their concept of Creoleness is thus the under-representation of the African element. In a recent interview with Lucien Taylor, Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant remember early attacks from Africanists or “Afrocentrics” (Taylor 135), to use Confiant’s term, against the *Éloge*. A new concept has often been known to react radically against a precursor in order to succeed the latter. The proverbial baby is thrown out along with the bath water; in this case, the Negritude ideology is overcome by the ideas of *créolité*. This is how Martinus Arion interprets the development from the earlier to the later movement. According to Chamoiseau, however, what Martinus Arion missed in the *Éloge*’s concept of Creoleness, was de facto missing in the aftermath of Césaire’s Negritude. Chamoiseau complains that the followers of Césaire had declared themselves Negroes but at the same time “become white, Western, dysfunctional, and anaesthetized” (158). Chamoiseau seems to regard Césaire’s own decision to opt for departmentalization in 1946 a turn away from Negritude. Thus, Chamoiseau insists, the *Éloge* was needed to shake up the debate. Contrary to Martinus Arion’s interpretations, Chamoiseau presents the *Éloge* as a return to the kind of liberation that was immanent in Negritude. Similarly, Confiant sticks to his guns when he states that

the *Éloge*'s concept of "Créolité has helped to make Antilleans aware of their existence in the world" (141).

One of the main points of departure in the *Éloge* was linguistic oppression, not only in the sense of naming as described by Martinus Arion above, but also with regard to the dominance of European languages. Chamoiseau has meanwhile come to concentrate on a different location of oppression and domination. Rather than with the nature of its signifiers, be they Creole or French, he is now concerned with the imaginary they express. With reference to *Écrire en pays dominé*, Chamoiseau describes his transformation from "word scratcher" to "warrior" (140). He underlines that it is the sphere of the imaginary which functions as the fundamental site for resistance. Chamoiseau is thus suggesting that the mind can be liberated regardless of the kind of signs it thinks and speaks in.

The opening question of *Écrire en pays dominé*, "Comment écrire alors que ton imaginaire s'abreuve du matin jusqu'aux rêves, à des images, des pensées, des valeurs qui ne sont pas les tiennes?" (Chamoiseau 17: How to write if your imagination from awakening until dreaming is fed with images, thoughts, values which are not your own?), in turn raises the question about the relationship between signifier and signified. It seems obvious that Chamoiseau's demand to free the imagination, the domain of the signifieds, can only benefit, if not be rendered possible at all, by the availability of respective means of expression. That is to say it can only benefit from the same freedom in the domain of the signifiers. The work of the "word scratcher," of the proponent of local languages or of a "free poetics," to recall Glissant's terminology, should thus not be underestimated.

While Creole languages are crucial elements of an independent Caribbean identity,

they seem to be losing their popularity not only in everyday encounters, but ironically in the eyes of those intellectuals and artists who once propagated their importance. While Caribbeanness, a concept interconnected with Creoleness and Creolization, is based on the idea of regional cooperation, ignorance and rivalries between the individual countries and particularly between the linguistic entities persist and remain enforced by the colonial legacy. Moreover, new economic dependencies are established, and where natural resources were once exploited through the plantation system, they are meanwhile exploited through the world market, and especially the tourist industry. The nature of this exploitation is at the center of my analyses of Cabrera Infante's *Tres tristes tigres* and Kincaid's *A Small Place*. While the landscape is once more foregrounded in "Authentic Versus Recycled Nature," effects of the tourist industry dominate the comparative analysis of "Visiter's Views."

Authentic Versus Recycled Nature: La Estrella and Cuba Venegas

In both *Omeros* and *Les Indes*, as well as in Césaire's *Cahier*, the landscape is personified through the metaphor of a female body. St. Lucia participates as Helen in *Omeros*, and the entity of Caribbean islands appears as anonymous Woman in *Les Indes*. In both cases, the personifications are employed in an active as well as in a passive sense. In the role of the seductress, the environment presents the beauty that leads to its celebration prevailing in *Les Indes* and especially in *Omeros*. In the role of the raped and exploited victim, the island-woman represents the struggle with (post)coloniality and imperialism.

Whereas the poet/narrator “felt like standing in homage to” St.Lucia/Helen’s beauty (23) when the latter is first introduced, he also sees her as a prostitute, “selling herself like the island” (111) at the street festival with tourists. Whereas the adventurers in *Les Indes* are fascinated by the Caribbean environment upon their arrival, they are also the ones who begin exploiting its resources. While the representation of the landscape as seductress is thus concerned with authentic nature, that of the oppressed victim suggests its recycled version. While the epic poems celebrate the natural beauty of their authentic environment the local population is surrounded with daily, they also point out the process of recycling which exploits natural resources and designs a specific image for the tourist industry. This recycled version can be found on posters like the one which leads Ana Lydia Vega’s character in “Pollito Chicken” to book a trip to Puerto Rico. Moreover, it is located in the conglomerations of giant hotels which constitute the tourist ghettos.

In Guillermo Cabrera Infante’s *Tres tristes tigres*, there are two female characters, the singers Cuba Venegas and La Estrella, whose portrayal indulges in the latter, in the exploited, recycled form of the Caribbean landscape. Cuba Venegas is the pseudonym Gloria Pérez receives when, dropping out of school in the country, she is *discovered* by the drummer Eribó in Havana: “Ustedes saben que yo fui quien descubrió a Cuba, no Cristóbal Colón” (90; 86²: You know it’s me who discovered Cuba, not Christopher Columbus). Eribó,

² The translation by Suzanne Jill Levine and Donald Gardner emphasizes the mediation of the text’s unique wit. It is thus a very free translation. However, because it is also very admirable and completed in collaboration with the author himself, I have decided to include it rather than to provide a more literal one. In the following quotation, for example, the image of the “missing molar,” refers to the previously established metaphor for various defects. On the process of translating *Tres tristes tigres* see Jill

one of the five primary narrators in *Tres tristes tigres*, also recalls, with resignation, how Cuba left him for his good friend Códac, “the Great Photographer of the Stars” (16), and how she left Códac and a series of men who all contributed to the advancement of her career (91). It is Códac, one of the three protagonists or trapped tigers, who reveals the discrepancy between Cuba’s appearance and her skills: “... es mejor, mucho mejor ver a Cuba que oírla y es mejor porque quien la ve la ama, pero quien la oye y la escucha y la conoce ya no puede amarla, nunca” (278; 299: ... anyone who sees Cuba falls in love with her but anyone who hears and listens to her can never love her again because her voice is her missing molar). Applied to the country rather than to the singer, this statement suggests the fascination of a tourist as opposed to the disillusionment of the inhabitant or sensitive visitor. To be sure, both singers also entertain the Cuban population, but it is the untalented, beautiful one who succeeds beyond the local crowd.

While Cuba Venegas, then, represents the exploited element of Cuban culture when she poses for the tourists, La Estrella is an unattractive but extremely gifted bolero singer who symbolizes the oppression of the slaves as well as the unmarketable originality of their descendants’ culture. Códac compares the two while musing about his reactions to them both:

... a mí me gusta Cuba por otras razones que no son su voz que no son su voz que no son su voz precisamente, que se pueden tocar y se pueden oler y se pueden mirar, cosa que no se puede hacer con una voz o tal vez solamente con una voz, con la voz de La Estrella, que es la voz que la naturaleza, en broma, conserva en la excrecencia de su estuche de carne y grasa y agua. (274)

Levine’s *The Subversive Scribe: Translating Latin American Fiction* (Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf, 1991).

(294-5: ... the fact is that I like Cuba for other reasons than her voice anything but her voice definitely not her voice but for visual reasons, for the eye has reasons that the ear never knows, for reasons that not only can be seen but can be touched and smelled and tasted, something that can't be done with a voice or perhaps only with one voice, with the voice of La Estrella, which is the voice that nature jokingly preserves in the excrescence of its pupa of flesh and fat and water.)

This enumeration of the senses accounts for an extremely sensual impression. The fact that hearing is first presented as the least effective, emphasizes the power attributed to Estrella's voice. It takes an extraordinary voice such as Estrella's in order to create an effect similar to the one created by Cuba's mere presence. Whereas the latter symbolizes the then current dilemma engendered by the dependence on tourism and other forms of economic colonialism, Estrella represents the horrors of the slave trade in its conquest context. Whereas Cuba's marketable beauty is of Spanish origin, Estrella's ancestors are African, as Códac underlines in his very sarcastic³ way:

Es negra, negra negra, totalmente negra, y empezamos a hablar y pensé que qué país más aburrido sería éste si no hubiera existido el padre Las Casas y le dije, Te bendigo, cura, por haber traído negros del Africa, como esclavos para aliviar la esclavitud de los indios ... (65)

(60: She's black, black black, utterly and finally eternally black and we began talking and I thought what a boring country this would be if Friar Bartolomé de las Casas had never lived and I said to him wherever he is, I bless you, padre, for having brought nigras from Africa as slaves to ease the slavery of the Injuns ...)

William L. Siemens opens "Guillermo Cabrera Infante and the Divergence of

³ It should be clear that *Tres tristes tigres* is not primarily an anti-colonial and -imperialist tirade, although that is the element I am foregrounding here. Cabrera Infante obviously also indulges in various kinds of plays with genres and styles for purely aesthetic reasons. For the situation of the novel withing the author's *oeuvre* see Raymond D. Souza's *Guillermo Cabrera Infante: Two Islands, Many Worlds* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).

Revolutions: Political Versus Textual” with Cabrera Infante’s description of *Tres tristes tigres* as “the most apolitical book in the whole history of Latin-American literature” (Siemens 107), only to immediately challenge said description. Siemens rightly points out that a central, major part of the text consists of several narrations of Leon Trotsky’s death,⁴ certainly a political event. He further suggests how the distancing from actuality, from reality, can serve as a convenient defense mechanism. Under the guise of poetic license, resemblances to actual persons, events, or locales are entirely coincidental. As Cabrera Infante himself puts it in his autobio-chronology, “the *only* way a critic can survive under communism is as a fictional character” (Cabrera Infante 1987, 516). I am suggesting that Cabrera Infante disguises his political statements with a facade of deliberately postmodern playfulness. The sarcasm in the above quoted description of La Estrella is certainly a strong rhetorical device, but it makes the inherent, obviously political, criticism of colonialism rather more than less effective. I agree, then, with Siemens that “*Tres tristes tigres* is severely apolitical, but only in its subtle yet emphatic rejection of the *authoritative voice* that tends to dominate political discourse in Latin America” and that “the book is highly political in offering a written text characterized by radical multivalence as an alternative to such an authoritative voice” (Siemens 107).

Siemens further explains how Cabrera Infante wrote “Ella cantaba boleros,” which would eventually turn into *Tres tristes tigres*, as a kind of continuation of his brother’s film *P.M.* which had been banned and seized in 1961 (110). Cabrera Infante’s participation in the

⁴ These narrations imitate the styles of José Martí, José Lezama Lima, Virgilio Piñera, Lydia Cabrera, Lino Novás Calvo, Alejo Carpentier, and Nicolás Guillén.

protest against such censorship was the beginning of a disillusionment with Castro and the revolution, which eventually resulted in his exile in Belgium and later in Great Britain. In “(C)ave Attemptor! A Chronology (After Laurence Sterne’s)” Cabrera Infante satirizes his own departure below the entry “1962 - Age 33”: “After the Bolshevik fashion, he is banished from the political capital. But Havana is still a Latin-flavored version of Moscow, and he is not exiled to Siberia but sent instead to Brussels as a cultural attaché” (Cabrera Infante 1987, 516).

Thomas Mann, who left Nazi Germany in 1933, has pointed out the common etymology of ‘alien’ and ‘Elend’ (misery) (Tabori 31). Cabrera Infante’s claim that, for him, “exile comes closer to *exist*” (*Mea Cuba* 484) seems to project a more positive attitude on a very similar state of displacement. And yet, Cabrera Infante is not immune to homesickness either, as a letter by Virgilio Piñera attests: “We are all alarmed with your ‘sighs’ about returning. Guillermo, it would be a great folly [...] here you will not have the peace you need in order to write” (Souza 70). Counting himself among about a million and a half Cubans living in exile since 1959 (*Mea Cuba* 486) Cabrera Infante, “a Cuban born British subject malgré lui,” (Prieto 584) as René Prieto puts it, is aware of the fact that the tradition of Cuban literature is one of physically exiled writers (482).⁵ Overall, there is hardly a writer from anywhere in the Caribbean who has not left the region at one point or another in his or her career, and the reasons for all these departures are commonly related to the

⁵An attempt to unite the work of Cuban artists who have remained in Cuba with that of those who have left is Ruth Behar’s *Bridges to Cuba: Pueriles a Cuba* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995). Behar’s project stresses an imaginary coherence beyond dispersion.

(post)colonial situation. However, within the area, Castro's communist Cuba obviously stands apart from the other countries and territories. Although *Tres tristes tigres* represents the pre-revolutionary Batista regime, phenomena such as Cué's "Third World Man's Theme" certainly allow for allusions to post-revolutionary, in addition to postcolonial circumstances. Cué, the popular actor, is the second of the trapped tigers, Silvestre, the writer, being the third. The former's "Third World Man's Theme" is expressed in his complaint to Códac:

Ese día me dijo que Cuba (no Venegas, la otra) era solamente habitable para las plantas y los insectos y los hongos, para la vida vegeta o miserable. La prueba era la pobre vida animal, que encontró Colón al desembarcar. Quedaban los pájaros y los peces y los turistas. Todos ellos podían salir de aquí cuando quisieran. (100)

(96: That afternoon [Cué] told me that Cuba (not Venegas, the other Cuba) was not a fit hangout for man or beast. Nobody should live here except plants, insects and fungi or any other lower forms of life. The squalid fauna that Christopher Columbus found when he landed proved the point. All that remained now were birds and fish and tourists. All of these could leave the island when they wanted.)

The irony in the blame on natural conditions, such as the climate which tolerates only "lower forms of life" is revealed when tourists are aligned with birds and fish on the grounds that they are free to visit as well as leave the island. Their freedom is opposed to the implied oppression of the local population by Castro's regime, which followed a long history of political dictatorships and recurrent US interventions.

Cuba's first war of independence took place between 1868-78. After the Treaty of Paris the island was occupied by the United States of America between 1899 and 1901. For the next fifty years the so-called Republic of Cuba suffered under a series of corrupt administrations until the last one, Batista's, was eliminated by Castro's revolution in 1959. In the above mentioned autobio-chronology Cabrera Infante emphasizes, albeit in brackets,

his attitude towards communism below the very first entry “1929 - Age 0” after indicating his birthday: “His parents were to become in fact, barely five years later, founders of the *Partido Comunista* in his hometown, providing their offspring with enough CP antibodies to be effectively vaccinated against revolutionary measles for life - a reactionary feat in itself if one takes into account that none other than Vladimir Ilych Ulyanov was born on the same date!” (Cabrera Infante 1987, 513). Castro’s new regime, unique for its radical ideology in the region, did not put an end to dependencies and exploitation either. Before I turn to critiques of the tourist industry in a comparative analysis with Kincaid’s *A Small Place*, I want to summarize the binary between the two singers, who symbolize different postcolonial dilemmas in *Tres tristes tigres*. I should emphasize that whereas Cuba Venegas caters to tourists and represents Cuba’s sellout to artificiality, Estrella Rodríguez sings only boleros, unaccompanied, and only out of her own inclination: “She sang for the pleasure of it, because she loved doing it” (65). While Cuba’s lacking talent does not prevent her success beyond local establishments, Estrella’s extraordinary gift is unmarketable. While Cuba’s heritage is Hispanic, that of the colonizers, Estrella is a descendant from slaves. The popularity of the clubs in which Cuba is celebrated, depends largely on foreign currency, and Estrella’s art does not appeal to those audiences.

Visitors' Views

Tres tristes tigres opens with a prologue in tourist heaven, in the nightclub “Tropicana.” The very first word of this “prólogo en el cabaret,” of the bilingual welcome by the M.C. is “Showtime!” This formula with all its implications of performance and pretense foreshadows the dominating concern of the entire text. The occupations of the three friends who most likely impersonate the trapped tigers, are all related to the show business. Before the censorship is finally lifted and he is moved from the entertainment supplement to the front page, to provide pictures of bomb explosions and political prisoners (281), Códac is the “Great Photographer of the Stars,” as the M.C. introduces him. Cué entertains as actor and Silvestre as writer. The scenes in and between diverse nightclubs, the coliseums “of pleasure and gaiety and happiness” (3) alternate with a series of visits to the psychoanalyst. The patient, also an actress, could be the one who bursts out in insanity in the epilogue. In any event, the epilogue radically contrasts the prologue in that the mad woman’s outburst in the park can be read as a violent reaction to the artificiality, the glamour, and the phoniness embodied by the entertainment industry and symbolized, for example, in the “exotic and memorable names that pollute the show biz” (147). Isabel Álvarez-Borland rightly interprets that the woman in the epilogue “represents the victimization by a regime whose corruption has given birth to a state in which political repression and decadence are the natural order of things” (Álvarez-Borland 556). More concerned with the metropolitan space, Ineke Phaf sees the mad woman as the ‘lost city’ with its Caribbean social structure and cultural life in *Havanna als Fiktion* (Phaf 1986, 308). The mad woman is certainly excluded from the merry

crowd in the nightclub, and epilogue and prologue thus indicate two very different sides of the postcolonial society.

It is in the prologue, in the speech of the M.C., that the most prominent tourist of *Tres tristes tigres* is first mentioned: William Campbell. Much later, in “Los visitantes,” Campbell complains in his own short story about his and his wife’s visit to Havana, that the *Tropicana* M.C. mistakes him for one of “the soup people” (178). A connection between the two writers Campbell and Silvestre, the latter being one of Cabrera Infante’s protagonists, is established only at the very end. Silvestre has to revise a Spanish translation of Campbell’s story and learns about the twists on its autobiographical nature: Mrs. Campbell, whose corrections are part of her husband’s story, is an invented character. Whereas “Los visitantes” includes Campbell’s seemingly autobiographical fiction embedded within Cabrera Infante’s fiction, Jamaica Kincaid’s *A Small Place* is usually attributed to the ‘non-fiction’ category.⁶

In contrast to Cabrera Infante’s elaborate stylistic, postmodern if one will, structure, the identification of the visitor is much more straightforward in Kincaid’s *A Small Place*. The tourist is the addressee, the “you” the narrator is talking to. The relationship between the addressee, the visitor, and the narrator, the native, is made explicit in the opening line: “If you go to Antigua as a tourist, this is what you will see” (3). In contrast to the tourist

⁶ Alison Donnell points out that the generic definitions of *A Small Place* as autobiography, politics, history, or sociology may account for the fact that of all of Kincaid’s texts it has received the least attention (Donnell 107). With Donnell I see *A Small Place* deploy a whole series of voices and function as “both a direct political statement on neo-colonialism and an ironic commentary on the politics of postcolonialism - the two operating simultaneously” (108), rather than merely a report of a visit to Antigua.

representative, the narrator has grown up, but does not live in Antigua anymore. The latter is thus narrating impressions of a visit herself. Having left Antigua at the age of seventeen, she is experiencing a type of homecoming. A central role in her observations is played by the old library which Moira Ferguson rightly interprets as “the transcendent symbol of outsider devastation” (Ferguson 1995, 136). This library was damaged during an earthquake in 1974, and the sign “THIS BUILDING WAS DAMAGED IN THE EARTHQUAKE OF 1974. REPAIRS ARE PENDING” is still hanging more than a decade later. The narrator rightly suggests that the promise of repair has so far been unfulfilled because, shortly after the earthquake, Antigua had gained independence from Britain and with it all the postcolonial economic misery. Like St. Lucia, as suggested in the preceding part of this chapter, Antigua relies more and more on tourism. Instead of the restored old library, other establishments are given a preference:

... that part of St. John’s was going to be developed, turned into little shops - boutiques- so that when tourists turned up they could buy all those awful things that tourists always buy, all those awful things they then take home, put in their attics, and their children have to throw out when the tourists, finally, die. (48)

Although she denies it in her corrections, in Mr. Campbell’s version of “The Story of a Stick” in “Los visitantes” Mrs. Campbell starts to buy souvenirs upon their arrival at the harbor (174). “The Story of a Stick” presents a couple of U.S. citizens visiting Havana for only a few days. The trip had been the wife’s idea. Accordingly, the husband (who is really a bachelor, as Silvestre is told when confronted with the Spanish translation of his story) can invent himself as extremely critical of his wife’s enthusiasm.

Mrs. Campbell, on the other hand, is presented as the typically “enchanted” tourist.

Since even her own corrections are really Mr. Campbell's composition, they simply serve to mock the couple's debate over a common experience. Consequently, Mrs. Campbell's corrections do not completely contradict the tourist image Mr. Campbell has produced of her. She does, for example, agree that Cuban music is primitive. She merely demands her right to still find it "lively and enchanting, flavored with so many delights" (186). She does like the *Tropicana*, "despite the fact that it is a tourist attraction and knows it: beautiful and exuberant and evergreen, a perfect image of the island." And she admits that "seen from the boat Havana was dazzlingly beautiful" (181). In her husband's composition she also quotes the travel agent who had promised her a permanent spring in Cuba (173). The latter expectations concerning the climate are attacked by Kincaid when she stresses the dangers of droughts in tropical climates:

... rain is the very thing that you, just now, do not want, for you are thinking of the hard and cold and dark and long days you spent working in North America (or, worse, Europe), earning some money so that you could stay in this place (Antigua) where the sun always shines and where the climate is deliciously hot and dry for the four to ten days you are going to be staying there; and since you are on your holiday, since you are a tourist, the thought of what it might be like for someone who had to live day in, day out in a place that suffers constantly from drought, and so has to watch carefully every drop of fresh water used [...] must never cross your mind. (4)

As ignorant as he or she may be, this money the tourist has earned in North America or Europe is desperately needed since industries in the Caribbean have moved from colonial to *post-colonial* exploitation, from exploitation through plantation systems to that through tourism. As Mr. Campbell has it, "one of the by-products of the Cuban tourist industry is that the cab drivers double up as salesmen" (181). This exaggerated ambition is not necessarily a capitalist need for the biggest possible profit, but rather a purely existential one. And the

era of communism has unfortunately not eliminated the dependence on the tourists' capital.

Although the political situation in Antigua is obviously different from the Cuban one, and the texts are written about two decades apart, both *Tres tristes tigres* and *A Small Place* attack respective regimes. In the last part of the former, Cué and Silvestre are driving together along the coast and through Havana. At some point they observe how trends change the popularity of various city centers:

Con los años subió hasta Galiano y San Rafael y Neptuno y ahora está ya en La Rampa. Me pregunto a dónde irá a parar este centro ambulante que, cosa curiosa, se desplaza, como la ciudad y como el sol, de este a oeste.

- Batista trata de que cruce la bahía.

- Pero no tiene futuro. Ya lo verás.

- ¿Quién, Batista? (301)

(326: With the years it moved up to the corner of Galiano and San Rafael and Neptuno and now it's reached La Rampa. I wonder when it will stop, this walking center which moves, and strangely enough, like the city and the sun, from east to west.

- Batista's trying to move it across the bay.

- No future in that. You wait and see.

- What, Batista's regime?)

This prophecy was, of course, written after the fact, and Cuba has gone through major changes since then. Nevertheless, the impression of the Antiguans in *A Small Place* is certainly as valid for today's Cuba, as it is for the rest of the Caribbean region: "The government is for sale; anybody from anywhere can come to Antigua and for a sum of money can get what he wants" (47). Accordingly, internal affairs, such as the quality of roads (5) or the quality of the hospital (8) are being neglected.

One of the points where this negligence may conflict most with the interests of the tourist is the sewage system as Kincaid describes it in *A Small Place*:

You must not wonder what exactly happened to the contents of your lavatory when you flushed it. You must not wonder where your bath water went when you pulled out the stopper. You must not wonder what happened when you brushed your teeth. Oh, it might all end up in the water you are thinking of taking a swim in; [...] for you see, in Antigua, there is no proper sewage-disposal system. But the Caribbean Sea is very big and the Atlantic Ocean is even bigger; it would amaze even you to know the number of black slaves this ocean has swallowed up. (14)

The subtlety of such connections between current deficiencies and the colonial past, or, as Ferguson puts it in her exhaustive close reading of *A Small Place*, a “metonymic shift from tourists to colonizers” (Ferguson 1994, 84) prevail in Kincaid’s entire text. Another legacy of colonialism Kincaid attacks concerns geographic circumstances. As Walcott has it in “The Star-Apple Kingdom,” “one morning the Caribbean was cut up/[...]/till everyone owned a little piece of the sea” (Walcott 1992, 390). In this poem, in which “the dispossessed/said the rosary of islands for three hundred years [...] And while they prayed for an economic miracle,/ulcers formed on the municipal portraits,/the hotels went up, and the casinos and brothels,/and the empire of tobacco, sugar, and bananas” (387) the fights between imperial powers are compared to the bargaining in a bazar. Among the results of these wars are divided islands such as former Hispaniola, on which Haiti now borders on the Dominican Republic, or St. Martin, whose southern part belongs to the Netherlands Antilles, while its northern part is administered by Guadeloupe. Kincaid describes the peculiar situation of Antigua when she explains that “Redonda is a barren rock out in the Caribbean Sea -actually closer to the islands of Montserrat and Nevis than to Antigua, but for reasons known only to the English person who did this, Redonda and the islands of Barbuda and Antigua are all lumped together as one country” (51).

Ferguson’s chapter on *A Small Place* in her extensive study of Kincaid’s *oeuvre* up

to 1994 overemphasizes the continuity between the non-fictional account of the home island and the preceding first novel, *Annie John*. Ferguson is right in pointing out that *A Small Place* grounds the “fictional-autobiographical” texts, the short story collection *At the Bottom of the River* as well as *Annie John*, “by explaining the cultural situation of Antigua and Antiguan response” (Ferguson 1994, 78). Antigua as the place of entanglement is also present in Kincaid’s following two novels *Lucy* and *The Autobiography of My Mother*. However, only in *My Brother* does the speaker return the way she does in *A Small Place*. One has to take into account that the publication of the latter had made her a *persona non grata* for several years. The specific reason for the return described in *My Brother* is that the brother is dying of AIDS, but the perception of the environment can nevertheless be read in comparison with the one in the earlier text. Medical care still has not improved much, which is why the narrator imports drugs for her brother from the United States: “in Antigua if you are diagnosed with the HIV virus you are considered dying; the drugs used for slowing the progress of the virus are not available there” (31). In her bitterness Kincaid goes as far as to echo Naipaul when she describes the kind of backwater she perceives Antigua to be:

I came to a major crossing where there was a stoplight, but it was broken and had been broken for a long time; it could not be fixed because the parts for it are no longer made anywhere in the world - and that did not surprise me, because Antigua is a place like that: parts for everything are no longer being made anywhere in the world; in Antigua itself nothing is made. (24)

Unlike Naipaul, Kincaid states clearly that she holds the legacy of colonization responsible for these deficiencies. And unlike Naipaul, Kincaid does not talk about creativity, but rather

about manufacturing.⁷

My analyses of Guillermo Cabrera Infante's *Tres tristes tigres* and Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* contrast those of the texts discussed in the preceding two chapters in that they emphasize the disillusionments with the postcolonial situation in the Caribbean region. A common ground among the various presentations of disillusionment can be found in the realization that constitutional independence and even an ideology officially contrasted to the capitalist one has not brought forth freedom from economic oppression. Post- or neo-colonial domination has replaced the colonial one, and the beauty of an authentic nature, celebrated in *Omeros*, *Les Indes*, and *De laatste vrijheid*, is distorted in its recycled version through the resulting sellout to the tourist industry. Within the region itself, the constructive potential of a regional consciousness, of concepts of Creolization and Caribbeanness, is destroyed by rivalries between or mutual ignorance of the diverse segments of the mainly insular space. The combination of these conditions has often lead to the migrations at stake in the following two parts of this study. Economic shortcomings have driven large parts of the Caribbean population to European or North American urban centers. The consequences of these movements are at the center of "Migration to the 'Old World'" and "Movement to the North of the Americas."

⁷ In his rebuttal of Naipaul's claim that "nothing was created in the Caribbean" Walcott arrives at the brilliant observation that "that is to move from anthropological absurdity to pseudo-philosophical rubbish, to discuss the reality of nothing, the mathematical conundrum of zero and infinity. Nothing will always be created in the West Indies, for quite long time, because what will come out of there is like nothing one has ever seen before" (*Mimicry* 9).

II Migration to the “Old World”

4. Destination Africa: *Heremakhonon* (Waiting for Happiness) and *Stemmen uit Afrika* (Voices from Africa)

Adam had an idea.
He and the snake would share
the loss of Eden for a profit.
So both made the New World. And it looked
good.

- Derek Walcott, "New World"

Whenever the questionable distinction between 'New' and 'Old' World is made, the Americas are usually understood as the former and Europe as the latter. These attributions may owe to the fact that the European colonizers are the inventors of the distinction in question. Arguing that all the other areas from which people emigrated or were forced to the so-called 'New World' should be considered part of the 'Old World' as well, I mean to suggest that the very distinction is becoming obsolete in the process of decolonization, not to mention globalization. Among the first attempts of emancipation from European domination in the United States as well as in the Caribbean was the turning to Africa as an alternative origin of American cultural traditions. With regard to the West Indies, this development is most prominently reflected in the Negritude ideology.

In the three chapters of part one of this study, the concept of Negritude has been referred to as an early point of departure in the quest for a regional consciousness, for a Caribbean identity and subjectivity. A seminal text of the *négritude* movement, Aimé

Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, is treated as a precursor of the two long poems analyzed in "Creating and Celebrating a Caribbean Environment: *Omeros* and *Les Indes*." Negritude as theoretical concept provides some of the ideas which eventually lead to formulations of *créolité* and *antillanité*, as discussed in "Caribbeanness in *De laatste vrijheid*." Finally, Negritude is at the root of the 'other disillusionments' addressed prior to the analyses of *Tres tristes tigres* and *A Small Place* in chapter three. As A. James Arnold puts it in his introduction to translations of Césaire's poetic and dramatic work, "when one considers the negritude movement with the full benefit of hindsight more than a quarter-century after the decolonization of most of the African continent, the process that began when Césaire, Léon-Gontran Damas, and Léopold Sédar Senghor met as students in Paris may seem to bear the mark of historical necessity" (Arnold 1990, xv). With this kind of hindsight, the failures of such movements and their concepts can also always be reconstructed fairly easily. In the context of *antillanité* and *créolité*, racial essentialism appeared as the main point of attack. Negritude was blamed for simplifications of the transculturation or creolization taking place in the Caribbean. The category of 'race' was to be replaced with that of 'culture'. Another point of attack was the apparent elitism of the movement. As Patrick Taylor has it in the epilogue of *The Narrative of Liberation*: "Negritude helped heal the intellectual, but it also distorted the history of the Caribbean, coupling a mythical, racialized interpretation of human beings with a false universalism" (Taylor 229). Frantz Fanon should be mentioned as the main representative of Marxist criticism in this context. For him, Negritude was the ideology of a dependent bourgeoisie. The present chapter sets out to briefly recall the emergence of Negritude, as well as its

consequences. These recollections allow me to situate Maryse Condé's *Heremakhonon* (Waiting for Happiness) and Frank Martinus Arion's *Stemmen uit Afrika* (Voices from Africa) within its aftermath. In terms of the analyses of these two texts, my emphasis will then lie on the roles Africa plays as part of an 'Old World', as opposed to the 'New' one the Caribbean is said to belong to.

In the Negritude section of *European-Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa* Albert Gérard indicates why it was in France of the 1930s, where a group of intellectuals from the Caribbean and from Africa could conceive of the ideas which would lead to the *négritude* movement. The influential movement, Gérard argues, was generated by "a systematic, rational, indeed Cartesian, application of several important trends in European culture to the specific problem of African identity" (Gérard 342). In a similar vein, Patrick Taylor demonstrates in *The Narrative of Liberation* how socioeconomic, political, and cultural upheavals in Europe of the early twentieth century provided ground for a movement such as Negritude, although precursors like Haitian Indigenism, the Cuban Negrista movement, or the Harlem Renaissance in the United States were located overseas (Taylor 154).¹ Less explicit about its origins, Abiola Irélé summarizes in *The African Experience in Literature and Ideology* that Negritude has come to denote "the black world in its historical being" in a broad and general sense (Iréle 1990, 67). Indicating the Pan-African or black-

¹ An excellent collection, including translations from *Légitime défense* as well as from *Tropiques*, which situates Negritude within its political and cultural context, is Michael Richardson's *Refusal of the Shadow: Surrealism and the Caribbean* (London/New York: Verso, 1996).

nationalist context, Irélé quotes Césaire's definition: "Négritude is the simple recognition of the fact of being black, and the acceptance of this fact, of our destiny as black people, of our history, and our culture" (67-8). Irélé further identifies Senghor as the one among the "French-speaking black intellectuals" associated with the movement in question, whose writings most coherently express Negritude in its philosophical sense (69). Irélé's thorough discussion of Senghor's views, especially in comparison to the ones Sartre brought forth in "Orphée noir" ("Black Orpheus" - which had appeared as introduction to Senghor's anthology of black writing in 1948), leads him to envision Negritude as one of the reactions to the doctrines of racial inferiority which had engendered the horrors of European colonialism (71). Vehement for good reasons, the concept did thus not only enforce the Manichaeian division between black and white through the reversal of its hierarchy. It also failed to challenge the objective reality of race as indicative for a specific identity. This failure would become a major concern for Édouard Glissant and his vision of *antillanité*, as well as for the proponents of *créolité*, Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant, who open their well-known *Éloge* by proclaiming themselves Creoles: "Ni Européens, ni Africains, ni Asiatiques, nous nous proclamerons Créoles" (Bernabé et. al. 13).²

One should, however, emphasize at this point that, whereas the initial conception of Negritude is attributed to the combined effort of Caribbean as well as African intellectuals, the latter two concepts, *antillanité* and *créolité*, reflect developments specific to the Antilles.

² I discuss the reconsideration of their manifesto in the preceding chapter.

Jacqueline Leiner's title "Africa and the West Indies: Two Negritudes" indicates the distinction called for in this respect. Her article itself, however, is unfortunately restricted to a comparison between Senghor and Césaire. In disagreement with her observation that "on the whole, this movement, [Negritude], is the work of the two founders who prophesied the world to come" (Gérard 1145), I would like to stress the differences between the environments in which Senghor's, Damas', and Césaire's initial ideas should bear fruit. On the one hand there is the comparatively large African continent with a stronger heritage of traditionally African cultures in officially decolonized territories; on the other hand, the smaller insular space of the Caribbean to which Africans had been forced, and where their traditions were met/suppressed not only by those of the European colonizers, but also by those of indentured laborers from Asia. In "Negritude: Then and Now," A. James Arnold mentions Michel Hausser's doctoral dissertation of 1978 in this respect. Hausser argued in "Essai sur la poétique de la négritude," that "the different history of the Antillean poets and writers provided a fundamentally different grasp of time and space from that found in traditional African societies" (Arnold 1994, 480). The contrast between the two spaces is the main cause for the distress Condé's protagonist experiences in *Heremakhonon*, but before I turn to the roles Africa plays in this novel and in Martinus Arion's long poem, I want to focus on the consequences Negritude ideas engendered in the Caribbean.

It is not unusual that initiators of theoretical concepts or movements find themselves overwhelmed by their own legacy. Glissant, for example, distances himself from his influence the authors of the *Éloge* claim for their manifesto. Similarly, Césaire expresses his anger in the 1960s about what had become of the term he had coined about thirty years

earlier. Gregson Davis speaks of an “intellectual albatross” in this respect (Davis 1998, 61). Such repudiations are provoked not only by appropriations of certain ideas by other thinkers, but also by the individual development of the very initiators. Lilyan Kesteloot’s “Césaire - the Poet and the Politician” is devoted to the question how the Martinican “managed to be both the great Rebel of Negritude as well as a member of the French Parliament for 40 years” (Kesteloot 169). One can certainly distinguish between Césaire’s creative writing and his political acting, but that is to return to the discrepancy between fiction and reality addressed above, in the context of *De laatste vrijheid*. I propose instead to look at the development of Césaire’s work rather than at the difference in forms of expression. In the above quoted introduction, for example, Arnold argues lucidly that Césaire’s collection *moi, laminaria* (a title of which Arnold provides a brilliant interpretation) should “be understood as a deconstruction of the negritude myth” (Arnold 1990, xxxiv). Laying bare the structures of identity within negritude as cultural project, its claim to a transcendent truth is here denied. With reference to *Modernism and Negritude*, Arnold repeats in “Negritude: Then and Now,” that even in the 1950s “Césaire’s poetic voice had become more markedly elegiac,” which reflects a certain nostalgia for the earlier, more rebellious and aggressive modes (Arnold 1994, 480).

In his excellent review of *Aimé Césaire: le Nègre inconsolé* by Roger Toumson and Simone Henry-Valmore, which is contrasted to Raphaël Confiant’s *Aimé Césaire: une traversée paradoxale du siècle*,³ Richard D. E. Burton specifies Kesteloot’s question by

³ Both these studies appeared as tributes to Césaire’s eightieth birthday in 1993.

suggesting the impossibility of Césaire's project to be both French *and* Martinican, to reconcile political assimilation with the retention of cultural distinctiveness, and, finally, to preserve "some measure of local political control while maintaining the material benefits - notably social security and a general standard of living which, left to itself, the local economy could not hope to sustain" (Burton 136-7). Burton provides a detailed juxtaposition between Césaire's *négritude* and Confiant's *créolité*, some of whose points it is worth repeating here: Where *négritude* opposes an African substratum with a European superstratum, *créolité* divides between a creole sub- and a French superstratum; Africa as such has become "irrelevant to the Martinican quest for identity, as indeed are Europe and Asia, except insofar as they themselves are undergoing creolization" (150); Creole is considered a dialect on the one hand, and a national language on the other; where Césaire welcomes departmentalization, Confiant demands independence. At least with regard to the last point, Césaire is defended by Kesteloot who holds that Confiant's Oedipal rebellion at times exceeds the limits: "Half of the Antilleans work in France. We can regret this fact. But we can also ask ourselves where they would go if they had to leave France. To blame Césaire for this is the same as blaming their island for being only 39 km wide!" (Kesteloot 172). As in the context of *De laatste vrijheid*, reality appears unfavorable to theory as it stands.

A tracing, however brief, of the Negritude movement in the Caribbean, should not fail to include a reference to the work of Frantz Fanon. The writings of the Martinican psychiatrist, who participated in the Algerian liberation war, and who was a student of Césaire's at Lycée Schoelcher in Martinique, also feature as direct intertext in *Heremakhonon*. Applying Marxist paradigms to the colonial situation, Fanon theorizes

processes of decolonization and developments of national consciousness most prominently in *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* (Black Skin, White Masks; 1952) and *Les damnés de la terre* (The Wretched of the Earth; 1961). Criticizing Negritude for its bourgeois elitism, Fanon nevertheless elaborated on its idea of racial separation. Misreading the irony in Mayotte Capécia's *Je suis Martiniquaise*, Fanon speaks, for example, of the black woman's relationship with the white man in terms of her desire to "whiten the race" (Fanon 47). Opposed to the category of 'race', Condé ridicules this analysis in *Heremakhonon*. Her protagonist, who rejects the idea of having children herself, reflects on her relationships with a mulatto as well as with a white man: "J'ai aimé ces deux hommes parce que je les aimais. [...] Je ne suis pas une Mayotte Capécia. Ah non! Pas mon souci, éclaircir la Race!" (55). In another passage, Condé challenges Fanon's theory about the envy of the colonized who supposedly desire the colonizers' wealth and privileges (22). However, the Fanon intertext in *Heremakhonon* has to be read in the light of the protagonist's erroneous striving to ignore and therefore mock the political situation in her African environment, a striving I discuss in the following part of this chapter.

Fanon's work is the point of departure of Taylor's above quoted *Narrative of Liberation*. Taylor explains in his preface how some forms of Caribbean writing explore the liberating significance inherent in transformations of mythical patterns (Taylor xii). Considering Fanon one of its major contributors, Taylor arrives at a definition in which the narrative of liberation (of reaction, resistance, and rebellion) reveals "the limits of the struggle for a hallowed ancient past, the endurance of a wretched present, or the leap toward a utopian future; it engages the processes of historical transformation with a view to the

possibility of creating a society based on human mutuality.” *Négritude* poetry is listed among the forms of such narrative. Negritude, Taylor emphasizes in the following prologue, “expresses both a romantic longing for a one-dimensional, utopian society and a vibrant encounter with the tragedy of colonial endurance” (4). In the course of the following analyses, I will show how aspects of the latter sentiment are foregrounded in *Heremakhonon*, while those of the former prevail in *Stemmen uit Afrika*. Beginning with the rather tragic role Africa plays as supposed place of entanglement, I will end with the more utopian one, as the site of prelapsarian phantasies, in the final part of this chapter.

Africa as Place of Entanglement

“How can I turn from Africa and live?” is the last line of Derek Walcott’s “A Far Cry from Africa” (CP 18). Their African heritage, the Middle Passage, and the imagination of its reversal is necessarily of great importance in the work of African-American artists, be they located in the Caribbean, the United States, or Canada. The acknowledgment and celebration of this heritage are at the core of the Harlem Renaissance as well as of the Negritude movement. As other, following theories have pointed out, however, the African element should be considered only one (albeit in several, especially the Caribbean areas the dominating one) among all the interacting, creolizing traditions in the Americas. In Walcott’s case, creolization is biological. He sees himself “poisoned with the blood of both,” the European as well as the African ancestor. Disregarding the level on which creolization takes

place, the attempt of African-Americans to trace their roots in Africa is obviously doomed to end in disappointment. Such is the experience of Véronica, Maryse Condé's protagonist in *Heremakhonon*, whom the author herself describes as a heroine from a Guadeloupe which she does not know well and expects to completely shake off in an Africa which she comprehends even less (Condé 11).

Though Françoise Lionnet includes her analysis of Condé's first novel in *Autobiographical Voices* and identifies Véronica as a "negative alter ego" (Lionnet 1989, 167), she distances herself from other analyses which had mistaken the text for an autobiography. Condé herself clarifies in a conversation with Françoise Pfaff that "*Heremakhonon* was no fictionalized autobiography at all. It was a novel of protest" (Pfaff 40). This is not the place to indulge in the problem of defining 'autobiography' or 'autobiographical writing'. That kind of categorization is as irrelevant for my purposes here, as is the attribution of *A Small Place* to the non-fiction genre. Condé spent the decade of the 1960s moving from the Ivory Coast first to Guinea, then to Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana (from which she was deported), and after another year in Senegal left "really fed up with Africa" (18). *Heremakhonon* expresses this disillusionment with African socialism, with post-independence developments, and especially their mythifications. It was first published in 1976 and revised twelve years later. The opening of the novel presents the first-person narrator at her arrival at the airport of an unidentified West African country. Having been attending university in Paris, Véronica has not visited her native Guadeloupe in nine years. Instead she decided to explore her identity by researching her ancestry in Africa. The immigration officer already reminds her of her father, a "marabout mandingue," as she had

learned in a history book when she was seven (20). Whereas her mother's mother had been the bastard child of a *béké* (33), the father's ancestors are all of African descent. And the father, who would call her a leftist intellectual and a whore (28), is recognized as the generator of Véronica's obsession with her identity and ancestry. The link between the memory of her family in Guadeloupe and the phantasy of an African heritage is created by the figure of a street-cleaner in Paris: "Chaque matin il balayait la rue de l'Université. Il nous regardait, Jean-Michel et moi, sans haine ni colère, ni intolérance, ni stupeur.(34; 14⁴: Each morning he would sweep the rue de l'Université. He would look at Jean-Michel and me, no hatred, no anger, no intolerance, no amazement).

This African, who has emigrated to France, is opposed to the Francophone Antillean, whose ancestors had been forced as slaves from the continent he has left more or less voluntarily. Whereas the daughter of a Mandingo marabout moves to Paris to attend university, he earns his living sweeping the street in front of the very institution. Véronica therefore refuses to talk to her African friends about Paris. Remembering ghettoization and discrimination she distinguishes between 'his'(and thus her friends') and 'her' Paris: "Dites à vos frères de le faire. L'un d'eux balaie la rue de l'Université et nous regarde matin après matin. Moi et mon Blanc. Pas de mépris dans son regard et c'est pourtant celui qui me hante" (48; 25: Ask your brothers. One of them sweeps the street by the rue de l'Université and looks at us every morning. Me and my white man. No contempt in his look, and that's what I can't get out of my mind). Reacting against the effect colonial structures had on previous

⁴ The second figure refers to the translation by Richard Philcox.

generations in the Caribbean, Véronica falls into the trap of the other extreme. As Lionnet puts it, “just as the black bourgeoisie of her parents’ generation mimics Europe, she falls victim to another --the same-- mirage created by her desire for the (African) other” (Lionnet 1989, 168). The stubbornness with which Véronica talks herself into rejecting everything connected to the present reality of her new environment, leads one to suspect a subconscious awareness of the dilemma. Over and over she tells herself that she is not interested in landscapes, natural or political, of the present (e.g. 20, 76, 89), that instead she cares exclusively for her very private quest (31), for the past of the ancestors (82).

The fascinating trait of Condé’s protagonist is her ability to secretly contradict her own stupor. Unable to consciously chose her camp, she is nevertheless subconsciously or intuitively biased. Trying to suppress her ‘leftist intellectual’ convictions, she still makes friends first with two of the more active Socialists, Saliou, the principal of her school, and Birame III, one of the students. It is ultimately the death of these two which makes her admit her mistake. To be sure, even shortly after her arrival, she occasionally betrays her best intentions to ignore the present and especially its politics. During her encounter with the president Mwalimwana, whose name Birame III mockingly interprets as “Our Father,” Véronica is, for instance, asked about her home country. To her response that she grew up in the Antilles, the president remarks that she is then one of the children Africa has lost. At this point, the Guadeloupean cannot help but rectify in her thoughts that those children were not lost but sold (58). In “Inscriptions of Exile: The Body’s Knowledge and the Myth of Authenticity,” Françoise Lionnet compares Véronica to the heroines in Myriam Warner-Vieyra’s *Juletane* and Suzanne Dracius-Pinalie’s *L’Autre qui danse*. Considering Juletane

and Rehvana younger sisters of Condé's (anti-)heroine, Lionnet emphasizes Véronica's advantage. Unlike the other two, she "has the composure, sarcasm, and intellectual means to live out her alienation and survive in her exile" (Lionnet 1992, 37). Véronica is allowed in time to realize that she is looking for herself in the wrong place (244), that not Africa but the Caribbean really is her place of entanglement: "Si je voulais faire la paix avec moi-même c'est-à-dire avec eux, c'est-à-dire avec nous, c'est chez moi que je devrais retourner. Dans ma poussière d'îles (*dixit le général*⁵), ballottée aux quatre coins de l'Océan par Betsy, Flora et autres femelles. *Chez moi*" (110; 71: If I want to come to terms with myself, i.e. with them, i.e. with us, I ought to return home. To my island specks (*dixit the general*) tossed to the four corners of the Atlantic by Betsy, Flora and other females. *Home*).

Lionnet applies Glissant's concepts of "Retour" (return) and "Détour" (diversion) to emphasize the impossibility of any kind of return to an authentic past for the slaves and their descendants (170). While Véronica thinks that Saliou, the principal of her institute, erases three and a half centuries when he welcomes her with "Vous êtes ici chez vous" (21), she later realizes that precisely this temporal, along with the spatial distance separates her from her ancestors:

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. Je n'ai trouvé qu'un homme avec aïeux qui les garde jalousement pour lui seul, qui ne songe pas à les partager avec moi. (193)

(136: I didn't find my ancestors. Three and a half centuries have separated me from them. They didn't recognize me any more than I recognized them. All I found was a man with ancestors who's guarding them jealously for himself and wouldn't dream

⁵ General Charles de Gaulle

of sharing them with me.)

The man, Ibrahima Sory, the “nigger with ancestors” is rightly identified as the embodiment of Véronica’s alienation by Lionnet (171).⁶ Desperate to see and get to know Sory as the missing link between her and her ancestors, Véronica ignores her friend/student’s accusations. Birame III, who is soon arrested and most probably killed (95), fails in convincing her that Sory is one of the most powerful assassins in the country (46). Only outside of Véronica’s conscious perception is Sory compared to Hitler (53) or to Louis XIV⁷. It takes the death of her other friend, Saliou, as well as the lies about his suicide in prison, to allow Véronica to finally admit her mistake, her private *détour*.

As misleading and disappointing attempted reversals of the Middle Passage may be, they still play a crucial role even in the acknowledgment of a Creole identity. As little as the African element of Caribbeanness should overshadow all the other traditions interacting in the region, as little should its weight be downplayed.⁸ This is what Walcott implies when he asks, how he could turn from Africa and live. While Condé’s protagonist’s trip is physical,

⁶ For a thorough psychoanalytic analysis, see Susan Z. Andrade, “The Nigger of the Narcissist: History, Sexuality and Intertextuality in Maryse Condé’s *Heremakhonon*” (*Callaloo* 16.1 (1993): 213-26). Andrade’s point of departure is the fact that “amidst the layers of suppressed historical narratives, women’s histories are among the most unrecovered.”

⁷ The rhetoric attributed to this absolutist French monarch occurs when Véronica is growing impatient while waiting for Sory’s arrival: “L’État c’est moi et rien d’autre” (133-4).

⁸ In the first part of the preceding chapter I point out how Martinus Arion attacks the authors of *Éloge de la créolité* for neglecting the African element, a neglect which, in turn, I see as their overreaction or ‘Oedipal rebellion’, to use Kesteloot’s term, to Césaire’s *négritude*.

that of Walcott's Achille in *Omeros* is spiritual. Guided by a divine sea-swift, Achille crosses the Atlantic, "this great design/of the triangular trade" and sees "the ghost/of his father's face" (130) when he realizes "he was headed home" (131). In *Omeros*, this trip functions as the epic journey to the underworld. Once in Africa, Achille is "moving with the dead" and thus able to have a conversation with his father Afolabe (136). Unlike Véronica's physical journey, Achille's spiritual one is thus successful in its quest for ancestors. In "The Novelist as Critic," A. James Arnold distinguishes between the mythical Africa "that could be represented only in lyric flights and tragic, agonistic drama" (in reference to Césaire's work) and the "Africa of conflict, national rivalries, wars, and conquests that call for the novel as a medium of expression" (in reference to Condé's work) (Arnold 1993, 712).

Whereas Walcott's *Omeros* includes both these Africas, Frank Martinus Arion's *Stemmen uit Afrika*, like Césaire's *Cahier*, is restricted to the mythical, poetic one. Martinus Arion's long poem was first published in 1957, almost twenty years prior to Condé's novel. The importance of orality already expressed in the title, is further supported by the fact that several of the fifty-four cantos are identified as spirituals. The first-person narrator, a very dark ("zwart-zwart" 4: black-black) tourist guide, became a poet because he used to sing along when 'spirituals and sighs' were being sung. In the course of the poem, he is leading his guests/readers through the African continent as well as back in time. Whereas Véronica travels very concretely from Guadeloupe to Paris, and on to West Africa, the journey of Martinus Arion's narrator leads through rather abstract jungles. The latter's origin is described simply as a 'dark wood': "het woud was donker;/ik was zwart./maar zwart vermengde/zich met donker" (4: the wood was dark; I was black. but black blent in with

dark⁹). The location of this poet/guide is fixed neither in space nor in time. Whereas Véronica arrives as visitor in a certain African community, the poet/guide is the one familiar with the jungles through which he leads his guests/readers from the ‘civilized’ world.

In “De Caraïbische verbeelding aan de macht” (The Caribbean Imagination in Power - which refers to a line from Martinus Arion’s 1979 novel *Nobele Wilden/Noble Savages*) Ineke Phaf rightly situates Martinus Arion’s poem within the tradition of Negritude, Haitian Indigenism, or the *poesía negra* of Nicolás Guillén. After the tourists are portrayed with their guide in the first canto, and after the guide has recalled his origins in the second one, the natives, the “negers,” are considered in terms of the black race in the third. Their current suppression is contrasted with their freedom in the far removed past. While once they were seen drumming in the woods and on the rivers, they are now supplying rocks where others are building (5). The binary between ‘them’ and ‘the others’ runs like a thread through the entire poem. It is paralleled by the opposition between black and white (6) as well as the one between the dark woods and the light cities (11). In the ninth canto, the others (‘with eyes wilder than the gorilla’s’) abduct people and plants from the dark woods through the much lighter woods into the very bright cities (11). Those cantos identified as spirituals represent the objections, the rebellion of the suppressed. In canto XVI, one of the spirituals, the master-slave relationship is reversed. The first person narrator, who may be the poet/guide or also a different singer (only canto XXV is a spiritual specifically attributed to the guide), is now being served by the “anderen,” the others (18).

⁹ Wherever Martinus Arion refrains from capitalization, I will also do so in my translation.

In some instances, the 'I' is also opposed to a 'you' ("uw," or the antiquated, especially Flemish form "gij"; 13). In canto XXIX, the addressee, the reader or member of the audience, is defined as 'Caucasian' (31), and in canto XXXII as the traveler (34). *Stemmen* thus seems to support the very essentialism for which the founders of Negritude, in particular Senghor, were mostly criticized. While racial distinctions are completely blurred in *Heremakhonon* with Véronica's Guadeloupean 'black-white' boyfriend as well as with the 'white' one in Paris, 'black' and 'white' are not only separated but contrasted in every possible way in Martinus Arion's poem. The issue of 'race' remains a much discussed topic in many academic disciplines.¹⁰ In his introduction to *Neither Black Nor White Yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature*, Werner Sollors indicates the terminological dead end in which the issue seems caught. Sollors convincingly argues for his preference of 'interracial' to many alternative ways of expressing one form of creolization, although "it may be understood as inadvertently strengthening a biological concept of "race" that it promises to transcend" (Sollors 3). Aware of the dilemma, then, Sollors still thinks it may be "a lesser semantic burden to bear than the heavy historical load that weighs down much of the problematic vocabulary applied to interracial relations [...]."

One has to keep in mind, however, that the contrast in *Stemmen* is, of course, a symbolic one. While Condé's protagonist travels from a certain geographic location to

¹⁰ With regard to cultural studies, reference should be made to Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Kwame Anthony Appiah. See, for example, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed. "Race," *Writing, and Difference* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985) and Kwame Anthony Appiah; Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds. *Identities* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995).

another one in search of her personal ancestors, Martinus Arion's guide travels through abstract African jungles. Whereas the place of entanglement is the concrete origin of her family history for Véronica, it is the site of prelapsarian phantasies for the poet/guide. A search which necessarily remains without success is therefore contrasted by an attempt to convey what the native knows to be there. Arnold is right in taking *Heremakhonon* "to be a first interrogation of the Negritude movement by a representative of a later generation of French West Indians" (Arnold 1993, 711). Condé published her own interpretation of Césaire's *Cahier* in 1978.¹¹ Direct as well as indirect intertext in *Heremakhonon* speak of her involvement with Césaire's work. Whereas *Stemmen*, written in a different language but in the same genre, appears very much in line with the *Cahier*, it is Condé's novel which challenges the seminal text of *négritude* and thus its underlying ideology. In what remains of this chapter, I concentrate on the spiritual value Martinus Arion attributes to Africa, or rather the idea of Africa, a value which is challenged by Condé's account of the continent's reality.

¹¹ Cf. Condé, Maryse. *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal - Césaire*. Paris: Hatier, 1978. Condé completed her analysis of the 'Before' (the slave trade), as Arnold puts it, in 1984/85, with the two-volume saga of the Bambara empire of Segu. Even this saga reflects her aim to replace the category 'race' with that of 'culture': "The introduction of mixed-race characters into her African setting and the author's decision to follow the destiny of African characters to Brazil and the Caribbean mark *Ségou* as a distinctly West Indian novel" (Arnold 1993, 711).

Prelapsarian Phantasies

In Martinus Arion's *Stemmen*, the civilization of the cities is corrupted by greed, infidelity, aggression, and the will to superiority. The uncivilized nature, on the other hand, is in harmony in its mythical Africa, where anarchy is therefore possible: "Afrika is zonder wetten,/zonder banen, zonder banden./een ieder straft zichzelf,/wanneer het kwaad in hem voorkomt" (24: Africa knows no laws, no professions, no ties. everybody punishes oneself whenever there is evil within him). Reason ranges behind belief and intuition: "De neger tracht geen God/te kennen, te begrijpen.//hij is zo vol, zo vol van God" (23: The Negro does not need to know or understand God, because he is so full of Him). Pantheism, love, and respect prevail:

XX

Bij hem is hartstocht liefde.
intrigueloos en schoon.
zoals zijn heden, fier
aan zijn gebrandmerkt lijf.

minnen is voor hem opgaan
in natuurlijk-zijn.
zoals de steen die mint
opgaat in de drift van water.

leven is voor hem de felheid
van de zon voelen
en koelen in de koelte van de nacht.

Zijn God: een rivierbed
een boomstam of een krater

hij aanbidt Hem in't goddelijke
schitter-kleed van al zijn naaktheid.

Passion is love for him.
free from betrayal and beautiful.
just like his present, proud
on his branded body.

for him, to love means
to immerse in nature.
like the rock which loves
dissolves in the water's current.

to live is for him to feel
the brightness of the sun
and to chill in the night's cool air.

His God: a river bed
a tree trunk or a crater.

he honors him in the divine
glitter-dress of all his nakedness.

alleen de oermens kan dit schone
zo intens beleven. in al zijn on-
bedorvenheid: hij, naief, kinderlijk
en argeloos en schaamteloos.

only the Ur-being can experience
the beautiful this intensely. in all its
uncorruptedness: he, naive, childlike,
and without worry and shame.

Such is obviously the portrayal of an archetypal noble savage, celebrated, for example, by Rousseau who is, ironically enough, one of the representatives of the Enlightenment, generally seen at the root of the evil of civilization. However, in Martinus Arion's text, the state described is that before suppression through slavery. In order to emphasize the evil embodied by the colonizers, the state before their arrival is turned into that before the biblical fall. In *Culture and Truth*, Renato Rosaldo discusses two forms of what he calls 'imperialist nostalgia'. On the one hand, there is a nostalgia for the white colonial society which appears orderly and thus renders racial domination innocent (Rosaldo 68). On the other hand, there is a nostalgia for the societies encountered by the colonizers, a particular kind of nostalgia, Rosaldo writes, "often found under imperialism, where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed" (69). Martinus Arion's narrator in *Stemmen* can present an even stronger picture of a utopian Africa, because he belongs to the victims whose civilization was altered and destroyed not by themselves, but by the white imperialists.

In the cantos preceding the one I quote above, the journey has led the guide back to the times of the Old Testament, to challenge the interpretation of Ham's damnation. Phaf explains that the question about Ham's curse was one of the crucial topics in Christian debates about slavery during the Enlightenment (Phaf 1987, 12). Noah incidentally cursed his grandson, Ham's son Canaan, because Ham had failed to cover his father's nakedness:

“a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren” (*Genesis* 9.25).¹² It is not entirely clear how skin color became involved in the interpretations of this bible passage, although “Jewish, Christian, and Muslim exegeses have been scrutinized for an answer to that question” (Sollors 86). The poet in *Stemmen*, in any case, identifies the idea that Canaan was cursed not only to be a servant but also black an opportunist lie: “dat was een leugen/maar ‘n leugen enkel/voor uw zielerust” (44: that was a lie, but a lie to serve only your peace of mind).

As in *A Small Place*, a connection is established between colonizers and tourists: “eens kwam de blanke karavaan/en zocht een zwart lichaam./nu komt de blanke karavaan/en zoekt een geest voor zijn musea” (32: once, the white caravan came to look for a black body. now the white caravan comes looking for a ghost for its museums). Condé mocks the function of souvenirs at the end of *Heremakhonon*. Collecting farewell presents such as an embroidered cloth from Sory’s sister Ramatoulaye, a mask from her colleague Pierre-Gilles (a visitor himself), or little statues from the hotel owners Jean Lefèvre and Adama, Véronica is amused by the idea to have something to show off after all (241). The objects thus parody the loss of her cause.

In Condé’s scenario, the difference between ‘them’ and ‘others’ is a cultural one. As much as she wants to avoid clichés, Véronica cannot help observing Birame III’s typically ‘African’ way of moving silently (37). Sory, who has not been ‘branded’, has no patience for

¹² For an extensive survey of interpretations and representations of Ham’s story see Werner Sollors’ “The Curse of Ham; or, From ‘Generation’ to ‘Race’” (Sollors 78-111).

his West Indian lover's private anxieties. In his sense of a community, none of its members need to explain their individual identities to themselves. He considers the pursuit of happiness a creation of the 'Western' mind ("aux Occidentaux" 102), and laughs at the idiocy of foreigners who rename themselves, like the African-American whose intentions had been similar to Véronica's. Sory seems especially wary of the leftists who, like those looking for ghosts in Martinus Arion's poem, consider Africa their chosen country nowadays (103). Condé, however, does not fail to juxtapose the more 'Westernized' Africa either. The people dancing in the *Miami Club* have taken off the boubous, but they too "sont l'Afrique" (161).

In Martinus Arion's *Stemmen*, dance halls are confined to the space of the bright cities. Because of their continuous corruption, these cities of the civilized are approaching an apocalypse: "de tovenaer ziet d'aard'/zich spannen als een boog./en blank en zwart, ze wachten/op het suizen van de pijl/of op het springen van de boog" (30: the jester sees the earth bending like a bow. and white and black, they wait for the hissing of the arrow or for the breaking of the bow). In this respect, the 'ghost for museums' can be interpreted as actual artifacts, but also as philosophical insights. Having lost their own direction, the civilized are looking for "de draai van negervolk" (30: the turn of a black people). This trend is the one from which Véronica distances herself in Condé's very first paragraph: "L'Afrique se fait beaucoup en ce moment. On écrit des masses à son sujet, des Européens et d'autres" (19; 3: Africa is very much the thing to do lately. Europeans and a good many others are writing volumes on the subject). However, the only harmony found in Véronica's African reality, are the pictures offering the discovery of the 'true Africa' in tourist brochures (20). One has

to keep in mind that Condé's protagonist is a visitor whereas Martinus Arion's narrator is the guide. Véronica's failure to overcome her alienation is symbolized by her frustration with language instruction. Eager to learn Mande at first (37), she soon discovers the difficulties: "Après le mandingue, le peul. Bref, il faut être polyglotte dans ce pays" (84; 51: First Mande, now it's Fulani. In other words, you need to be polyglot in this country). Besides the differences between the two narrators and their forms of expression, one also has to remember the distinction between Martinus Arion's mythical Africa, before the arrival of the colonizers, on the one hand, and Condé's concrete Africa in the process of decolonization on the other. If the inhabitants of the latter sleep so much because they are hungry (42), then that can be blamed on their postcolonial situation. However, Condé does not fail to point out the deficiencies of the pre-colonial period either. As Birame III explains, before Sory's aristocratic family became allies of the colonial powers, they were on top of pre-colonial royal hierarchies (47). In Martinus Arion's anarchy, on the other hand, there is no disparity. Everybody strives to unite opposites, and nobody ignores borders out of egocentric motivation.

In this chapter, Africa is treated as one area of an 'Old World' from which the cultures interacting in the so-called 'New World' originate. If the idea of the 'Old World' is generally restricted to Europe, it may be due to the fact that the very distinction was first made by the European colonizers who contributed to the cultures of their 'New World' by means of demonstrated superiority and suppression. The cultural influences from Africa, on the other hand, were transported along with slaves who had been forced to this 'New World'.

The beginning of this century finally allowed for a strong recognition of the African element in the Americas. Movements such as Haitian Indigenism, *poesía negra* in Cuba, the Harlem Renaissance in the United States, and Negritude in all of the Caribbean arose from this new consciousness. However, as antithesis to the thesis of colonialism, these movements often neglected all the other non-European elements present in the Americas and in similar need of recognition. As Derek Walcott writes in “Necessity of Negritude,” in the ‘New World’ “Negritude offers an assertion of pride” but not of a complete identity “since that is mixed and shared by other races, whose writers are East Indian, white, mixed, whose best painters are Chinese, and in whom the process of racial assimilation goes on with every other marriage” (Walcott 1993, 23). Whereas Martinus Arion’s *Stemmen uit Afrika* celebrates a mythical Africa as a site of prelapsarian phantasies, Maryse Condé’s *Heremakhonon* challenges Negritude ideas and demands an acknowledgment of creolization instead. While the black inhabitants of Africa represent noble savages before the arrival of the colonizers in *Stemmen*, *Heremakhonon* replaces racial divisions with cultural ones.

**5. Islands Within the European Metropolis: *L'Isolé soleil* (Lone Sun), *Nergens*
ergens (Nowhere, Somewhere), *The Lonely Londoners***

We are all Caribbeans now in our urban archipelagos. [...]
Perhaps there's no return for anyone to a native land -- only
field notes for its reinvention.

- James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*

Having discussed spiritual as well as physical journeys to Africa, I now turn to migrations to the European colonial powers, and specifically to their cities. I consider both Africa and Europe parts of that 'Old World' which is commonly opposed to the so-called 'New' one, the Americas, which includes the Caribbean. Both African and European traditions provide elements of the hybrid cultures in the Americas characterized, for example, by Caribbeanness. The fact that the European elements were initially imposed as those of the oppressors, and the African ones conveyed by the oppressed, is the point of departure and attack for movements such as Negritude. Whereas the journey "back" to Africa, then, had mostly spiritual reasons (recovery of neglected roots, search for cultural, traditional origins, and resistance against the colonizers), the migration to London, Amsterdam, and Paris seems to foreground more material motivations. Maryse Condé's protagonist in *Heremakhonon* arrives in Africa with an expatriate teacher's contract, but this contract is by no means the purpose of her trip. In fact, she gives it up as soon as she realizes that her actual agenda, the quest for her ancestors and thus her identity, has failed. The group of exiles in Sam Selvon's

The Lonely Londoners, on the other hand, only departed for Britain because they were un- or underemployed in Jamaica or Trinidad. They represent the majority of Caribbeans in European metropolises. In that respect, the exiled characters in Astrid Roemer's *Nergens ergens* and in Daniel Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil* belong to the minority whose departure is either inspired by idealistic reasons, as is the case in the former text, or whose departure was not a conscious choice at all.

The islands which the laborers in *The Lonely Londoners* leave, have since become independent countries. Suriname's post-independence turmoil is part of the disillusionment which drives Astrid Roemer's protagonist to the Netherlands in *Nergens ergens*. The Guadeloupe from which Adrien departs in *L'Isolé soleil*, however, has remained one of France's overseas departments. It is Maximin's text which has inspired the title of this chapter. Adrien writes to his chosen sister, locating each on his and her island: him in Paris, her in Guadeloupe. Édouard Glissant states in *Le discours antillais* that "it is very often in France that migrant French Caribbean people discover they are *different*, become aware of their Caribbeanness" (Glissant 34; 23)¹. This observation equally applies to the diasporic communities in Great Britain and the Netherlands, as it generally does to any diaspora. I will begin my comparative analysis of Selvon's, Roemer's, and Maximin's texts with a discussion of the exiled individuals and their communities, then consider their sense of Caribbean identity not only outside the Caribbean environment, but also specifically within the European city. Urban space is finally contrasted with that of the island. In this respect,

¹ The second figure refers to the translation by J. Michael Dash, from which this quotation is taken.

Suriname has to be seen separately, given its location on the South American continent.

The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature (which *should* be entitled “The Routledge Reader in *Anglophone* Caribbean Literature”) describes the period between the 1950s and early ‘60s as “Literature of the boom” (Donnell/Lawson Welsh 206). The introduction to this period indicates how Britain recruited laborers for certain industries after the Second World War. Sam Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners* portrays a group of such laborers in their diasporic working-class milieu. Similar migrations were described earlier by Jean Rhys in *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), and taken up later in Andrew Salkey’s *Come Home Malcolm Heartland* (1975) or Caryl Phillips’ *The Final Passage* (1985). Selvon’s text stands out in that it is written entirely in a stylized patois, in “a consciously chosen Caribbean literary English,” as Susheila Nasta defines it (Nasta 1995, 82).² In his “Editorial” to a special issue of *Ariel*, devoted to Selvon’s work, Victor J. Ramraj emphasizes that Selvon, whom he calls a “pioneering and talented practitioner of demotic English,” was “among the first to render in fiction the experience of colonial immigrants in Britain, in particular working-class West Indians” (Ramraj 7). I return to linguistic decisions in “Choosing a Language: Polyglossia and the Caribbean Writer.”

While absent from *L’Isolé soleil*, the working-class milieu is also described in *Nergens ergens*. Benito leaves Suriname depressed about both the post-independence

² For a discussion of Selvon’s written Trinidadian English see Edward Baugh’s “Friday in Crusoe’s City: The Question of Language in Two West Indian Novels of Exile” (Nasta 1988, 240-9).

developments of the country and the fact that his girlfriend Tamara has deserted him for a foreigner, an Algerian diplomat. Although his mind is set on studying law or business, he is first forced to live with his relatives in Utrecht. The stubbornness with which he rejects his new environment evokes Véronica's denial of the African present in *Heremakhonon*. Benito is stood up by his friend Arti at the airport. Given a ride to his relatives' address by what then seems a stranger, but later turns out to be Arti's partner Sjaak, Benito argues: "Ik wil niets met Utrecht te maken hebben. Ik ben hier niet om mij te verliezen in de genoegens van Hollandse steden. *Leiden* is mijn bestemming. Althans de Rijksuniversiteit daar ..." (18 emphasis mine: I am not interested in Utrecht. I did not come here to lose myself in the entertainment of Dutch cities. *Leiden* is my destination, at least the university there). Given that the Dutch verb "lijden" (pronounced like "Leiden") means "to suffer," one could also interpret the sentence "Leiden is mijn bestemming" as "to suffer is my destiny" and read it both as Benito's intention as well as a prediction of his fate in exile. It is the former reading in which his character differs from Véronica's, a difference connected to another, more significant one. Unlike Véronica, who claims not to have imagined Africa at all, Benito rejects his destination in that he escapes into stereotypes: "*Ze moeten maar niet denken dat ik van Holland houd. Voor mij blijft Holland wat het in Suriname is: Lankaart! Klompen! Kaas! Dreiging achter dijken!*"³ (14: They should not think that I like the Netherlands. For me, the Netherlands remain what they are in Suriname: Map! Wooden shoes! Cheese!

³ The narration in *Nergens ergens* switches between third and first person. The protagonist's thoughts, and occasionally those of the characters he interacts with, are rendered in italics.

Danger behind dikes!). On the one hand, this refusal to show interest in his new environment emphasizes Benito's aversion toward the colonial power, on the other hand it reflects the general frustration over the forces that engendered his departure. It is freedom from the Surinamese dictators as well as from the memory of Tamara, which drive Benito across the Atlantic. The idea of a university degree belongs to his vision of individual independence. However, Benito's first job in the Netherlands, mediated by his ambitious uncle Leon, is that of a social worker in a treatment center for heroin addicts.

Unlike *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) and *Nergens ergens* (1983), Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil* (1981) is not actually, or at least not exclusively, set in Europe. Written in epistolary and diary form, Maximin's text portrays a group of Guadeloupeans in the process of reconstructing their pasts. One of them, Adrien, has moved to Paris in August 1962 because of his father's transfer. Helping Marie-Gabriel, his 'chosen sister', with the research for her family novel, he writes to her about his experiences in France. Especially towards the end of the text, their mutual friend Antoine is included in the correspondence. As in *Nergens ergens*, with Tamara's new boyfriend, reference to Algeria is made in *L'Isolé soleil*, with Adrien's friend Eve, who is 'repatriated' from Algiers. Besides the site of the liberation war in which Frantz Fanon participated, as I point out above, Algeria is also the homeland of Hélène Cixous, one of the main proponents of *écriture féminine*, and Maximin's teaching assistant at the Sorbonne in the early 1970s. In an interview with Clarisse Zimra, which precedes the English translation *Lone Sun*, Maximin identifies his first novel as his "private dialogue with Anaïs Nin," heavily influenced by other women writers "from Cixous to

Lispector” to Suzanne Césaire (xxiv-xxv).⁴ Roemer’s *Nergens ergens*, published two years later in a different language and thus for a different audience, lacks Maximin’s multitude of voices. Nevertheless, Roemer presents the same anti-linearity and anti-rationality, along with legend, folklore, song, and dream sequences characteristic of *écriture féminine*. Without reference to the French feminists of her generation, Roemer explains in “In the beginning was the word and after that the alphabets. About the power of literature,” how she recognized that her fascination with the classics of Dutch literary history, “produced only pseudo-fruits: insights into white life-style and admiration for highly developed authorship” (Fleischmann/Phaf 240). In the course of this essay, Roemer retraces her development as Afro-Surinamese woman writer. If colonialism is considered the product of a patriarchal society, of the abuse of certain power structures, then Maximin’s as well as Roemer’s use of stylistic elements from *écriture féminine* function as not only anti-patriarchal, but also anti-colonial statements.

In contrast to Roemer’s and Maximin’s texts, *The Lonely Londoners* is straightforward and entirely in third-person narration. The protagonist Moses is a West Indian pioneer in London, whose task it becomes to welcome and initiate all the newly arrived. *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), Selvon’s third novel, was followed by two other novels, *Moses Ascending* (1975) and *Moses Migrating* (1983), which center around this Moses character. In his introduction to the Longman paperback edition of *The Lonely Londoners*, Kenneth Ramchand argues that it is nonsense to talk about a ‘Moses Trilogy’, because the characters,

⁴ For a feminist analysis see Lydie Moudileno, “Daniel Maximin: la chute de Caliban?” (*L’écrivain antillais au miroir de sa littérature*. Paris: Karthala, 1997).

although they are given the same names in the three texts, are changed in the latter two novels (Selvon 1991, 21). In disagreement with Ramchand, I do consider *The Lonely Londoners*, *Moses Ascending*, and *Moses Migrating* a sequence, and I would claim that the differences between the three Moses do not reach beyond the development, his ageing would necessarily have brought about.⁵ It is the voice of the same Moses, who introduces the other ‘boys’ to their options in Britain in *The Lonely Londoners*, who returns to Trinidad and receives a prize for his Britannia costume at the carnival in *Moses Migrating*. Now presented in first-person narration, Moses remembers his arrival in Britain when he decides to travel back to the Caribbean: “I could see the greenery of the coast hills, the pretty little houses, and seagulls hovering and fluttering around, waiting to drop a welcome on the heads of we black adventurers!” (Selvon 1983, 18). This passage seems to echo the discovery scenarios of the European adventurers described in Glissant’s *Les Indes*. In a way, Selvon’s ‘black adventurers’ do not so much reverse as continue the Middle Passage, the second stretch in the slave trade triangle. Whereas the slaves were forced from Africa to the Americas, their descendants are now seen on the third leg of the triangle, the one previously traveled by the colonizers with their earnings, which is not to say that the former now share the privileges of the latter. The anticipated welcome by the seagulls certainly symbolizes the discrimination and the new form of oppression to be met in the metropolis. It is with great irony, ridiculing stereotypes of Antillean societies as well as mocking the colonizers’ educational and

⁵ Victor Ramraj provides a thorough discussion of Moses’ development from *The Lonely Londoners* to *Moses Ascending* in “Selvon’s Londoners: From the Centre to the Periphery” (Nandan, Satendra, ed. *Language and Literature in Multicultural Contexts*. Suva, Fiji: The University of the South Pacific, 1983. 297-307).

missionary enterprises, that Moses justifies his desire to return to Trinidad: “I now had a purpose, which was to show the outlanders in the Caribbean that Brit’n was not only still on her feet, but also still the onlyest country in the world where good breeding and culture come before ill-gotten gains or calls of the flesh” (30). Although Moses distances himself from the ‘boys’ in *Moses Ascending*, he does not escape the immigrant community at large. A landlord himself now, he may temporarily move from the basement to the attic and thus away from the realms of the ‘boys’, but his tenants are similarly alienated immigrants: a woman from Barbados, an electrician from Cyprus, a conductor from Africa, an Australian, a Pakistani involved in an illegal immigration enterprise, and a British Black Power activist. Similarly, when Benito finally leaves the house of his relatives, he moves in with a Surinamese-Turkish couple. Adrien reveals only very little about his close friends in the letters to Marie-Gabriel. His community appears to be that of his correspondents. The individual communities of these protagonists in their European urban environment are at the center of the following part of this chapter.

Moses, Benito, Adrien, and Their Exile Communities

In her introduction to *Critical Perspectives on Sam Selvon*, written shortly after the publication of *Moses Migrating*, Susheila Nasta identifies Moses as the central figure of the “trilogy of novels” (Nasta 1988, 5) and refers to his hint of an existential crisis at the end of *The Lonely Londoners* as the turning point in his relationship with the fellow exiles: “we are

shown a Moses who is coming to an awareness of a meaningless repetition and circularity beneath the surface preoccupations and activities of his group of West Indian ‘boys’ in the city.” Like *Moses Migrating*, *Moses Ascending* is written in first-person narration, and this shift from third person in the first text to first in the following two texts emphasizes Moses’ aspirations to construct his own individual identity, rather than to conceive of himself in relation to the other ‘boys’. *The Lonely Londoners*, however, opens with the ritual of meeting a new arrivant⁶, whom Moses nicknames Galahad, at Waterloo station. Also waiting for the boat train is Tolroy, the Jamaican who managed to save enough money to send for his mother, not anticipating that the mother would bring along ‘Tanty Bessy’ as well as four other relatives. Besides Galahad and Tolroy, Moses’ group of ‘boys’ includes Bart, the miser, Big City, the want-to-be cosmopolitan, Five, the parasite, Harris, the parvenu, and the Nigerian Cap, a hopeless drifter. While waiting at the station, Moses reflects on the developments since his own arrival, ten years earlier. Whereas Britain was encouraging migration from its colonies then, a sense of saturation seems to have replaced the need for cheap labor now:

... the English people starting to make rab about how too much West Indians coming to the country: this was a time, when any corner you turn, is ten to one you bound to bounce up a spade. In fact, the boys all over London, it ain’t have a place where you wouldn’t find them, and big discussion going on in Parliament about the situation, though the old Brit’n too diplomatic to clamp down on the boys or to do anything drastic like stop them from coming to the Mother Country. (24)

Contrary to Moses’ assumption, Britain did pass a ‘Commonwealth Immigrants Act’ in 1962

⁶ This term was coined by Barbadian Edward (Kamau) Brathwaite who uses it as the title of his *New World Trilogy*, which includes *Rights of Passage* (1967), *Masks* (1968), and *Islands* (1969) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

to control further entry (Brock 25). Moses is personally affected by the rapidly growing number of migrants because he had hardly settled himself when friends and acquaintances of acquaintances began to arrive and ask him for help. Supervising their search for accommodation and employment as well as their romances, his advice is not seldom to save up enough money and “hustle back to Trinidad” (129). Nasta identifies these immigrants, originally invited by the ‘mother-country’ to solve the post-war labor crisis, as the “Windrush generation” (Nasta 1995, 78). *Empire Windrush* was the name of the ship on board of which five-hundred emigrants from the West Indies arrived in Britain in 1948.⁷

Seen in a global context, Caribbean migration to Europe accounts only for a small proportion of emigration from the Antilles, but especially in the immediate post-war period groups of laborers from the West Indies, as well as from other colonies or from southern Europe, grew to make up a considerable percentage of the population in British, French, and Dutch cities alike. As I point out above, the multicultural dilemma was mainly brought about by the ‘mother’-country’s own initiatives. Glissant observes in his *Discours* that the process of integration and assimilation has been much smoother in France than in Britain (Glissant 1981, 75). Nevertheless, Adrien addresses the “white people of London *and Paris*” (emphasis added) when he describes the metropolitan post-colonial scenario in *L’Isolé soleil*:

⁷ Mike and Trevor Phillips collect portraits of and statements by many of these emigrants and their descendants in *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Harper Collins, 1998). In *Empire Windrush: Fifty Years of Writing About Black Britain*, Onyekachi Wambu combines literary representations of the exile experience by West Indians with those by Africans. The final part, “The New Britain,” also includes writers of East Indian descent, such as Salman Rushdie or Hanif Kureishi (London: Victor Gollancz, 1998).

Mais ce ne te sera pas chose facile de réussir cette fois la colonisation douce et heureuse de ces deux nouvelles îles des Antilles que tu as voulu créer toi-même pour ton profit à Londres et à Paris. (100)

(97⁸: But this time it's not going to be so easy to do a nice gentle colonization of those two new islands that you created yourselves, for your own benefit, right in London and in Paris)

In this prediction, Adrien refers mainly to the mass of laborers which is not represented in his own circle of friends. Whereas Moses' as well as Benito's communities consist mainly of working-class immigrants, Adrien associates with intellectuals. He embodies the kind of artist Gregson Davis describes in "From island to metropolis: the making of a poet," with regard to Aimé Césaire (Davis 1997, 4-19). Césaire's Paris is described in the journal of Marie-Gabriel's mother Siméa. Celebrating the black poets of the time, Siméa also discusses the influences symbolists and surrealists had on them. Maximin includes himself in Adrien's circle of Guadeloupean friends by signing the letter which closes *L'Isolé soleil* with "Daniel," locating himself simultaneously in Paris and in Guadeloupe.⁹ Whereas Moses' arrival in Britain was encouraged by the prospect of better employment, and Benito's by the desire for his individual freedom, Adrien's was generated by the father's transfer, which remains unspecified. It is the Moses of *Moses Ascending* who aspires to write his memoirs. In *The Lonely Londoners*, he is seen working the night shift. Benito's work place, as I

⁸ The translation is taken from *Lone Sun*, published in 1989 in the CARAF collection.

⁹ Maximin's second novel *Soufrières* (1987) opens with the closing line of *L'Isolé soleil*. For a thorough analysis of the inter-play between these two texts, see Chris Bongie's "The (Un)Exploded Volcano: Creolization and Intertextuality in the Novels of Daniel Maximin" (*Callaloo* 17.2 (1994): 627-42).

mention above, is the treatment center for heroin addicts. Adrien's major occupation, on the other hand, is his research and creative expression. Joseph Brodsky emphasizes the discrepancy between intellectuals and working-class immigrants in the opening to a conference paper presented in Vienna in 1987:¹⁰ "As we gather here, in this attractive and well-lit room, on this cold December evening, to discuss the plight of the writer in exile, let us pause for a minute and think of some of those who, quite naturally, didn't make it to this room. Let us imagine, for instance, Turkish *Gastarbeiters* prowling the streets of West Germany, uncomprehending or envious of the surrounding reality" (Glad 22). The dilemma is obvious: since the creators of novels are necessarily *writers*, the destinies of Turkish *Gastarbeiters* are not likely to be represented, at least not very authentically. As Gayatri Spivak has prominently established, the subaltern can ultimately not speak. The milieu Selvon represents in *The Lonely Londoners* and the one Roemer portrays in *Nergens ergens* are certainly of a less autobiographical nature than Maximin's is in *L'Isolé soleil*, but they nevertheless convey their intellectual perspectives.

Concerned with the colonial past of his Caribbean home on a more theoretical level, then, Adrien considers his own as well as the writing of his friends (Daniel included) as an important form of anti-colonial resistance. Similar significance is attributed to music. Marie-Gabriel's father, for example, was a musician, and in "Mother's Song" he indicates the potential of music as a form of liberation: "Est-ce que la musique n'est pas la seule Liberté que nous ayons véritablement conquise jusqu'ici depuis les trois siècles de notre

¹⁰ Guillermo Cabrera Infante was the only participant from the Caribbean at this conference of writers exiled on political grounds.

oppression?” (172; 170: Isn't music the only freedom we've really conquered in all our three centuries of oppression?). The violin of Louis Delgrès, who fought against the restoration of slavery in Guadeloupe in the late eighteenth century, plays a crucial role in the account of his final surrender which is depicted in the novel. And Adrien himself reports about a meeting in London, during which he overheard Stokely Carmichael, the Black Power activist, remark to two comrades that the only true revolutionaries he had met, had been musicians in a jazz club (90). It is his occupation with critical thought and creative expression which generate Adrien's vision of the islands within cities described in the quotation above.

To be sure, the same contours of immigrant islands, such as the ones Adrien detects in London and Paris, also exist in the cities of the Netherlands. Besides his relatives, Benito's contact persons are other immigrants, be they from Suriname or from other countries such as Indonesia or Turkey. Suriname's independence and its consequences for the Netherlands will be discussed in detail below, in my analysis of Astrid Roemer's Suriname trilogy. At this point I should, however, emphasize that by 1975 about 40% of Suriname's population had emigrated to Holland (Knight 327). In contrast to those emigrants who had been Dutch citizens at their arrival in the Netherlands, Benito lacks even administrative integration: “*En ik heb de boot gemist: Ik heb een Surinaams paspoort!*” (41: And I missed the boat: I have a Surinamese passport!). On top of racial and class discrimination, he is confronted with immigration policies:

Hij wist niet waar hij moest beginnen. Dat de studie met zijn vooropleiding niet zou lukken hadden ze hem verzekerd [...] en *dat ik op het dak kan gaan zitten tot de vreemdelingendienst mij opspoort en mij naar mijn Derde-Wereld-land trapt, mijn*

God!

(41: He did not know where to begin. They had assured him that he would not succeed in his studies on the basis of his education [...] and *that I can go sit on the roof until the immigration police tracks me down and kicks me back to my Third-World-country, my God!*)

Although at this point, shortly after his own arrival in Utrecht, Benito is under the impression that the Surinamese who left before the revolution are adapting to their Dutch environment, he becomes increasingly disappointed the more his visit progresses. A major shock is his half-brother Iwan's revelation that he poses for pornography tabloids and associates with drug dealers. A parallel to the milieu of the 'boys' in *The Lonely Londoners* or the *Gastarbeiders* mentioned by Brodsky is established by Tèvfic, the Turkish partner of Britta, Benito's cousin, whose husband returned to Suriname to fight for the revolution. Tèvfic's Turkish curses are translated into Dutch: "*Zij programmeren onze mooie kinderen tot vuilnisruimers en fabrieksarbeiders!*" (102-3: They program our beautiful children to become garbage men and factory workers!). Sybille, one of Benito's lovers, is a Javanese who arrived in the Netherlands via Suriname. Along with Evita and the prostitutes Nelly and Nolly, the tenants of Iwan's apartment in Amsterdam, Sybille is one of the women with whose help Benito tries to battle the memory of Tamara. The one with whom he is finally most successful in doing so, is the African-American blues singer Bessie. Bessie, however, is a cocaine addict, and in order to help her, Benito spends the money Iwan has earned in the drug-porn demi-monde. When Iwan shoots Bessie at the close of *Nergens ergens*, Benito completely loses his sense of direction: "Toen liep hij met de mensenstroom zonder te weten waarheen en waarom" (180: There he went, with the stream of people, without knowing

where to and why). This sketch of Benito's social circle underlines that, much like Moses, Roemer's protagonist is completely absorbed by the immigrant community at large.

In *Atlantic Passages: History, Community, and Language in the Fiction of Sam Selvon*, Mark Looker points out that Selvon's "narration constructs a world characterized by constant struggle to create a stable community when all the forces of society mobilize against that community" (Looker 64). This statement certainly applies to Benito's and Adrien's communities as well, although the reader knows less about the latter's than about those of Adrien's fellow exiles in Utrecht/Amsterdam and London. The embodiment of the isolated intellectual, Adrien is himself the exiled sun referred to in the title of Maximin's novel. While Adrien describes alienation within his own self, between him and his double, Benito and Moses foreground the struggle indicated by Looker, the struggle between their own communities and those of the 'native' British or Dutch. However, I would also argue that, sadly enough, it is precisely these hostile forces of society, the common enemies, which strengthen the immigrant communities. Moses helps the other 'boys' because he remembers his own difficulties upon arrival, because he knows in which parts of the city "they will take in spades" (25). Whenever the 'boys' get together, it is not only to celebrate their common heritage, but also to share in their common experience with discrimination, with strict material constraints, or with dating 'white' women. It is this outsider experience which allows for the inclusion of the Nigerian Cap in Moses' community, for the inclusion of Javanese, Turks, and African-Americans in Benito's community, or for Adrien's association with his Algerian friend. All these immigrants, different in appearance from the 'aboriginals' in the respective European countries, equally partake in what Nasta refers to as the

acquisition of different modes of apprehending reality, the demythologization of imagined realities: “For the experience of Britain [of the Netherlands and France] does not create a simple antithesis between tropical exoticism and darkness in a cold clime, nor is the meeting of the two worlds in the imagination easily reduced to a nostalgic vision of a lost paradisaical childhood and an alien world to replace it” (Nasta 1995, 80). The European presence in the Caribbean necessarily generated certain visions which have to be altered upon arrival in the respective countries. This demythologization, the common encounter with the full implication of the foreign culture in its original location is probably the strongest among the forces uniting the immigrants. Having analyzed the immigrant communities’ confrontation with the foreign environment, I now turn to the identification with the familiar, albeit deserted, traditions in these new environments.

Antillanité Abroad

In the above quoted article, Nasta states that “the birth of a Caribbean consciousness by confrontation with the ‘mother-country’, and the redefinition created by the juxtaposition of the two worlds is a central theme in a great deal of West Indian expatriate fiction” (Nasta 1995, 80). Again, this statement applies equally to Anglophone, Francophone, as well as Dutch Caribbean fiction set in the European metropolis. It would also be true for expatriate writing from the Hispanic Caribbean if this writing was located in the ‘mother-country’ rather than in North America. As Selvon himself emphasizes in “Finding West Indian

Identity in London,” more than about anything else, his life in the metropolis taught him “about people from the Caribbean” (Selvon 1987, 37). Carrying his island with him and “far from assimilating another culture or manner [he] delved deeper into an understanding of [his] roots” (38). In a similar vein, Maximin speaks about his family’s move in his conversation with Clarisse Zimra:

“... we took the Caribbean along with us. [...] We had moved the island to Paris with us so we never felt exiled. [...] I would say it gave me a Caribbean consciousness and a universal consciousness as well. It opened up for me what I call the four continents that make up our island: Africa, Europe, Asia, and America.” (xvi)

This final observation immediately evokes the idea of *antillanité*, of an archipelago traced by “four races, seven languages and dozens of bloods,” as it reads in the opening of *L’Isolé soleil* (9). Although Caribbeanness, unlike Negritude, aims at giving the same importance to all the cultural and ethnic elements interacting in the Caribbean, and Selvon’s own parents are of East Indian descent, the protagonists in *The Lonely Londoners*, *Nergens ergens*, and *L’Isolé soleil* are all African-Caribbeans.

The awareness of their color is among the experiences prompted by their exile. It is in the Netherlands, and specifically in his relationship with Evita, that Benito recognizes himself as a “*zwarte mens*” (102: a black person). Adrien recalls how, in his high school in Paris, his value as a soccer player was assumed on the grounds of his color (97). And Moses’ friend Galahad refers to the symbolic value of certain colors when he argues that not the idea of race but the perception of colors might be responsible for discrimination: “‘It is not we that the people don’t like,’ he tells Moses, ‘is the colour Black’” (89). Indeed, linguistic examples in which negative connotations are attached to darkness, and in particular to

blackness, are numerous. Benito demonstrates one such example while in shock from Bessie's death: "*In naam van de liefde heeft Iwan mijn minnares doodgeschoten omdat ik zijn zwart fortuin wit heb gemaakt*" (179: In the name of love, Iwan has shot my lover because I made his black fortune white). The irony lies, of course, in the fact that Iwan's black money and the white cocaine on which the former was spent, are equally condemnable as they belong to the same drug business.

In comparison, the greatest emphasis on racism occurs in Roemer's text. As in *Stemmen uit Afrika*, where interpretations of the Curse of Ham are attacked, religious roots are challenged in *Nergens ergens*. Benito recalls, for example, how Tamara explained to him that the Devil is black because white people invented him (163). Benito also refuses to celebrate the *Sinterklaasfeest* with the junkies. Whereas in British and North American traditions the figure of Santa Claus is involved in the Christmas festivities, the anniversary of Saint Nicholas is celebrated separately in Central Europe, in early December. In the Netherlands, where this celebration is actually of greater importance than Christmas itself, the tradition is somewhat twisted because Nicholas' companion is black. This so-called *Zwarte Piet* is the servant who carries the bag with the presents, but whose task it is also to punish the pests. When Benito protests against this racist element of the tradition, his coordinator responds that it is a hopeless enterprise to fight racism:

'Het Sinterklaasfeest is geïnstitutionaliseerd en gelegitimeerd racisme. Daar kan geen enkele theorie tegen in man. Maar als we in dit land strijd willen voeren tegen het racisme, dan halen wij geen adem meer. Onze hele sociëteit komt voor uit racisme.'

(73: The Saint Nicholas celebration is institutionalized and legitimized racism. No theory will change that, man. But if we want to fight racism in this country, then we won't catch our breaths anymore. Our entire society originates in racism.)

The society the coordinator refers to in this context, is that of the Netherlands and, by extension, that of Central Europe. Bessie, however, recalls the situation of segregation and discrimination in New York, and in the United States in general, before her departure in the 1950s.¹¹ In *L'Isolé soleil*, a connection to the US is established with Marie-Gabriel's father, who works as musician in the New York of the Harlem Renaissance. In Selvon's trilogy a connection between racism in Europe and North America is only established in the second text, *Moses Ascending*, where a corrupt Black Power leader visits the 'brothers' and 'sisters' in Britain only to help himself to some of their funds. Generated by the 'mother-country' or another predominantly 'white' society, the awareness of their 'non-whiteness' certainly belongs to the more traumatizing exile experiences of most Caribbeans. It belongs to the baggage of the immigrants.

A proverb which Siméa's father teaches his daughter before her departure for Paris, and which is repeated in *L'Isolé soleil*, advises to always travel with the knowledge of one's baggage, to travel with one's own roof: "Voyage vers le village où tu n'as pas ta maison, mais voyage avec ton toit" (56, 145). Zimra points out in her introduction that this roof the islanders have to carry is an "awareness of their own, multiple origins" (lix). Glissant conceptualizes the idea of retained traditions during migrations in his opposition of "nomadisme circulaire" and "nomadisme en flèche" (Glissant 1990, 24). The former, circular nomadism, represents the positive form of *errance* or wandering, whereas the latter,

¹¹ Evidence of the fact that not all that much has changed since then is provided by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in his brilliant *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Man* (New York: Random House, 1997).

arrowlike nomadism, describes, for example, the devastating conquest of the colonizers. Unlike the invading nomads, the participants in circular nomadism do not aim at imposing their cultures, but the encounter with others still enforces their awareness of them. As Glissant indicates in the context of circular nomadism, identity can benefit from uprooting, and observations of the unfamiliar generate a knowledge of the familiar. In the case of Caribbean exiles in Europe, in the countries of the colonizers, the ‘familiar’, the Caribbean, already includes elements of the ‘unfamiliar’, the European. Colin Brock’s premise in “The West Indian Dimension of Western Europe” is that “the Amerindian period apart, the West Indies emerged politically, economically and even culturally as an extension of Europe” (Brock 3). Although such a premise is simplistic in that it ignores the impact of previously discussed concepts such as Negritude or Creolization, it is of course important to note that elements of the cultures encountered in the European metropolis, had already been part of the migrants’ everyday life in the Caribbean. It is the way in which these European cultural elements are absorbed and contested which characterizes Caribbean identities.

Creole languages, for example, are products of the encounter with the colonizer in the Caribbean. Yet because they also offer alternatives to the colonizer’s language, they are crucial for a specifically Caribbean consciousness. As Martinus Arion argues in his fictional as well as in his critical texts, languages are among the main characteristics of a community’s cultural identity. The three texts discussed in the present chapter equally provide evidence of this fact. *The Lonely Londoners* is the most radical, with Moses and his group of West Indians speaking and thinking in Trinidadian English. *L’Isolé soleil* includes occasional phrases, especially songs and rhymes, in French Creole, as does *Nergens ergens* in Sranan,

the Creole spoken by Afro-Surinamese. However, there is no denying that these languages are as subordinated to the English, French, and Dutch of the colonizers in the three novels as they are in Caribbean reality.

However different the individual situations of the protagonists in *The Lonely Londoners*, *Nergens ergens*, and *L'Isolé soleil*, they equally encounter the 'mother-country' as a foreign environment, although elements of its cultures had been imposed on their own. Alienation and discrimination enforce the recognition of a, however vulnerable, Caribbean identity in the three novels alike. These identities are symbolically expressed through references to Caribbean languages, such as Sranan and French Creole, or dialect, such as Trinidadian English. Whereas I have so far analyzed the situation of Caribbean immigrants in the European metropolis with regard to their communities and social interactions, the following and final section of this chapter concentrates on the topographical component, on the contrast between island and metropolis.

From Maritime to Urban Islands

As I mention above, the metaphor of the urban island originates from Adrien's experience in Paris. With the exception of Benito, the protagonists whose exile in the European metropolis is at the center of my comparative analysis departed from Caribbean islands. In the introduction to *L'insularité: Thématique et représentations*, Jean-Michel Racault points out that the difference between island and continent is merely a matter of

perspective (Marimoutou/Racault 9). Yet, the former is commonly understood to be significantly smaller than the latter. Especially with regard to an archipelago such as the Caribbean one, the smallest among its individual islands are often close to matching the size of large cities. Some of the contributions to Marimoutou and Racault's collection, for example Elisabeth Pantalacci's "L'exil, constante insulaire?" or Michèle Marimoutou's "Exils: de l'enchantement au désenchantement de l'île," refer to the conceptual connection between island and exile. Not only is the former always a geographically isolated space, it also conditions the latter frequently on the grounds of resource limitations. Migration between the various parts of the Caribbean has a long tradition in this context. Europe and North America as destinations only followed places like Cuba, during the prospering of the United Fruit sugar estates, or Curaçao, when the oil refinery was opened there.

The linguistic link between island (île, isle) and exile is not only exploited by Maximin in *L'Isolé soleil* (105-6), it has also been pursued in book titles such as Mbye Cham's *Ex-isles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema* or Chris Bongie's *Islands and Exiles* which, in turn, stems from the third chapter of Kamau Brathwaite's *Rights of Passage* (Bongie 18). To explain his own perception of insular space, Bongie refers to George Lamming's remark, that no geography is more appropriate than that of the island to the study of exile (Lamming 96): "The island is a figure that can and must be read in more than one way: on the one hand, as the absolutely particular, a space complete unto itself and thus an ideal metaphor for a traditionally conceived, unified and unitary, identity; on the other, as a fragment, a part of some greater whole from which it is in exile and to which it must be related." This claim, it seems to me, applies to the maritime and to the urban islands alike.

The model of a Chinese box which places urban islands within their archipelago of provinces and states, within the giant-island of a continent, can be continued on its other end with the consideration of the urban centers of inhabited maritime islands. Derek Walcott scrutinizes the Caribbean city in “The Antilles, Fragments of Epic Memory.” Mocking the arrogant cosmopolitan viewpoint that a culture is made by its cities, Walcott asks what “the proportions of the ideal Caribbean city” are (Walcott 1993, 263). Defending the “magnified market towns,” he demands that they be judged not by travelers or exiles but by their “own citizenry and architecture” (264). It is the artist’s imagination which is called upon when Port of Spain is painted as “a writer’s heaven”: “a downtown Babel of shop signs and streets, mongrelized, polyglot, a ferment without a history, like heaven” (263).

A seminal essay with regard to the representation of urban space is Roland Barthes’ “Semiology and the Urban.” Barthes criticizes Kevin Lynch, the pioneer in studies of city images, for being ambiguous or superficial in his attempt to think about the city “in the same terms as the consciousness perceiving it” (Barthes 90). Establishing parallels to Freud’s language of dreams and Lacan’s structure of the imaginary, Barthes’ language of the city leaves him with “strong and neutral elements, or rather, as the linguists say, [...] marked and unmarked elements”¹² (91). If one applies this distinction to the cities represented in *The Lonely Londoners*, *Nergens ergens*, and *L’Isolé soleil*, then these texts obviously explore and focus on the marked elements of the respective metropolises. Looker is thus right in pointing

¹² For the linguistic definition of the terms ‘marked’ and ‘unmarked’ see Oswald Ducrot and Tzvetan Todorov’s *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences du langage* (Paris: Seuil, 1979. 147-8).

out that Selvon “creates a new world whose byways would be mapped by writers that followed,” that in fact he “invents a black London whose existence had been ignored, distorted, or even erased by the cultural establishment as well as by society at large” (Looker 60). To be sure, Selvon’s London is still absent from comparative studies of artistic representations of urban space. Neither Mary Ann Caws’ *City Images: Perspectives from Literature, Philosophy, and Film* (1991) nor Richard Lehan’s *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History* (1998) include any reference to immigrant urban islands such as the ones described by Maximin’s Adrien. The treatments of London are restricted to representations by Dickens or Woolf in Caws’ collection, and to Conrad or Eliot in Lehan’s study. Paris belongs to Flaubert, Balzac, or Baudelaire. These studies discuss those urban novels which, according to Looker, were recast by Selvon. Selvon gave them “a new shape and a new language which rehistoricizes the new city - its geography and its monuments.”

Nasta describes this reshaping of the urban space as domestication through ritualistic repetition of names of the marked areas. Among the borders of Selvon’s black London are ‘the Gate’ (Notting Hill) in the west, ‘the Arch’ (Marble) in the east, and ‘the Water’ (Bayswater) in the north (Nasta 1995, 84). As any exile, possibly any inhabitant, Moses experiences the city in two extremes: as the alienated foreigner and as the attached member of a community. He experiences both repulsion and attraction. “This is a lonely miserable city,” he thinks on the one hand, and cherishes his group of fellow exiles when he continues that “if it was that we didn’t get together now and then to talk about things back home, we would suffer like hell” (130). Yet, on the other hand, he is aware of the magnitude of “the

great city of London, centre of the world,” and wonders “what it is that a city have, that any place in the world have, that you get so much to like it you wouldn’t leave it for anywhere else” (137).

As much as I sympathize with Walcott’s defense of the Caribbean towns and cities, and one has to account for Havana or Benito’s Paramaribo among them, I cannot deny the opportunities, in terms of both employment and education, offered by the bigger cities. After all, these opportunities are the very ones which attract the protagonists of Selvon’s, Roemer’s, and Maximin’s texts, as well as the masses of non-fictional immigrants. There is also hardly a Caribbean writer who has not lived in one of the world’s metropolises. As Richard Lehan, who considers the modern city an Enlightenment construct, puts it in “The City and the Text,” cities are “the source of intellectual excitement and challenge” (Lehan 3). Lehan continues to relate the rise of the city to the development of literary movements, to that of the novel as such, and to subsequent narrative modes. Concurrent with this intellectual environment, Lehan also traces the less glorious economic one. In “From Myth to Mastery,” he explains how the city could only emerge, according to most urban historians, due to a surplus of food, which allowed for new divisions of labor, which eventually lead to the importance of trade and commerce, which ultimately brought capitalism into being, and with it that imperialism which generated immigrants such as Moses, Benito, and Adrien to begin with. These developments gave the metropolis the importance Selvon mocks when he allows Moses to take pride in walking on Waterloo Bridge or in considering Piccadilly Circus his “playground” (137). However, one should not fail to note that the same Moses also realizes even in his euphoria that familiarization or domestication, to allude to Nasta’s

observation, causes the same attachment to any other place in the world.

The city as a presence in its own right is much less prominent in Roemer's and Maximin's texts. As I point out above, Benito states on the day of arrival in the Netherlands that he does not intend to lose himself in the pleasures of its cities. When he saunters through Amsterdam toward the end of the novel, he identifies with transient tourists rather than with inhabitants: "Hij liep met zijn minnares tegen zijn linkerzijde gedrukt alsof hij ook deel was van de vakantiestroom uit verre landen" (168: He walked with his lover pulled close on his left, as if he was part of the stream of tourists from remote countries too). Unlike Moses, who never leaves London, Benito is mobile. He commutes, mostly between Utrecht and Amsterdam, throughout the novel. Like Benito's, Adrien's attention does not rest on just one city. I have already mentioned the meeting Adrien attends in London. On another occasion he reports about the staging of a Césaire play in Salzburg, which allows him to complain that "Paris est toujours à la traîne pour accueillir la culture noire!" (87; 84: Paris is always behind when it comes to making a place for black culture!). Paris, albeit an earlier version, itself is really more tangible in Siméa's journal. However, although Benito's and Adrien's experiences are divided between several cities, they do share Moses' sense of alienation and oppression by the concentrated force of the respective colonizers in all the cities concerned.

Comparing Caribbean immigrants in Britain, France, and the Netherlands about a decade ago, Colin Brock argues that, although integration and assimilation are more encouraged in France than they are in the other two countries, the immigrant groups "exhibit concentration in locations of cheap, usually poor, housing" (Brock 11) in the three 'mother-

countries' alike. Apart from these economic constraints, Brock adds, "the predominantly black identity of the majority of West Indians in all three countries has led, due to discrimination, to the experience of continued and general disadvantage." Despite my reservations about his essentialist notion of 'black identity', I cite Brock's observations here to summarize the experiences made by the protagonists in *The Lonely Londoners*, *Nergens ergens*, and *L'Isolé soleil*. Moses', Benito's, and Adrien's move from their maritime Caribbean to the urban islands, to the European metropolises, results for all three of them in the development of a Caribbean identity in reaction to encountered hostility. With Stuart Hall, I should at this point emphasize that identity is never "an already accomplished fact" but rather "a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall 222). It is on this premise on which I have analyzed the portraits of Selvon's, Roemer's and Maximin's protagonists. The awareness of their color as well as of distinct customs, always in contrast to those of the dominant 'aboriginal' culture, encourages the association with other immigrant groups rather than with the 'white' natives. Given the interaction of different immigrant groups, the populations of the large cities have come to rival the Caribbean creolization conceptualized in theories of *antillanité* or Caribbeanness. Benito's cousin Britta rejects the idea of a homeland ("land van herkomst" 165) when she states that her ancestors hail from China, India, Europe, and Africa. However, if one considers global ghettoization and ethnic rivalries along with more specifically European immigration laws, this statement is as much or as little true for the Caribbean reality as it is for that of the world's metropolises.

6. Exile and Caribbean Transculturation in Astrid Roemer's Suriname Trilogy

O wou o, Kalfou nèg Kongo
Si wi touye, ou chaje ak pwoblem
Nan kalfou, Kalfou nèg Kongo
Si w vole, ou chaje ak pwoblem
Lan kalfou, kalfou nèg Kongo

- Boukman Eksperyans, "Kalfou Danjere"

In the opening of Astrid Roemer's *Nergens ergens*, the protagonist is seen arriving at Schiphol airport. His first encounter there is with one of the "legendary Surinamese in the Netherlands" (11). Whereas my analysis of *Nergens ergens* contributes to a general evaluation of the situation of Caribbean immigrants in European cities, my discussion of the author's more recent Suriname Trilogy focuses on the relationship between former Dutch Guiana and its 'mother-country' in particular. Suriname is the only Dutch possession in the Caribbean to have gained complete constitutional independence. Moreover, it is the only one located on the continent, between Guyana and French Guiana. The Netherlands acquired their part of the Guianas in 1667, by the Treaty of Breda, in exchange for New Amsterdam (present-day New York). As Wim Rutgers writes in a survey of Dutch Caribbean literature, the Dutch were pleased with this bargain because the plantation economy was flourishing then (Glaser/Pausch 186). When slavery was abolished in 1863, cheap labor was provided by contract workers from British East India as well as from the Dutch East Indies. As in the other parts of the Caribbean, this history of colonialism accounts for the hybridity

characteristic of today's Surinamese society, a society which includes the descendants of Europeans, of East Indians and Javanese, of Amazon Indians, and of Africans. With regard to the latter, a distinction is made between the so-called *Bosnegers* ('Bush Negroes' or maroons) and the urbanized Afro-Surinamese on the coast. The latter often refer to themselves as 'Creoles'. Roemer succeeds in representing all these ethnicities, and especially their interactions, throughout her trilogy.

Onno Mus, the protagonist of *Gewaagd leven* (risky life) and grandson of a Frisian farmer/Belarusian sailor and his mistress, is born into a *Bosneger* village in Galibi. Cora Sewa, the third-person narrator of *Lijken op Liefde* (looks like love), is the daughter of a Hindustani from Nickerie and an Afro-Surinamese from the Para district. In *Was Getekend* (signed), finally, Ilya can "zich zoon noemen van die-rooie-bosneger-en-die-witte-verpleegstersvrouw, iedereen kan toch zien dat hij gewoon een zoutwater-Chinees is" (28: call himself the son-of-that-red-Bush Negro-and-that-white-nurse, everybody can still see that he is simply a saltwater-Chinese). It becomes obvious that to satisfy the interests of all these diverse groups in a newly defined country, in a newly imagined community, to invoke Anderson's terminology, in particular one with an anti-capitalist premise, should prove impossible.

A great number of inhabitants anticipated the arising misery when Henk Arron announced Suriname's independence for 1975. In the early 1970s, the emigration rate increased rapidly, and when independence was guaranteed, about forty percent of Suriname's population had moved to the Netherlands. Ironically enough, it had been there that the strongest demands for an official separation had emerged. As Gert Oostindie argues in

“Preludes to the Exodus: Surinamers in the Netherlands, 1667-1960s,” a growing nationalist ideology precisely among Afro-Surinamese in the metropolis had contributed considerably to the direction the independence struggle was to take (Brana-Shute 231). Roemer’s novels are primarily set in Suriname, but constant contact, through correspondence as well as actual travels, with the ‘mother-country’ persists. After recalling briefly the main phases on the way to and in the aftermath of Suriname’s revolution,¹ I will analyze the individual parts of the trilogy in their chronology, with special attention paid to the analogy between private and public spheres introduced in *Gewaagd leven*, to the importance of exile and transculturation with regard to *Lijken op Liefde*, and to its relation to representation as such in *Was Getekend*.

Tracing Surinamese nationalism in the Netherlands, Oostindie emphasizes the importance of Anton de Kom. De Kom is the author of *Wij slaven van Suriname* (1934), which is considered the first history on Suriname written from a Caribbean perspective rather than from that of the colonizers. De Kom became a volunteer in the Dutch military service in 1920. Four years later he worked as a bookkeeper in The Hague and was dismissed in 1931 because of his involvement in leftist organizations. After a brief remigration to Suriname, De Kom was deported back to Holland and died in a concentration camp near Hamburg in 1945. He became a symbol for Surinamese nationalists, and the university in Paramaribo was named after him in 1980. The legacy of figures like Anton De Kom can be

¹ An extensive treatment in English of these periods is provided by Edward M. Dew’s *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam: Ethnicity and Politics in a Plural Society* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978) and *The Trouble in Suriname, 1975-1993* (Westport, CT/London: Praeger, 1994).

traced through the post-war struggle against colonialism in the entire Dutch Caribbean. Most of the British West Indies cut their ties in the late 1960s and 1970s. Suriname's neighbor Guyana, for example, gained independence in 1966. Among the Dutch possessions, Suriname is the only one to have done so. Of all these post-war independence movements, however, only the one in Grenada witnessed as radical and disastrous a process as the one in Suriname.

Most of the earlier spokesmen of anti-Dutch sentiments in Suriname were of middle-class origin and inspired by general ideas on autonomy and home-rule. Their concerns were satisfied in 1954 with the *Statuut*, or Kingdom Charter, which made Suriname and the Dutch Antilles autonomous parts within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Opponents of this dependent status became more radical in the 1960s. As Oostindie points out, most of these opponents were, or had been, students in the 'mother-country'. Not only had they experienced the exclusion from the very society of which they were officially citizens, their studies had also confronted them with theories on decolonization and liberation. For these radicals, the rejection of the colonizer equaled the rejection of their capitalist system. The poet Dobru (Robin Raveles), for example, writes in his autobiography that it had become necessary "to trade the old colonial standards on which society floated --capitalism, imperialism-- for a new idea" (Brana-Shute 260), and this idea was meant to correspond with the thoughts of the Surinamese people. Unsurprisingly, given the examples of Haiti (1804), of Cuba (1959), and of Grenada (1979), nearly two thirds of the people in question were lacking faith in the new idea and emigrated. In the three parts of Roemer's trilogy, the time of narration is situated in the post-independence era. Extensive flashbacks, however, allow

the narrated time to cover all of this century's second half.

Whereas the different ethnic groups had cooperated in the struggle against the common enemy, the colonizer, they found their interests in competition once independence had been guaranteed. Inter-ethnic rivalries as well as the radical decrease of the new state's population were probably among the main factors contributing to the instability which ultimately led to the collapse of Arron's four-party coalition and the military coup in 1980. Tony Thorndike opens "Suriname and the Military" with the venture that "of the 350,000 Surinamers who woke on the morning of 25 February 1980 to the news that there had been a military coup, few were unhappy" (Sedoc-Dahlberg 35). Dissatisfaction with current politics was strong enough to welcome any change as a chance for improvement. Thorndike goes on to argue that "public and political malaise did not prompt the coup, but nonetheless rendered it legitimate" (36), admitting that controversy remains over "whether the sixteen poorly-armed non-commissioned officers, led by Sergeant Desi Bouterse, had actually planned to take over the government." Whether planned or not, martial law remained in place, under Bouterse's three-man leadership, until a referendum to endorse a civilian constitution was held in 1987. These developments led to a dramatic increase of human rights abuse.

As Thorndike explains, although Bouterse proclaimed a Marxist/Socialist basis, his mutiny was well prepared only in a military sense and lacked political direction (37). Whereas the party system was first left intact, the parliament was finally dismissed in 1981. The terrors of the following dictatorship culminate in what is commonly known as the 'December massacre'. In order to prevent a counter-coup, fifteen prominent opponents,

among them labor union leaders, university staff, journalists, and lawyers, were executed in December of 1982. In reaction to this massacre, the Netherlands immediately suspended their massive aid program, which resulted in a complete deterioration of Suriname's economy. Support would then be provided mainly by Libya's Colonel Khadafy, who had already been approached in the 1970s by Surinamese Muslim groups (44).

In "Democracy and Human Rights in Suriname" Betty Sedoc-Dahlberg emphasizes that it was a double change between democratic-pluralism and military-authoritarianism which occurred in "one short generation," between 1980 and 1996 (Griffith/Sedoc-Dahlberg 214). Even after an "(electoral) democracy" had been restored in 1987, the National Army's massacres of civilians during the Maroon guerilla war testified that this governmental change did not prevent human rights abuse either (215). Another brief period of military rule occurred in 1990. In agreement with Sedoc-Dahlberg, I consider the growing conflict between Suriname and the Netherlands one of the main factors to encourage the instabilities which lead to such crises. Preceding the coup, Arron's government had disagreed with the Dutch about allocations of development aid resources as well as about return migration policies (218). After 1982, the Dutch kept adding new elements to the list of preconditions for reinstatement of development aid (223). Constitutional independence never prevented the Netherlands from interference with Suriname's domestic politics, a politics already challenged by inter-ethnic quarrels and a radical decrease of the population. Roemer represents this problematic relationship between colony/new republic and colonizer throughout the three parts of her trilogy.

To date, the crisis in Suriname has not been solved. The cleansing tribunal in *Lijken*

op Liefde remains a fiction, although, in December 1995, the National Assembly did request an investigation of the 1982 massacre. In the election of 1996, the National Democratic Party (NDP), with strong ties to the military, gained four seats, while the main opponent, the New Front, lost six. With the help of changed memberships and coalitions, the NDP candidate Jules Wijdenbosch was elected president. In April 1997, the Netherlands attempted to prosecute Bouterse, who was charged with trafficking in cocaine. Bouterse, then president of the NPD, was suspected of being one of the leaders of the so-called Suriname Drug Cartel. The Army's second-in-command Boerenveen had already been convicted in Miami, in 1986, by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency. Bouterse, however, was rescued by Wijdenbosch who made the former an advisor of the state, which gave him diplomatic immunity. The return to a democratic government has thus still failed to engender an elimination of corrupt leaders and methods.

Nevertheless, Sedoc-Dahlberg's perspective remains positive when she points out that "expectations of the performance of the welfare state could be revised to more realistic levels if a social-political infrastructure existed for communication" (225) and if Suriname's still weak democratic institutions could further be strengthened. As in Martinus Arion's utopia, and as in the theoretical concept of Caribbeanness (which is supported by celebrations of the area's natural environment), such positive development is connected to more cooperation within the region rather than continued dependence on the so-called 'First World'. Suriname is a member of the Association of Caribbean States, established in 1994. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), active since 1973, accepted its membership in 1995. Sedoc-Dahlberg closes with a reference to optimistic democratic circles which hope

for “regional integration and a political climate favorable to democracy and human rights,” allowing, however, for the question as to whether Suriname will indeed be able to overcome economic stagnation and political unrest in the near future (227). Such ambiguity also governs Roemer’s fictional representation of these historical/political developments. Throughout the trilogy, the reader is confronted with diverse perspectives. It would be of no use to my discussion to launch into a periodic categorization of the texts, but it is certainly in postmodern fashion that the reader of the trilogy is not only left to his or her own judgements, but that these judgements are also continuously challenged. In the context of form, I concentrate on strong links with oral tradition and storytelling as well as on the ways in which they challenge the colonizer’s traditions. While forms of representation itself are addressed especially in *Was Getekend*, it is the transcultural nature of the society they represent which I will foreground in the context of *Lijken op Liefde*. I will begin, however, with the discussion of Roemer’s analogy between private and public spheres, between family life and the colonial scenario, which is introduced prominently in *Gewaagd leven*.

Gewaagd leven (risky life; 1996)

The only part of the trilogy which provides exact historical dates, is the second one. While the main plot in *Lijken op Liefde* takes place in the future, in December 1999, and follows a flight itinerary, all the flashbacks are also precisely situated. It is, however, obviously not Roemer’s intention to create a chronology. The time of narration in *Gewaagd*

leven is indicated by segments entitled ‘Gesprek’ (conversation). Accompanied by fragments called ‘Berichten’ (reports), they divide the individual *verhalen* (stories). This terminology alone suggests a close link with oral tradition and storytelling. Beginning with the prologue, the *gesprekken* present monologues of the protagonist Onno Mus, mostly addressed to his brother Hagith. As Ineke Phaf points out in “The Contemporary Surinamese Novel,”² this structural device allows Roemer to combine and interweave political debates, intimate memories, neighborhood gossip, and beautiful sceneries of today’s Suriname. Roemer also maps her setting by pointing out not only the districts of the country, such as Para, Nickerie, or the Marowijne delta, but also specific areas of its capital, such as Blauwgrond, Zuurzakstraat Negen, or Surinderstraat Zes. The latter two references go as far as to point out specific houses by street and number (nine and six), making the setting thus very tangible. Addressing the influence of literature on individual consciousness in “In the beginning was the word and after that the alphabets: About the power of literature,” Roemer writes that Surinamese literature “will be a powerful medium only if it shows an extremely recognizable affinity with what is specific and particular in the Surinamese awareness” (Fleischmann/Phaf 243)³. It is certainly in this spirit that the trilogy was written.

While *Lijken op Liefde* concentrates on post- and *Gewaagd leven* on pre-

² This essay is forthcoming in *A History of Literature in the Caribbean. Vol. 2: English- and Dutch-Speaking Regions*. Ed. A. James Arnold. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2000.

³ Another translation, by Rita Gircour, is included in Carole Boyce Davies’ *Moving Beyond Boundaries. Vol. 2: Black Women’s Diasporas*. (New York: NYUP, 1995. 237-44).

independence circumstances, *Was Getekend* resembles an *Aufhebung*, a synthesis, in that it covers almost the entire time span of both preceding novels as well as an elaboration on themes and devices introduced in either of them. Accordingly it is this last part which actually represents independence celebrations and gives the event a place in its narration. *Gewaagd leven*, on the other hand, emphasizes the pre-independence and therefore colonial relationship between Dutch Guiana and the Netherlands. This relationship is seen analogous to the one between children/wife and patriarch in the protagonist's, Onno Mus' family. As Roemer writes in the above mentioned paper, the oppressed can be characterized by class, race, as well as gender: "Women, blacks, and so-called third-world citizens do not have power medi[a] [such] as capital and production resources." For these groups, language can become "an emancipatory power-medium." Among Roemer's choices of form and content, the inclusion of Creoles as well as persistent references to storytelling traditions are the most obvious illustrations of this fact.

Roemer is, however, well aware of the complications in power relations, of the futility of simplification as well as moralization. Onno's father, Michael or short MM⁴, is a protestant minister about to settle down in his own house: "Vandaag wordt een stuk paradijsgrond gekoloniseerd door mij" (25: A piece of paradise-ground is being colonized by me today). Although he has a *buitenvrouw* (outside-woman) with outside-children and frequently abuses his official wife, it is the latter for whom the house is being built. It is named *Manlobi* (Saramaccan: love of a man) after the *Bosneger* village in Galibi into which

⁴ August Hans den Boef interprets these initials somewhat polemically as 'macho squared' (Boef 33).

Onno is born. Significantly, in the novel dedicated to “our parents,” all the wives remain nameless. Mirte Mus, whose first name is not revealed until *Was Getekend*, is either referred to as MM’s wife or as Onno’s, Hagith’s, and Rubi’s mother. Her sister, who has already moved to the Netherlands, visits as ‘MM’s wife’s sister’ or the children’s aunt. MM’s mistress appears as “die moslim-vrouw” (the Muslim woman), and a relative’s boat is named “naar de vrouw van ‘oom Ed’” (47: after the wife of uncle Ed). Although women and children play the role of victims in this respect, Roemer very skillfully avoids simple binaries between ‘good’ and ‘evil’. It is to please his wife that MM becomes a wandering minister. Confirming Fanon’s theories of mutual necessity between master and slave, his wife’s attempt to separate ends with her return. Then again, Mirte aborts their fourth child without MM’s consent. The latter is particularly angry “omdat het volgens hem ‘precies dat mensenkind had kunnen zijn dat Suriname van de ondergang had kunnen redden!’” (87: because, according to him, it could have been just that human being capable of rescuing Suriname from its decline). To his blood brother, the orphan Onno Sewa, MM is the best possible friend, and through the entire trilogy Roemer manages to subtly present her characters in a way that Ilya’s exclamation, “Ik ben ook niet heilig” (*WG* 369: I’m not a saint myself) applies to them all.

Whereas in *Gewaagd leven* it is the patriarch MM who symbolizes the colonizer, in *Was Getekend* it is the protagonist’s mother who symbolizes the ‘mother-country’. For Ilya’s mother the Netherlands is also her home country. In *Gewaagd leven*, however, the emphasis is not so much on descent but rather on the distribution of power. MM is himself an ‘outside child’, but only toward the end of *Lijken op Liefde*, which is also the end of the tribunal, does

he face his father, the wealthy Frisian farmer Andijk, on his deathbed. In *Gewaagd leven* MM is shown as a patriotic Surinamese. His son rightly observes that “zijn vader keurt alles van landgenoten in het buitenland af” (17: his father scrutinizes everything from fellow countrymen abroad). As the patriarch, MM has the power to entertain several families. At least in the relationship with his legitimately married wife, he is capable of cruel domestic violence. Yet, he can also generously treat her and their children to vacations with educational value:

Zonder vooraf overleg te plegen met zijn vrouw en kinderen kon MM op een gegeven moment vliegtickets op de eettafel leggen met de mededeling dat hij met zijn gezin voor tien dagen naar het buitenland vertrok. [...] Zo hadden ze Tokio bezocht om hun vaders nieuwsgierigheid te bevredigen. De Nederlandse Antillen om een afzetmarkt voor ‘gerookte riviervis’ af te tasten; Guyana om de strijd van de burgers tegen het neokolonialisme met eigen ogen te kunnen waarnemen; New York om het kapitalisme te begrijpen; Havanna om het socialisme te ervaren; Miami om naar geldverspilling te kijken; Holland om bloedverwanten te bezoeken.

(27: At a certain moment, without consulting his wife and children, MM could put plane tickets down on the table with the notice that he would go abroad with his family for ten days. [...] That way, they had visited Tokyo to satisfy their father’s curiosity. The Netherlands Antilles to prove an outlet for ‘smoked river-fish’; Guyana to see the population’s struggle against neocolonialism with their own eyes; New York to comprehend capitalism; Havana to experience socialism; Miami to watch the wasting of money; Holland to visit relatives)

The way these destinations are matched with impressions or rather, agendas, mocks the enterprises of the colonizers, of the adventurers described in the opening of Glissant’s *Les Indes*. With the help of prefabricated expectations, the world can be understood through brief visits, or at least and if need be, assimilated to those expectations. The last trip before the family’s budget is absorbed by the new house, however, ends in a catastrophe. In the hotel in Rio de Janeiro MM is made aware of his authoritarianism. His attempt to leave Onno in

charge of the foreign currency provokes his wife to remind him that Hagith is the older son and that Onno would not be misled through words or money anyway. Overcome by his temper, MM leaves the four of them to their own device only to be hospitalized with a heart condition shortly thereafter (30).

Like Glissant's imperialist adventurers, MM is also a nationalist, as the remark about his wife's abortion indicates. In this light he wants to educate at least his living sons. Onno, who soon develops a fascination for astronomy, eventually becomes an astrophysicist in the Netherlands. While he is still attending high school, his father has other aspirations: "zijn vader vindt dat zijn aanleg voor wis- en natuurkunde zou moeten leiden tot een vak dat zijn zoon in staat stelt de natuurlijke rijkdom van de republiek Suriname in kaart te brengen en die terug te geven aan het volk" (37: his father thinks that his talent for the natural sciences should lead to a profession which allows his son to map the natural riches of the Surinamese Republic and to return them to the people). Unlike that of Hagith's, however, the development of Onno's personality alienates him from the father. Whereas the father soon associates with the military, Onno finds guidance from people such as his math-teacher, who opposes authoritarian structures. In response to Onno's question about the connection between feelings, thoughts and scientific knowledge, the instructor bursts out with the information that he was not hired from the Netherlands to answer questions in a colonialist manner, but to train his students in epistemology: "De staatkundige onafhankelijkheid moest ook maar onafhankelijk denkers produceren!" (42: Constitutional independence also has to produce independent thinkers!). It is Onno's mother who points out the dilemma Onno's scientific talent creates in their colonial scenario: "jouw weg om een marionet van het

Westen te worden zal langs de wetenschap gaan, mijn jongen!” (176: your path to become a puppet of the West shall lead along science, my boy!).

Another opponent to MM’s attitudes is Onno’s girlfriend Iris. Iris sympathizes with her own father, whose disgust with the dictatorship leads him to plan his family’s departure. In response to Onno’s argument that there are murderous armies in Europe and North America as well, she explains that they had not grown up in these places, and that it is the fact that they care about Suriname which makes an escape preferable to direct confrontation with its military regime (78). Iris’ father complains about the misuse of developmental funds: “naar mijn ervaring zijn mijn landgenoten dag en nacht bezig manieren te verzinnen om de vliegen van Holland af te vangen. Ik trap liever op de hondenpoep in Nederlandse straten dan te blijven hopen dat er stront zit aan de pootjes van zo’n gevangen vlieg!” (168: my fellow countrymen are according to my experience all day and night busy with the development of methods to snatch the flies from Holland. I’d rather step into dog shit in Dutch streets than keep hoping that there is shit on the paws of such a fly!). The bitterness and disillusionment which prevail in this observation derive not only from his impressions of the situation in Suriname. Iris’ father has witnessed the independence of Guyana with his parents as well as followed the student history in Uganda. He summarizes the political murders, the poverty, and the rapidly growing emigration rate as the post-colonial trauma: “Hij wist dat Paramaribo toegetakeld zou raken. Dat het land onleefbaar zou zijn” (106: He knew that Paramaribo will be devastated. That the country will become impossible to live in). Like so many others, Iris’ family therefore emigrates as well. Onno himself joins the stream of emigrants eventually. In *Lijken op Liefde* he lives in Amsterdam as astrophysicist. The

narrator's perspective, however, remains in Suriname because it switches from Onno Mus to Cora Sewa. The Netherlands, where Cora meets with Onno, are only the first stop on her trip via London, Miami, and Willemstad back to Plantage-Jericho, where she lives with her husband Herman, Onno Sewa's stepbrother. Whereas I concentrate on the power distribution in the colonial scenario in my analysis of *Gewaagd leven*, the transculturation engendered by colonialism and continuously encouraged by post-independence developments, is at the center of my discussion of *Lijken op Liefde*.

Lijken op Liefde (looks like love; 1997)

The term 'transculturation' was first introduced by Fernando Ortiz in *Contrapunteo cubano del Tabaco y Azúcar* (1940). Ortiz suggests its adoption in sociological terminology as a substitute for 'acculturation' in order to stress the complexity of interactions between different cultures rather than the transition from one culture to another. I consider such a complexity of interactions equally relevant for the literary context since their literatures are one form of expression for the different cultures in question. A prominent application of the term to literary criticism is provided by Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Defining transculturation as a phenomenon of the "contact zone"⁵,

⁵ "Contact zone," in turn, refers to the space of colonial encounters, "the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (Pratt 6). Suriname is discussed in Pratt's chapter on

Pratt employs it to raise questions related to the focus in this part of my analysis: “how are metropolitan modes of representation received and appropriated on the periphery?” and likewise, “how does one speak of transculturation from the colonies to the metropolis?” (Pratt 6). Roemer addresses these questions in “Writing Back in the Diaspora: Surinamese Ethnic Novels,” where she contrasts her own work to traditional (white) Dutch literature: “my publications are rooted in the inheritance of the diaspora, in multiethnic and multicultural projections” (Roemer 39). She continues that in her novels “ethnicity, a natural authority in Western works, is neither natural nor an authority. It is a particularity as are gender and class.”

Whereas the Mus family in *Gewaagd leven* combines European and African heritage, the protagonist in *Lijken op Liefde* also represents Hindustan traditions. Cora Sewa’s Afro-Surinamese father is first a *kafri* for her mother’s Hindustan family in Nickerie (39). The community’s reactions to Cora’s mother’s marriage emphasize the universality of discrimination. Warnings such as “die kafri gaat je beslist mishandelen” (that nigger is certainly going to abuse you) illustrate inter-ethnic conflicts in the multi-culture created by the colonizers. Cora’s parents, on the other hand, are naturally more tolerant to their own daughter’s transcultural marriage. Cora’s husband Herman lives in Plantage-Jericho, in the so-called Para region, which is an old plantation area where the syncretist, pantheist *winti*

“Eros and Abolition,” in the representation of John Stedman, a Scotsman whose expedition of the 1770s is published in his two-volume *Narrative* (90-102).

(Sranan: wind/breath/spirit)⁶ religion has resisted Roman Catholic missionaries. Herman's father was a Winti practitioner and a "natuurgenezer" (homeopath), and Herman has inherited this trade. What Herman confesses only later in their marriage, is that his profession also includes the carrying out of abortions, which eventually causes Herman's involvement in the tribunal. Moreover, it causes Herman to change his profession and open a restaurant together with his wife in the aftermath of the December massacre. Even abortions become part of the family metaphor in Roemer's colonialism analogy. Surinamese politics are seen as the womb in which the massacre interferes violently (145), an interference at the center of the tribunal.

Cora's trip to Holland and the United States revolves around this tribunal which is designed as an absolution for the country at the eve of the twenty-first century: "De regering die gekozen was had na heftige etnische conflicten het volk via een referendum gehoord over twee 'vreeselijke kwesties': de verhouding met Nederland en de verwerking van de decembermoorden" (22: The elected government has, after violent ethnic conflicts, asked the people in a referendum about two 'terrible questions': the affair with the Netherlands and the investigation of the December massacre). More than sixty percent of the remaining population voted for the republic, especially because the younger generation (above sixteen) was invited to participate. With regard to the second question, sixty-three percent demanded an open trial lead by an international commission. The tribunal does not fail to attract those

⁶ According to Roemer, Winti is "one of the most outstanding Creole strategies of survival" (Roemer 42). Based on the belief in personified supernatural beings, past, present, and future can be disclosed and illness healed. See also Roemer's "Who's Afraid of the Winti Spirit?" (Balutansky/Sourieau 44-52).

Surinamese who had chosen to emigrate: “De stad zit vol vreemdelingen. Surinamers die een mensenleven lang niet naar hun geboorteland zijn gekomen hebben de moeite genomen om het tribunaal te komen volgen” (29: The city is packed with strangers. Surinamese who haven’t been back in their homeland in decades, went through the trouble to return to follow the tribunal). The alienation of the exiles becomes obvious in this observation. Having left a country characterized by a more or less interactive diversity of ethnicities, they have continued the tradition of transculturation, or alternately cross-culturation,⁷ through their emigration. Their mobility is contrasted by the refusal to move of inhabitants such as Ilya, the protagonist of *Was Getekend*.

Cora herself never loses touch with her home during the journey which is temporary in its outset. Her main connection are the tape recordings, addressed to Herman, which break the individual chapters in *Lijken op Liefde*. In contrast to the exiles who now appear as strangers in Suriname, Cora feels stigmatized all along her travels until she is finally back in the Caribbean, albeit not in Suriname:

Nu begreep zij waarom zij het gevoel had haast thuis te zijn: bij haar aankomst was zij meteen ‘onopvallend’ geworden. Net als in Paramaribo. Zelfs de kruier had haar in het Papiamentu aangesproken. Ze had hem het hotel genoemd en toen was hij overgegaan op het Hollands met een: ‘Ai, mevrouw is van Suriname?!’

(202: Now she understood why she almost felt at home: at her arrival, she immediately became ‘inconspicuous’. Just like in Paramaribo. Even the porter had addressed her in Papiamentu. She gave him the name of her hotel, and he switched to Dutch with a: ‘Oh, madam is from Suriname?!’)

⁷ As with the concept of *métissage*, Glissant opposes that of transculturation to creolization, insisting that only the latter implies unpredictability (*Introduction* 126). In disagreement with him, I use creolization, trans- and crossculturation interchangeably.

This encounter occurs in Curaçao, where Cora has to transfer on her way from Miami to Paramaribo. The familiarity demonstrated by the airport employee supports the idea of unity within the region. Under the impression of her experiences in Europe and North America, inter-Caribbean borders lose their significance even for Cora. Like the theoreticians of concepts on Caribbeanness, she can now perceive of the region as a whole.

In a post-tribunal vision, as in that of the ideal creolized society, even the diverse ethnic groups appear in harmony. When someone jokes about the fact that after the trial, the people will deserve ‘bread and games’, a representative of the younger generation specifies: “‘Bananen en kaseko willen wij dan! Roti met dahl! Bami en Djaran Kepang! Kasiri!’” (23: Then we want bananas and *kaseko!* *Roti* with *dahl!* *Bami* and *Djaran Kepang!* *Kasiri!*). As in *Gewaagd leven*, but without repetition, the Creole terms are explained in an ongoing glossary. *Kaseko* and *djaran kepeng* are both dances, the former an Afro-Surinamese, the latter a Javanese one. While *rotis* originate in the Hindu tradition, and *bami* belong to Chinese cuisine, *kasiri* is an Amerindian drink. Roemer’s inclusion of several Creole languages, such as the Afro-Surinamese Sranan, the Hindustan Sarnami, or the *Bosnegers’* Saramaccan, does then not only emphasize the link with oral traditions, it also represents the coexistence of the different ethnicities.

Cora’s trip and her accommodation in the most expensive hotels, such as the Sheraton in Rotterdam or the Ritz in London, are paid with the recompense she had refused in 1974 for cleaning the sight of a murder, and which had therefore been deposited in a Dutch account for her. The victim of the murder had been An Andijk, the daughter of the wealthy Frisian farmer Adriaan Anton Andijk, and mistress of the influential politician Cor

Crommeling, who has meanwhile moved to Miami with his family. Cora had worked as housekeeper at the Crommelings until the wife, Dora, had made the job unbearable. Cora's other connection to the murder is that An Andijk, pregnant when she was killed, had also been dating Onno Sewa, Herman's stepbrother, who dies himself, shortly after An's death, on the street. Throughout the trilogy, the murders are never completely clarified. They are, in postmodern manner, merely explained from different perspectives. Cor Crommeling as well as Ilya's mother relate the versions the former's wife Dora told before she turned mute. In Miami, Cora hears from Cor how his wife manipulated Onno Sewa to stab An. In *Was Getekend*, Ilya learns from his mother how it had been an accident, because Onno wanted to rescue An from Dora, but killed the former instead of the latter. Both these versions consider Onno's own death a suicide, by a poison he knew through the healers in Herman's family. MM, Onno's blood brother, on the other hand believes in a complot his son Onno Mus, named after Onno Sewa because of his birth immediately after the latter's death, narrates in the final monologue in *Gewaagd leven*. In this closing *gesprek*, the reader is told that "die politicus had zijn minnares vermoord om een benoeming in het buitenland te kunnen krijgen" (*GL 237*: that politician killed his lover in order to be able to receive an appointment abroad). MM, accordingly, believes that his blood brother was also murdered because he knew too much about Crommeling's circumstances.

In *Lijken op Liefde*, Cor is described as the man "die kwaad kan doen zonder dat hem dat wordt aangerekend, omdat hij ooit zoveel goed had gedaan: hij had een politieke moord voorkomen" (98: who can afford to be evil because he has done so much good: he prevented a political murder). Crommeling is the hero of the so-called 'Killing-complot'. Roemer

chooses this appropriate name for the failed attempt upon a politician's life in 1950, in reference to the complot by Killinger and his comrades in 1912 (30). In their study of Suriname, Astrid Roemer and Gerlof Leistra address the Killinger-complot in their final chapter on historical background. Killinger was himself Hungarian and very outspoken against the Dutch colonizer. Along with seven Surinamese comrades, he was arrested to be executed for advocating a decolonization (Roemer/Leistra 130). The sentence was not carried out, but the incident served as a warning. By calling the post-war attempt 'Killing-complot' in *Lijken op Liefde*, Roemer emphasizes the brutality and ethical void which characterize politics in general. As Onno Mus puts it in his final *gesprek*: "Politiek ruikt naar bloedwraak. Ook in ons land" (*GL* 237: Politics reek like blood revenge. In our country as well). The politician whose murder Crommeling prevents resembles Johan Adolf Pengel, whose statue now resides in the Independence Square in Paramaribo. In *Lijken op Liefde* he is described as the dark-skinned "volksjongen" (working-class boy) who knew to shed light on the neglected everyday life of thousands of fellow citizens (100). Like Pengel, this leader of 'the people's party' survives an attempt upon his life. In opposition to the 'white' colonizer, he strives to unite Hindostanis, Javanese, and Chinese as "kinderen van méér vaders uit één moederland'!" (children of several fathers from one mother-country).

The analogy between family life and political scenario, which is at the center of my analysis of *Gewaagd leven*, is supported frequently by idiomatic expressions such as 'mother-country'. When Cora takes Onno Mus to the zoo in Antwerp, she addresses him in Sranan, only to realize that his alienation from his native culture has affected his language-use. Throughout *Gewaagd leven*, Onno is troubled by pain in his ears. During the accident

at the end of this first part of the trilogy, he becomes deaf. He learns to read lips, but only in Dutch, and Cora therefore remarks to herself that “deze jongeman is niet slechts zijn vaderland kwijtgeraakt maar heeft ook zijn ‘moedertong’ verloren” (92: this young man did not merely rid himself of his fatherland, but he has also lost his ‘mother-tongue’).

Special attention should in this context be paid to the role the different senses and their disturbances play with regard to perception and expression. While Dora Crommeling turns mute and Onno Mus deaf, it is the protagonist of *Was Getekend*, who suffers from an eye disease. The picture of the three monkeys who ‘see, hear, and speak no evil’ comes to mind. This ancient ‘Three-Monkey-Symbol’ celebrates the animals as divine messengers who report about humankind. It is significant that the ailments of Roemer’s characters are all explicitly psychologically conditioned. Dora’s muteness occurs after her involvement in An Andijk’s death. Onno’s deafness is related to the quarrels between his parents, and Ilya’s temporary blindness, which seems connected to his descent from a community affected with leprosy, is caused by sudden agitation. Various forms of psychosomatic pain thus symbolize the misery of the community, of the country and its international relations, in particular the one to its (former) colonizer, throughout the trilogy. At the end of *Lijken op Liefde* the reader is assured that “Surinamers konden het jaar tweeduisend ondanks hun inspanningen niet verschoond van de geschiedenis ingaan” (245: The Surinamese could not enter the year two-thousand carefree of history, despite their efforts). Absolution remains a spiritual myth as dialectic improvement remains one based on Enlightenment ideas. Representation then has to include, as Roemer’s does, the many variations on the scale between good and evil, between better and worse, as well as a variety of perspectives determined by agents such as

ethnicity, class, or gender. This chapter discusses the ways in which these agents function in Roemer's representation of the relationship between Suriname and the Netherlands. Whereas my analyses of *Gewaagd leven* and *Lijken op Liefde* deal with an analogy between private and public spheres and with transculturation respectively, I foreground representation itself with regard to *Was Getekend*.

Was Getekend (signed; 1998)

As Roemer's chapters are divided by *gesprekken* and *berichten* in *Gewaagd leven*, and by Cora's tape recordings in *Lijken op Liefde*, they are broken by inspections of a clock in *Was Getekend*. The time of narration consists of the hours Ilya spends anticipating the arrival of his children and his fiancé from the Netherlands. For this purpose he has set the clock the children, Junier⁸ and Rozemond, have given him on father's day. Its hourly progression is accompanied by Ilya's meditations on the passing of time, as well as by a so-called "fragment uit Holland" which presents an excerpt from the children's, the mother's, the grandmother's, or the fiancée's letters. Foetida, the fiancée and sister of MM's wife Mirte, had refused Ilya's proposal thirty years earlier because of her love to a married man. As a consequence, she accepted a job at the embassy in The Hague and commuted continuously. At her mother's seventy-fifth birthday she finally succumbs to Ilya's courtship,

⁸ Because 'Junior' is misspelled in the hospital, Ilya registers the son's name in the new version, an evocation of creolization.

only to die during the flight on which she was supposed to accompany the latter's children. The plane crashes near Zanderij airport, but it turns out that Junier and Rozemond had not been on board because their mother had changed her mind at the last minute. Sofia's departure had been prompted by Ilya's affair with a Dutch teacher, and their relationship is accordingly characterized by bad feelings, as is the one between the countries they then live in. The children had first remained with their father in Suriname, but the political situation eventually encourages the parents to move them to the Netherlands as well.

Sofia's mother Frieda has already been living in the Netherlands for many years when her daughter and grandchildren immigrate. Ilya's own mother Melani hails from the 'mother-country' and returns there after her husband's death. Unlike MM and Sofia, however, Ilya does not have Dutch ancestors, because Melani is not his biological mother. After several miscarriages, the Abracadabras decided to adopt their children. As I quote in my introduction, Ilya can call himself the son of the white nurse and the mulatto mechanic, his appearance is still that of a Chinese or an Amerindian. The story of his arrival at the Abracadabras is one of the many examples of storytelling prominent throughout the trilogy, but particularly emphasized in *Was Getekend*. It is related through the Franciscan Father Frans, with whom Melani has a son whom she, in turn, had to give away for adoption. According to Father Frans, a wandering tribe of Ojana brought him a baby in a basket and said what he understood to be one of the few things they knew in French: "Il-y-a" (126). Frans brings the baby to Melani because he knows that she had had to give away their own son. Ilya is nicknamed Pedrick De Derde A. (Abracadabra) when Melani marries Pedrick De Tweede A., son of an engineer from Boston and a *Bosneger*. Ilya is thus given the role of the

first son, whereas the other adopted children are often referred to collectively as “De Anderen” (The Others). Frans’ story is paralleled by a story about the Amazon women who rebel against patriarchy and allow their men to visit them only once a year. Of the children they successively give birth to, they keep only the girls. The boys are left in baskets to be discovered by the Caribs (233). However, the fact that Ilya was suffering from leprosy when Melani received him, leads his father to conclude that he has to be Chinese after all: “Indiane krijge geen lepra” (256: Native Americans are immune to leprosy).

To be sure, the ambiguity about Ilya’s descent as the one about An Andijk’s murder support postmodern concepts of ‘truth’, that is, the lack thereof, and serve a self-referential purpose at the same time. Ilya begins to create stories himself when his mourning for Onno Sewa leads to a very fascinating tale about Junier’s dead twin sister Clair being a rope dancer between ‘Here’ and ‘There’, between ‘Life’ and ‘Death’. At this point Ilya gives up on the idea that “de waarheid iets is voor mensenmonden” (250: the truth is something for the mouths of human beings). Among Ilya’s most cherished items is the volume of Grimm fairy-tales his mother used to read from especially when his eyes needed treatment at the hospital. Underlining the European presence, this volume is eventually complemented by a collection of Hans Christian Andersen’s stories Frieda sends for her grandchildren. Nevertheless, transculturation is not ignored in the context of storytelling either. Pedrick II, also referred to as Ped, knows tales from his mother’s African tradition which he praises to be the “oudste sproken van de wereld” (306: the oldest tales on earth).

The combination of different traditions can naturally not help but underline certain comparative aspects and the universality of many motives. One such motive, commonly

known as *Wanderlust*, directly relates to exile and, ultimately, transculturation. It is Junier, the adventurer, who explains his desire to live in a metropolis with the memory from his father's storytelling: "In al de sprookjes die pa voorgelezen heeft trekken zonen de wijde wereld in" (395: Sons explore the wide world in all the tales dad has read). Rozemond, on the other hand, leaves their home only reluctantly. It is the military regime, in particular Herman's suspicion of and winti-driven intuition about the political developments, which leads the children finally to join their mother in Amsterdam. Ilya's mother, in contrast, belongs to the pre-independence emigrants. "Het vuurwerk van de scheiding Suriname-Nederland" (325: The fireworks for the divorce between Suriname and the Netherlands) takes place on the day of Melani's departure. Wearing a symbolic orange hat, she returns to the 'mother-country', just as the ties are cut. To be sure, the fact that what originally was Melani's homeland already accommodates numerous fellow Surinamese, some of her adopted children among them, illustrates the futility of a clear-cut division. If there is evidence that "wie naar Holland vertrok getransformeerd kon terugkeren" (439: who departs for the Netherlands may return transformed), then the same applies to the reverse movement.

In *Global Diasporas* Robin Cohen discusses the Caribbean situation in the category "cultural diasporas." As Tabori distinguishes between refugees, asylum seekers, exiles, and emigrés in *The Anatomy of Exile*, so does Cohen differentiate between victim, trade, or imperial diasporas. Suggesting that "for postmodernists the collective identity of homeland and nation is a vibrant and constantly changing set of cultural interactions that fundamentally question the very ideas of 'home' and 'host'" (Cohen 127), Cohen points out the close interrelation if not interchangeability of concepts such as 'globalization', 'creolization' and

'transculturation'. While I agree that the three are obviously connected, I prefer to avoid confusion by stressing the origins of the latter two in Caribbean thought. As Sabine Hofmann points out in "Transculturation and Creolization: Concepts of Caribbean Cultural Theory," the latter two "have been introduced by Caribbean authors in an attempt to distance themselves from European concepts" (Hofmann 73). Far from evoking the out-dated model of center and periphery, let alone establishing a revised version of it, I nevertheless consider the strong anti-imperialist nature of creolization and trans- or crossculturation a crucial factor of distinction to the predominantly Euro/US-vision of globalization. To return to Cohen's discussion of Caribbean migration, I would like to reproduce how he situates the term 'diaspora' with regard to the Caribbean region. Cohen rightly addresses the "problem in seeing Caribbean peoples as any kind of diaspora "because they are not native to their area, since the Caribs and Arawaks "failed to survive the glories of Western civilization" (137). Related to this problem, Caribbeans can be associated with other diasporas, such as "the African victim diaspora, the Indian labour diaspora and the European imperial diasporas." Despite these objections, Cohen ultimately agrees with Stuart Hall who argues for the conceptualization of a Caribbean identity, which implies potential Caribbean diasporas. Like identities in general, for Hall, "diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (138). My own treatment of Caribbeanness should leave no doubt about my support of this viewpoint.

The uncertainties about the ancestors of Roemer's characters also illustrate the need for the dynamic trans- and re-formation indicated in Hall's idea of identity as well as, by implication, of diaspora. Such uncertainties are enforced by the lack, ignorance, and

challenge of written records. They are supported by vibrant oral traditions, as the ones referred to by Roemer. The confusion created about family trees culminates in the variety of information on the Mus parents. At the end of *Lijken op Liefde*, MM visits his dying father, the wealthy A.A. Andijk, who tells him that he is the son of Teresia Mus, “geboren op drieëntwintig januari negentieneendertig, aan de Van Idsinga-straat numero zeventien; mijn eerste kind; mijn zoon” (*LoL* 237: born on 23 January 1931, in Van Idsinga Street, #17; my first child, my son). In *Was Getekend*, on the other hand, Teresia appears as Frieda and claims that Sofia’s and Michael’s father was a Belarusian sailor and “geen Nederlander. Geen kolonist” (153: Not Dutch. Not a colonizer). Although Andijk’s confession resembles the precision of a written record, Frieda is still entitled to her own story, as is the author Roemer herself.

As adaptations of the Caliban figure have demonstrated prominently, language can be a powerful medium in master/slave relationships, in relationships between oppressor and oppressed. In my analysis of *Gewaagd leven* (risky life), the first part of Astrid Roemer’s Suriname Trilogy, I concentrate on an analogy of such relationships between public and private spheres. While the patriarch, representing the colonizer, can be the most powerful of the entire family, the parents are certainly dominant with regard to their children. In the colonial scenario, storytelling in written or oral form, can function as resistance on the part of the colonized by creating and emphasizing their own and unique tradition. In *Was Getekend* (signed), the final part of the trilogy, the author Roemer is capable of challenging the authority of the wealthy Frisian farmer Andijk because he is her own fictional character,

her own creation. In my discussion of the second part *Lijken op Liefde* (looks like love), I focus on the concept of cross- or transculturation and its relation to exile, as well as to the previously mentioned creolization, in order to show that the tradition advocated by Roemer is hybrid in its nature, which includes European elements by all means. The ethnic diversity of Suriname is represented throughout the trilogy on socio-political as well as on artistic levels. The texts are postmodern in that they present a multitude of perspectives on a number of issues without authorization of either one of them. Furthermore, Hegel's dialectics are challenged by the lack of moralization and resolution. The cleansing tribunal around which *Lijken op Liefde* revolves does not allow the Surinamese to enter the next millennium free of their past, yet it does suggest the importance of continued, similarly critical discourses.

III Movement to the North of the Americas

7. Pieces of a Canadian Mosaic: Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* and Émile Ollivier's *Passages*

Creolization is the ideal towards which we are working. I think the intellectuals and the writers are in the forefront of this movement, which has its political-economic counterpart in Caricom. [...] I think we would like to move to a notion of creole culture which is saying that we are a people who are unique in the world because there is no indigenous culture left in the Caribbean. We are all immigrants, and there is no superior culture [...] we want to work together to create a culture that is ours. And that's a shared culture. Creolization is something, I think, which respects all cultures.

- Olive Senior, interview with Marlies Glaser

I want to begin my analysis of migrations to the North of the Americas with those Caribbean writers who went to the continent's extreme North, to Canada. Some of these writers, like Sam Selvon, arrived there via Europe, via the so-called 'Old World' I discuss in the preceding part of this study. Others, like Trinidadian Dionne Brand, Guyanese Cyril Dabydeen, Haitian Émile Ollivier, Derek Walcott's twin brother Roderick, or Jamaican Olive Senior left the Caribbean to immediately reach that part of the so-called 'New World' which Voltaire infamously characterized as "quelques arpents de neige" a few centuries ago. Climatic conditions inspire numerous metaphors, especially in the poetry of Dionne Brand. Whether Brand writes that "ice invades/your nostrils in chunks" (Brand 1997, 43) in *Land to Light On* or that "snow is raping the landscape" (Brand 1983, 6), in *Winter Epigrams*, it

should be obvious that not so much the natural, but rather the cultural conditions generate the attraction this part of the world has for Caribbeans among other immigrant groups.

“Many times I would lie awake at nights and imagine being in Canada; but it was really ice-capped mountains that dominated my imagination” (Dabydeen 79), Cyril Dabydeen writes in the opening of “Outside El Dorado: Themes and Problems of West Indian Writing in Canada.” In this article, Dabydeen points out how the Canadian policy of multiculturalism supports publications by exiled Caribbean writers as it does those by other immigrants belonging to so-called ‘ethnic minorities’. He also notes how, on the other hand, there continues to be confusion in terms of cultural identifications. The latter sentiment is emphasized in his opening line: “I find it difficult always to understand myself in Canada.” Barbadian Austin Clarke, who considers himself “a black writer working in a white environment” (Clarke 59), analyzes the conflict between the theory of Canadian multiculturalism and its reality in “Exile.” One of the most radical opponents of this policy introduced in the late 1960s, under Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, is Trinidadian *malgré lui* Neil Bissoondath. The historical context of, as well as the controversies about the idea of a ‘Canadian mosaic’ are the subject of my first part of this chapter. The ideals and prospects of institutionalized multiculturalism, which I also consider in comparison to Glissantian creolization, are then at the center of my discussions of specific immigrant experiences expressed in Dionne Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here* and in Émile Ollivier’s *Passages*. Whereas Brand’s protagonists depart from the Anglophone Caribbean and convey mostly impressions of Toronto, Ollivier’s characters belong to the large group of Haitians in Montréal. The juxtaposition of the two novels thus also reflects the situation of

bilingualism, a phenomenon intricately linked to the introduction of multiculturalism in Canada.

In “On Collective Rights” Trudeau ventures that if his government “had tried to identify each of the minorities in Canada in order to protect all the characteristics which made them different, not only would [it] have been faced with an impossible task, but [it] would shortly have been presiding over the balkanization of Canada” (Trudeau 83). In “On Multiculturalism,” on the other hand, Trudeau states that “there are surely few policies potentially more disastrous for Canada than to tell all Canadians that they must be alike” (146). The multicultural society is idealized in the latter text because it “offers to every Canadian the opportunity to fulfil his or her own cultural instincts and to share those from other sources.” The resulting conceit of the Canadian ‘mosaic’ is popularly opposed to that of the US-American ‘melting pot’. Comparing the reality of the two giant national entities, one wonders whether there is indeed less melting of cultural traditions in the former or, likewise, less retained integrity for them in the latter model. As Augie Fleras and Jean Leonard Elliott put it in *Multiculturalism in Canada: The Challenge of Diversity*, the fusion of subordinate into dominant groups has, in reality, “not substantially altered the American race relations ‘pot’: it remains unmistakably white, capitalist, and liberal in orientation” (Fleras/Elliott). With regard to the ‘mosaic’, the two social scientists are cautious enough to separate “ideas and ideals” from the actual facts. The passage on the Canadian model is thus subtitled “The Mosaic Metaphor: Fact or Fiction?” One wonders whether Trudeau appears slightly too enthusiastic when he claims that the “mosaic pattern, and the moderations which

it includes and encourages, makes Canada a very special place.” Then again, as Fleras and Elliott suggest, one may be reminded that the dilemma caused by the vexing discrepancy between theory and practice, between the ideal and its reality, is a recurring one. As much as this dilemma reigns over Glissant’s idea of creolization, as much as it prevails in Martinus Arion’s “The Great Curassow Or the Road to Caribbeanness,” as much does it provoke the controversies about Canadian multiculturalism.

In *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*, Neil Bissoondath argues that Trudeau introduced the Canadian Multiculturalism Act merely to react to protests against his favoring the French traditions over those of other immigrant groups, that is to secure the majority’s sympathies for his party (Bissoondath 40). Trudeau’s preceding policy of bilingualism implied the recognition of both languages “of the Europeans who first settled what became Canada” (Trudeau 144). It demanded the equal recognition of English and French. In “Multiculturalism 10 Years Later,” Jean Burnet emphasizes that the policy of multiculturalism was to work within a bilingual framework. Whereas prior to the 1960s Canadian governments had promoted assimilation or “Anglo-conformity” (Burnet 235), a Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism was established in 1963 to reconcile the “two founding peoples” (236). As a result of protests by diverse ethnic interest groups, book 4 of the commission’s five-volume report was devoted to “other ethnic groups,” whereby ethnicity was defined as expressing “a sense of identity rooted in a common origin [...] whether this common origin is real or ‘imaginary’” (237). Culture was, in turn, to be perceived as “a way of being, thinking, and feeling [...] a driving force animating a significant group of individuals united by a common tongue, and sharing the same customs,

habits and experiences.” It should be obvious that the development from bilingualism to multiculturalism had to be a gradually progressing process. I therefore tend to agree with Ron Graham when he clarifies in his introduction to *The Essential Trudeau* that this process was an expression of the belief in “social tolerance, democratic pluralism, and individual fulfilment” (Trudeau xi) rather than campaign rhetoric.

In order to respond to Bissoondath’s criticism on the actual Act, I reproduce his own excerpt at this point:

3. (1) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to (a) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage. (Bissoondath 39)

Bissoondath provides a fairly long list of polemic quotations to support his critique. His major complaint is that the Act lacks definitions of the society it intends to create, as well as limits concerning the encouragement of cultural difference (42-3). Moreover, Bissoondath stresses the potential difficulty for individuals to identify with a certain cultural group (71). With regard to the first two points, I would argue that a country is lucky if it can avoid being governed by the kind of dictator it takes to prescribe a desired society constitutionally. As I explain in my analysis of Martinus Arion’s *De laatste vrijheid*, I do not agree with Glissant’s distinction between *métissage* and *créolisation*. In my understanding of both phenomena, the former is different from the latter only in that it commonly involves less diverse elements or influences and not in that it is predictable. Glissant’s distinction does, however, tackle a quality I would like to single out with regard to multiculturalism: the quality of unpredictability. I consider unpredictability equally relevant for both creolization

and multiculturalism. As Glissant has it in the definition I discuss in “Caribbeanness in *De laatste vrijheid*,” creolization occurs when heterogeneous elements relate without degradation or diminution, neither from without nor from within. This definition relates to another concern of his: the right to opacity. Likewise, a multicultural mosaic would ideally allow for the harmonious coexistence of an infinite number of traditions which, as they necessarily change and develop, always remain of equal importance in the process. Bissoondath is obviously right when he remarks that “a Canadian of Italian descent and a Canadian of Pakistani descent are likely to have more in common with one another than with Italians or Pakistanis not shaped by the cultural imperatives of this country” (71). He is, I would argue, at the same time missing the point that Canadians of Italian descent may still have more in common with other Canadians of Italian descent than with those of Pakistani descent. Neither does it matter that individual Canadians of Italian descent may prefer to socialize with Canadians of Pakistani descent. What matters is merely the preservation of the diversity. The fact that transients like Bissoondath himself, or his uncle V.S. Naipaul¹, chose to break their own bridges, should not lead them to demand the same of fellow migrants. Granted all its shortcomings, some of which I turn to below, I still favor a societal approach which supports communal cooperation over one which isolates individuals who believe in the survival of the fittest and therefore reject the preservation of uniting traditions.²

¹ On Naipaul’s attitude towards Caribbeanness and creolization see my “Walcott vs. Naipaul: Intertextuality in Frank Martinus Arion’s *De laatste vrijheid*” (*Journal of Caribbean Literature*, special issue on “The Caribbean That Is,” forthcoming).

² How much Bissoondath’s thinking is influenced by Darwinian ideology, shows in his attack on employment equity: “the best person gets the job” (95). “It is likely that,

“The stories of Canada and the West Indies have been intertwined for a long time, since the era when the two regions were pawns in the same colonial wars. The same treaties that shifted different parts of Canada back and forth between England and France shifted the West Indian islands from one European power to another” (Chodos 61), Robert Chodos writes in *The Caribbean Connection*. Chodos traces the relations between the two regions of the Americas in his extensive, albeit slightly dated study. He discusses the potential association of the Turks and Caicos with Canada, as well as Canadian tourists in the Caribbean, why Barbados’ nickname “little England” could also be “little Canada”, trade arrangements, and finally Caribbean immigration to Canada. In “Strangers in Paradise” Chodos writes that it was not until 1967 that changes in the Immigration Act allowed for the arrival of ‘non-whites’ from Asia, Africa, Central and South America, the Caribbean and Oceania. “This new immigration,” for Chodos, “has put the myth of Canadian tolerance to its most serious test” (221), a claim supported by the majority of Caribbean writers mentioned above.

Although I distance myself from Austin Clarke’s reasoning about the categories of exile, I turn to his short essay for an example of this “serious test” Chodos indicates. In “Exile,” Clarke claims that “we have a true spirit of multiculturalism here” (Clarke 62), only to deconstruct his own statement with an example from the annual Caribana Parade in Toronto. While he is enjoying the carnival’s calypso music, a fellow passenger on the same

initially at least, most of those hired will be white anglophone [sic] males, but in the long term, as the ‘designated groups’ acquire the necessary tools and qualifications, this too will change.” One is tempted to ask whose standards determine which tools and qualifications are necessary.

bus expresses hostility, thus ruining his pleasure as well as cultural experience. Clarke judges the woman's complaint as "a declaration of subordination to things which she wanted to be Canadian" (63). While the Caribbean associations and events such as the annual carnival may be sponsored due to an official policy of multiculturalism, they are not immune to the factual limitations of multicultural tolerance, especially with regard to race. As Rinaldo Walcott puts it in *Black Like Who?*, "the impossibility of imagining blackness as Canadian is continually evident even as nation-state policies like multiculturalism seek to signal otherwise" (R. Walcott 42). Walcott cautions that the term *multicultural* is of little help as long as it means, as it does in everyday usage, "that all those who are not white (i.e., of European descent) represent the ethnic mix" (79). In order to get closer to the ideal of multiculturalism, cultural hierarchies would have to be eliminated.

Among the consequences of factual limitations to official policies is the ghettoization of cities. Clarke holds that the privilege of immigrants in Canada is that they become Canadians, whereas the Caribbeans in England, such as the characters of Sam Selvon's *Moses Trilogy* were never considered Englishmen. Yet, Selvon's mapping of 'Black London' is paralleled in Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* as well as in Ollivier's *Passages*. I will analyze first the former and then the latter in light of such mappings as well as in light of multiculturalism. The comparison of the two very diverse texts will show that however great the difference between the two cities in question, Toronto and Montréal, obviously is, the experiences of what still are 'ethnic minorities', for lack of a better term, seem (un)surprisingly similar.

In Another Place, Not Here

Dionne Brand's first novel, *In Another Place, Not Here*, revolves around the lives of two protagonists, "two migrant black women," as Rinaldo Walcott puts it. Verlia moves and legally immigrates to Canada at seventeen. Elizete, who meets and falls in love with her during Verlia's journey back to the Caribbean, travels to Toronto as a visitor after Verlia's death. When Verlia arrives with her revolutionary ideas on the nameless Caribbean island, Elizete still believes that she was "born to clean Isaiah's house and work cane" (4). While Verlia's thought and speech have been shaped by her experiences abroad, the more traditional Elizete speaks in a stylized patois. Toward the end of the novel, when the perspectives of the two mingle, Verlia realizes how "when they'd first met she thought that she was the one who knew everything, and how she was going to change this country woman into a revolutionary like her," but how then "something made her notice that she was the one who had doubts and what she was saying she merely said but Elizete felt and knew" (202). At the beginning of the narration, in Elizete's account of their meeting, on the other hand, Elizete presents herself first very skeptical about Verlia's suggestion that black people could cooperate: "Her mouth too fast, she tongue flying ahead of sheself. [...] They tell me she is for the revo, that she is for taking all the land and giving it to people who work it all their life" (13). Soon, however, Elizete develops a passionate love for "Verl," as she calls her, and Isaiah, who had tortured Elizete with stories of the woman who left him, who had whipped her when she tried to run away, becomes insane when he encounters his wife "lying underneath Verlia" (5). After Verlia's suicide during the revolution, Elizete decides to find

her dead lover's friend Abena in Toronto.

Elizete arrives in Toronto without any contact, but with a sense of adventure: "Today she was Columbus, today the Canadian National was not the Canadian National yet and the Gladstone was not a bar and nothing had a name yet, nothing was discovered" (47). The sarcasm of this comparison between the female cane worker from the so-called 'Third World' and the privileged male European traveler is revealed instantaneously. Elizete's Canadian world remains tiny:

Months and she still hadn't heard about Yonge Street because she hadn't looked that way, just stared at the hank of Canadian National and the factories beyond. Nobody told her about Yonge Street or Avenue Road or Yorkville. Nobody told her what wasn't necessary or possible or important for a woman from nowhere. She'd been told about kitchens and toilets and floors and sewing machines and cuffs and rubber and paint spray and even been offered some sidewalks but nobody told her about any place she wouldn't fit in. (49)

About two decades after Verlia's arrival in Toronto, and unable to find Abena at first, Elizete does not even make it to the 'Black Toronto' Brand describes in great detail in her essay "Bathurst." Continuously living "on the street" (54), Elizete struggles to survive with the kind of odd jobs indicated in the quotation above. In her isolation she is struck by the anonymity of the city: "If you live in this city, nobody knows anybody so you could be anybody" (66). Besides the anonymity which renders her poverty even more unbearable, it is the urban pace which seems to alienate her most: "Here she began to love whatever held everyone still, like heavy rain or snow storms or bus strikes" (67).

Verlia, on the other hand, is able to make herself a home in the Bathurst neighborhood at her own arrival in the late 1970s. Having left her aunt and uncle's place in Sudbury, she lacks Elizete's sense of anonymity as well as the latter's fatigue, caused by the

lover's death. Verlia immediately gets involved with the Black Power Movement. While Elizete is driven by her private mourning, Verlia is driven by the public cause. While the former feels isolated, the latter enjoys the fact that the city never rests, that there is a brother- and sisterhood to identify with. Like every movement, Verlia's has developed symbols of appearance. Signs of belonging are bell-bottom jeans, dashikis, and Afros. Verlia, a militant member of the movement displays an aggressiveness which is expressed in the way "that she walks, a way her Afro demands, straight up, Black power straight up" (158). In her aggressive spirit Verlia also claims that "it doesn't matter that it's Toronto or a country named Canada. Right now that is incidental, and this city and this country will have to fit themselves into her dream" (159). With the political developments at the time in mind, however, the reader can conclude that it is not accidental at all that Verlia finds herself and the movement in the city Toronto in the country Canada, a country which had made room for 'non-white' immigrants only a decade earlier, but which was now establishing the policy of multiculturalism outlined above. It was in October 1971 that Trudeau informed the House of Commons about the acceptance of all the recommendations contained in volume IV of the Royal Commission's reports (Fleras/Elliott 281). In his statement Trudeau emphasizes that "for although there are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other. No citizen or group of citizens is other than Canadian, and all should be treated fairly." One should expect the kind of political climate aspired to in statements like these, to be conducive to confrontations of issues concerned with racism and discrimination, especially in urban centers where diverse cultural influences are more likely to interact with one another.

Verlia's fictitious experience parallels the author's own account of Toronto in "Bathurst." In this essay, included in *Bread out of Stone*, Brand relates her own arrival in Canada. Also seventeen, she was a supporter of the Civil Rights Movement and of Black Consciousness. Brand reflects Verlia's aggressive spirit as well as her energy here. Malcom X's strategies are explicitly favored over those advocated by Martin Luther King. While the essay thus addresses parallels to the movement in the US, it concentrates on the development of the Canadian environment between the author's arrival in the 1970s and the writing of her essay about twenty-five years later. While the Bathurst/Bloor area was then "the only oasis of Blacks in the miles and miles to be learned of in the white desert that was the city" (Brand 1994, 68-9), people now seem to make more room and "the city is colourising beautifully" (77). In Verlia's vein, Brand credits the people's own struggle for these changes, rather than administrative policies.

In *Black Like Who?* Rinaldo Walcott traces Brand's continuous redrawing and remapping "the oppressive landscapes of Canada" through short stories such as "At the Lisbon Plate" or "Train to Montreal." Walcott calls *In Another Place* "a tour de force which recharts this project" (R. Walcott 51). Like Selvon adds his "Black London" to the British literary landscape, Brand adds "Black Toronto" to the Canadian one. While Selvon concentrates, however, on the experiences of male, to some extent chauvinist, migrants, Brand's characters vividly portray their lesbian relationship. In an interview with Frank Birbalsingh Brand addresses her debt to other lesbian writers like Adrienne Rich, and especially black ones like Audre Lorde, who took on the responsibility to offer alternatives to misrepresentations: "because lesbian sexuality is either not represented at all, or very

badly represented by heterosexuals” (Birbalsingh 135). As Walcott rightly points out, Verlia’s activism is guided by her feminism, which is her “critique of black patriarchal nationalism and heteronormative politics” (R. Walcott 48).

Brand’s protest aims thus not only at white oppression but also at male oppression within communities and organizations of African-Americans. In the interview with Birbalsingh she emphasizes that Caribbean writing is “not just dominated by male writers but dominated by themselves as subject in it, despite the evidence of their own lives” (Birbalsingh 133). In the same interview, Brand identifies herself explicitly not only as “feminist,” but also as “Marxist,” despite recent developments in former communist countries: “I still believe that the people who do most of the work in the world get very few benefits [...]. General suffering, starvation, people working for low wages - those things still exist and need redress” (126). As the discussion of *In Another Place* as well as of “Bathurst” show, her own redress or address is often characterized by militancy, albeit as Birbalsingh is right in pointing out “a sober militancy” (135).

Like Brand’s own voice in “Bathurst,” Verlia’s sentiment in the novel swings between hopefulness and frustration. When she discusses the segregation between the white or opaque, and the “other,” the colored parts of the city, she suggests that the latter is “growing steadily” at the borders of the former. Yet in the course of her stay in Toronto, in the country that used to be the destination of the Underground Railroad, a destination for escaped slaves, her work for the Movement causes disturbances of her memory: “She was deep in thirteen winters when she observed the stringiness which had overtaken her mind” (192). It is at this point that she decides to go back to the Caribbean, where she meets Elizete

at work in the cane field. In Verlia's diary, the Caribbean finally becomes more tangible. Without naming the particular island, Verlia identifies a number of its landmarks, such as Caicou, Choiselles, or Morne Diablo (211). In the first reproduced entry she realizes that the Caribbean "always devastates" her (205). Referring to C.L.R. James, and quoting from Cayetano Carpio and Che Guevara, Verlia describes a scenario which might well reflect some of Brand's experiences in Grenada. As Brand explains in the interview with Birbalsingh, she had gone to Grenada with the Canadian Universities' Service Overseas (CUSO) in February 1983, seven months before the island's invasion (Birbalsingh 126). In the novel, it happens during the invasion that Verlia jumps off a cliff.

Like the belief in prospects throughout the novel, even Verlia's suicide appears ambiguous. It devastates in that it means the end to her revolutionary struggles, yet it is given the sense of a liberation in that she is seen "flying" off the cliff. This flight is taking her to a seemingly better place altogether. "She's in some other place already, less tortuous, less fleshy," is the closing line of the novel. Verlia's death can thus be situated in a long tradition of suicides during rebellions, a tradition which goes back to the Caribs in the Caribbean. Some of the Caribs chose to jump off cliffs rather than submit to or be killed by the colonizers.³ Another suicide which protested against invasion was that of Louis Delgrès in Guadeloupe. One of the Caribbean heroes listed in Glissant's *Les Indes* and also celebrated in Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil*, Delgrès killed himself through explosives during the taking of

³ For details on this mass suicide in Grenada, which was caused by Du Parquet, proprietor of Martinique, see Philip P. Boucher's *Cannibal Encounters: Europeans and Island Caribs, 1492-1763* (Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

Matouba at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Another example would be Haiti's Henri Christophe, who led a black army with Dessalines against Napoleon's attempt to restore slavery, but despaired in the civil war against Pétion, of what became the Dominican Republic. All of these suicides, including Verlia's, seem to have responded to invasions. The hopelessness of the (post/neo)-colonial situation seems, however, symbolized in general by a death metaphor. Émile Ollivier's *Passages*, which addresses the Haitian dilemma in particular, also revolves around death, albeit not suicide. Whereas Verlia kills herself in the Caribbean, returned from her migration to Canada, two of Ollivier's main characters die abroad, in Miami, one of the centers of the Haitian diaspora.

Passages

In Another Place is told by two narrators, Elizete and Verlia, whose viewpoints are presented mainly in third-person narration with only brief interruptions of first-person perspectives. Throughout *Passages*, its narrator Régis is granted not merely the first-person privilege, but furthermore omniscient qualities. Commenting in the manner of a magi, he relates the story of Brigitte, Amédée's widow. Amédée is the aged leader of those inhabitants of Port-à-l'Écu who decide to leave for Miami because their country is disaster-ridden to an extent that it is about to disappear completely. Port-à-l'Écu, as Régis cautions the reader early on in his narration, is not marked on any maps because "Port-à-l'Écu n'existe plus" (13). Exploitation by a capitalist economy, represented by Standard Fruit, is held equally

responsible with natural catastrophes for the process of destruction. This process is continued in a metonymic manner during the ‘passage’ to Miami. Only twenty-two of the sixty-seven people on board survive. Amédée’s death in Miami is paralleled by that of his counterpart Normand, who has left Haiti much earlier, during the terrors of the Duvalier regime. As Anne Malena interprets in *The Negotiated Self*, it is striking that the young intellectual Normand should leave during the dictatorship of Duvalier Senior, also known as Papa Doc, while the old Amédée is forced to depart under the reign of Duvalier Junior, or Baby Doc. Malena continues that “this ironic crossing of the ages of oppressor and oppressed points to the cyclical nature of oppression in Haiti” (Malena 122).

The first of the Caribbean islands to become independent, in 1804, as the first so-called ‘Black Republic’, the second republic in the Americas after the United States, Haiti is today the most devastated place in the region. It is therefore also characterized by large waves of emigration, and many Haitians try to flee, like Amédée, as *boat people* to Miami.⁴ Another popular destination for Haitians is Québec, and specifically Montréal. It is here that Normand’s mistress Amparo visits his widow Leyda to recount the days that lead to Normand’s death. Although in *Passages*, Amparo’s as well as Brigitte’s stories reach the reader through Régis, the structure of two female storytellers resembles that of *In Another Place*. Much less intricate than in the latter novel, however, Amparo’s and Brigitte’s narratives are, as Malena puts it “linked through death in an attempt to tell a common experience of tragedy, to explore and express ‘l’insupportable’” (128). The tragedy is the

⁴ See Malena’s study and her references for a discussion of the intolerable conditions of Haitian *boat people* in the United States (Malena 126).

arrival of forty-three dead bodies on the coast of Miami, as well as the following deaths of Amédée and Normand. Like *In Another Place*, *Passages* does thus by no means limit its setting to one specific place. As Malena has it, “Haitian exile is part of a network of global economic and historical relations that are changing definitions of nation-states and imposing a diasporic perspective on cultural identity” (120). The idea of displacement is emphasized by the characters’ movements between an unidentified Caribbean island and Toronto in *In Another Place*, and between Haiti, Miami, and Montréal in *Passages*.

As I indicate above, Montréal is mainly presented in the latter novel as Normand’s widow Leyda’s environment. Walking to her appointment with Amparo, Leyda maps important landmarks of the city. She turns left at Rue Sherbrooke, past the Old Orchard Ice Cream, and across the park which once witnessed the fights between young Blacks from the southern part of Rue Sherbrooke and young Whites from its north. Slowly, Leyda has approached the ‘Caribbean’ neighborhood:

Elle contourna le petit kiosque vivement coloré, vestige du dernier carnaval antillais. Le quartier avait résonné de rythmes endiablés, de spectacles insolites, de liesses souveraines. Leyda gardait en mémoire l’image de toutes couleurs de peaux se côtoyant dans une débauche de costumes bigarrés, une foule riant haut et fort, une horde de corps que des coulées de sueur font luire au soleil; [...] Et l’on tape sur tout ce qui peut résonner: bouteilles vides, casseroles ébréchées, vieux bidons d’essence, *steelbands* d’un jour; une cacophonie, du bruit qui soudain devient rythmes, méringue, reggae, calypso, rabordaille, rythmes célèbres qui, après avoir fait le tour du monde, échouaient là, dans ce parc de Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, incitant à des déhanchements, des assauts de fantaisie. (30)

(She passed the little colorful kiosk, reminiscent of the last Caribbean carnival. The quarter had echoed wild rhythms, extraordinary spectacles, and the utmost jubilations. In her memory Leyda kept the image of all skin colors mingling with a show of multi-colored costumes, a high and loud laughing mass, a hoard of bodies whose streams of sweat glisten in the sun; [...] And one bangs on everything that rings: empty bottles, chipped pots and pans, old gas canisters, *steelbands* of a day;

a cacophony, a noise which suddenly turns into rhythm, meringue, reggae, calypso, rabordaille, famous rhythms which ended up there, after having gone around the world, in this park Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, suggesting movements of the hip, attacks of the imagination.)

Like nearly every city in Canada, Montréal witnesses the annual Caribbean carnival Austin Clarke describes in “Exile.” Although restricted resources as well as temporal and geographic distance engender a more or less apparent loss of authenticity, Leyda’s description leaves no doubt about her nostalgia. It is in great detail that she describes the spectacle, emphasizing the multitude of colors, sounds, and rhythms. Passion and joy seem to dominate Leyda’s memory of this very sensual celebration of her native culture. While the quotation above addresses mainly vision and hearing, the satisfaction of smell and taste are subject of what follows in Leyda’s and subsequently Régis’ description:

Et les odeurs! Des matrones, plantes plantureuses aux yeux rouges de plusieurs veilles de laborieuses préparations, plantes parvenues à maturité sans que l’on puisse en préciser l’âge, distribuent victuailles et rafraîchissements: sandwiches à l’avocat, pâtés relevés de poivre, d’ail, de piments, de clou de girofle; des punchs exotiques, bouquets de cannelle, de basilic, de muscade, de vanille, de fruits de la passion: irruption de la Caraïbe des origines; pulsions sauvages de la violence lascive des Tropiques, tout cela vibrait sous le regard médusé des archéo-Québécois qui auraient pris panique, n’était-ce la présence massive et rassurante de la flicaille prête à toute éventualité. (31)

(And the odors! Matrons, voluptuous women with eyes red from many nights of work-intensive preparations, plants that have reached maturity without predictable age, distribute food and refreshments: avocado sandwiches, pâté with pepper, garlic, hot peppers, clove; exotic punches, cinnamon, basil, nutmeg, vanilla, passion fruit: invasions of the original Caribbean; savage drives of lustful tropical violence, all of this vibrated under the scrutiny of the arch-Québécois who would have panicked, had there not been the massive and calming presence of cops prepared for every eventuality.)

In this passage, Régis’ voice has obviously taken over Leyda’s reminiscences, not only in the description of the women, but also in the commentary on official Québécois reactions to

the spectacle. As Clarke indicates in his essay, the ideal of multicultural tolerance can sometimes be far removed from Canadian reality. Riots connected to the Caribana parade have in the past even led to murders, as in Toronto in the late 1990s. While Toronto is probably the most obviously multicultural of all the Canadian cities, Montréal adds another dimension to the problem with its location in Québec.

In “Attitudes and Responses to Multiculturalism” Fleras and Elliott point out that Québec is the least responsive to the policy of multiculturalism, introduced by a prime minister of Québécois origin: “There is some validity to the assertion that English-speaking Canadians approach federal multiculturalism with an air of benign indifference, whereas the Québécois tend to view it as little short of an insult to their integrity and a threat to their existence” (Fleras/Elliott 120). Nevertheless, at least according to Paul Dejean’s *The Haitians in Québec*, an invaluable source of statistics, Haitian culture is thriving as long as it is less intrusive than in the form of the carnival described above. Immigrant teachers have introduced French West Indian as well as African literature. Haitian books are in stock in many bookstores. A Montréal publishing house specializes in publications by Haitian authors who write socio-economic studies (Dejean 66). There are research projects on Haitian ethnomusicology as well as on theater employing voodoo elements. And Haitian dance and painting can be enjoyed as much as authentic cuisine (67).

Ollivier seems to support the idea of a more positive, certainly promising environment in the Canadian city by ending the novel with an epilogue for Leyda. In this epilogue Régis emphasizes that it is Leyda who emerges cured from the meeting with Amparo. Unlike her husband Normand, who was driven by his restlessness, Leyda appears

to have settled in Montréal. This fact is underlined by Régis' date with Leyda. At the end of the text the two are seen in the urban center together. Although the settings in *Passages* include Haïti and Miami besides Montréal, multicultural Canada still functions as its central space. As Malena points out, Normand's and Amparo's first meeting takes place in the federal capital, in Ottawa. Because Amparo had departed from Vancouver and Normand from Montréal, this meeting symbolizes "the union between East and West" (Malena 142) and thus supports the idea of bilingualism, the concept which serves as framework for multiculturalism.

Comparative only to a small extent, my analyses of Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* and Émile Ollivier's *Passages* have shown that despite the ideal of the Canadian multicultural mosaic, racism and discrimination prevail in both the mainly English- as well as in the French-speaking part of the country. The theoretical model seems one more time defeated by its factual reality. Do I agree, then, with Neil Bissoondath that the multiculturalism policy should be eliminated altogether? On the contrary. As I explain in the first part of this chapter, I still prefer an idealistic model which has the potential to encourage continuous approaches to its ideal from the complete lack of such efforts. With Augie Fleras and Jean Leonard Elliott I think that "multiculturalism is an imperfect mechanism, but one with considerable potential to address many of the issues arising from political, demographic, and social changes" (Fleras/Elliott 278). Despite their criticisms, both novels also offer positive prospects in the end. Elizete's lover Verlia jumps off a cliff in despair of the US-invasion, which reacts to a revolution on their Caribbean island. In search of Verlia's

Canadian partner Abena, Elizete first experiences only poverty, alienation, isolation, and discrimination. In the end, however, she does encounter Abena and the possibility of a future together. Similarly, Leyda's husband Normand dies in Miami because he had become restless in Montréal. His mistress Amparo visits Leyda in Montréal in order to rid herself of the trauma of Normand's death. The result of her visit, however, is that Leyda can finally let go of the painful past and look forward to the meeting with her friend, the narrator Régis who understands that "Leyda venait de donner à Normand sa vraie mort: l'oubli" (171: Leyda was giving Normand his true death: forgetfulness). At the end of the tragedy, Haitians urged to leave their homes, more than twenty dead *boat people*, Normand as well as Amédée's deaths in Miami, there is a hopeful outlook at Leyda's home in Montréal: "Sous les pas de Leyda, après la disparition de Normand, s'était ouvert un gouffre insondable. Aujourd'hui, elle remontait vers la clarté" (After Normand's disappearance, an inexplicable abyss had opened underneath Leyda's steps. Today, she climbed back into the light).

8. Choosing a Language: Polyglossia and the Caribbean Writer

‘Onthoofd de moordenaars op het Onafhankelijkheidsplein op 1
juli van het jaar 2000 en geeft het volk daarna brood en spelen!’
Maar een van de jongelui riep uitbundig: ‘Bananen en kaseko
willen wij dan! Roti met dahl! Bami en Djaran Kepang! Kasiri!’

- Astrid Roemer, *Lijken op Liefde*

None of the displaced writers I have discussed so far, migrated to a place whose official language was different from that of their homes in the Caribbean. Anglophone Caribbean writers tend to move to Great Britain, like Sam Selvon, to the United States, like Jamaica Kincaid, or to the Anglophone part of Canada, like Dionne Brand. Francophone Caribbeans migrate to France, like Daniel Maximin and Édouard Glissant, or to Québec, like Émile Ollivier. And Dutch Caribbeans move to the Netherlands, like Astrid Roemer and Frank Martinus Arion. The fact that some of them also return, sometimes permanently, is the subject of my final chapter. The present chapter concentrates on those authors whose displacement involves the confrontation with several languages, as well as on their choice of one of these languages over another with regard to their writing. As in the scope of my entire study, displacement includes here the situation within the region, which refers to polyglossia in the Caribbean, as well as actual emigration, which mainly refers to the many Hispanics in the United States.

Bakhtin defines ‘polyglossia’ as “the simultaneous presence of two or more national languages interacting within a single cultural system” (Bakhtin 431). If one considers, as I

suggest in my introduction, the Caribbean as one cultural system, then the entire area is one characterized by polyglossia. I am, however, more concerned with smaller spaces in the present context. While the official language in St. Lucia is English, for example, French Creole is also widely spoken. Although Derek Walcott writes in English, he occasionally includes French Creole in his texts. The question whether English patois and/or creoles are merely ‘dialects’ or indeed ‘languages’, is beyond the scope of this study. Although I provide a few perspectives on the status of creoles below, I generally propose that for the purpose of my present argument, I take them to be the latter. I begin this chapter with a discussion of the linguistic diversity within the region, to then concentrate on writers like Rosario Ferré and Edwidge Danticat, who write in English in addition to, or instead of in their mother tongues, Spanish and French respectively. Finally I provide an analysis of Ana Lydia Vega’s “Pollito Chicken,” a short story written in stylized ‘Spanglish’, which aptly illustrates the linguistic expression of physical displacement.

In his study on Aimé Césaire, Gregson Davis writes that “like the rest of the Caribbean archipelago, the island of Martinique is fundamentally bilingual. Along the standard languages of the European colonizers (e.g. English, French, Spanish, Dutch) there exist throughout the region various vernaculars that are now globally referred to as ‘creoles’” (Davis 1998, 179). Davis continues to assure that Martinican creole is “a well-developed language in its own right, with a complex grammar and large lexicon.” The definitions provided by George Lang in *Entwisted Tongues: Comparative Creole Literatures* suggest that Davis’ perception of Martinican Creole equally applies to all existing creoles, not all of

which are found in the Caribbean region:

Creoles originate when one or several overlapping generations create a mother tongue which never existed before. [...] What distinguishes creoles [from pidgins] is that they arise when a population shifts from one language to another without normal transmission of a grammatical core. Typically, this rupture in the passage of language from one generation to the next occurs during periods of dislocation in which a population is cast into a radically new context, deprived, as during plantation slavery, of social and family structures and forced to acquire a working vernacular under duress. (Lang 2000, 2-3)

The newly created language, Creole, can thus function as a protest tool against the language of the oppressor. The colonial imposition of European languages has been widely discussed, for example by Stephen Greenblatt in *Learning to Curse*, or by Peter Hulme in *Colonial Encounters*. Both these scholars depart from a rereading of Shakespeare's *Tempest*, in which Caliban exclaims: "You taught me language, and my profit on't/Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you/For learning me your language!"

Several radical writers, such as Raphaël Confiant and Frank Martinus Arion, have thus chosen the Creole languages for their texts, at least at certain stages of their careers. As Lang puts it: "Although writing in creoles dates back to the eighteenth century, many contemporary writers would like to emulate the popular speech of classes and social groups with perceived revolutionary potential" (149).¹ Throughout chapters three and four, I emphasize the role the *Éloge de la créolité* plays in this context. Nevertheless, as my discussions show, even the more radical writers have recently taken to using the colonizers' languages as their main medium, and refer to the creoles only occasionally. Martinus Arion's Papiamentu vocabulary in *De laatste vrijheid* is restricted to terms of endearment and to

¹ See Lang's study for discussions of contemporary texts written in creoles.

curses. Confiant insists that the *Éloge* succeeded because its concept of *créolité* “has helped to make Antillians aware of their existence in the world” (L. Taylor 141), although this existence does not have to be represented continuously in the respective creoles.

Other writers, such as Derek Walcott, never completely rejected the European languages. In “What the Twilight Says” Walcott writes that “both the patois of the street and the language of the classroom hid the elation of discovery” (*Twilight* 4). In my comparative analysis of *Omeros* and *Les Indes*, I explain Walcott’s idea of ‘Adam’s task’, the task of naming, thus discovering as well as creating. In the above quoted essay, Walcott insists that all the available registers and vernaculars should be exploited to this end. The languages referred to include creoles as well as the European languages. Reminding of the irrational elements in artistic as well as any form of occupation, Walcott continues: “But one did not say to his Muse, ‘What kind of language is this that you’ve given me?’ as no liberator asks history, ‘What kind of people is that that I’m meant to enoble?’” (9). Defending his own work against accusations of assimilation and betrayal, Walcott emphasizes the undeniable and unrejectable presence of the languages imposed by the colonizers:

Our bodies think in one language and move in another, yet it should have become clear, even to our newest hybrid, the black critic who accuses poets of betraying dialect, that the language of exegesis is English, that the manic absurdity would be to give up thought because it is white. In our self-tortured bodies we confuse two graces: the dignity of self-belief and the courtesies of exchange. For us the ragged, untutored landscape seems as uncultured as our syntax. (31)

Obviously, Walcott nowhere disavows the creoles. Neither does he rule out the possibility that they could become languages “of exegesis.” He merely stresses the current benefit of the European languages.

In chapter one I mention a special edition of Walcott's poetry which is illustrated by Romare Bearden's paintings. In his introduction to this edition Joseph Brodsky writes: "If at times Walcott writes in Creole patois, it's not to flex his stylistic muscle or to enlarge his audience but as a homage to what he spoke as a child" (Walcott 1983, ix). Little concerned with the linguists' distinction between French Creole and English patois, or 'Patwa', Brodsky is right in emphasizing that there are numerous examples of both to be found throughout Walcott's poetry. "Sainte Lucie," for example, is an earlier homage to the island. It begins with a long meditation on St. Lucia's environment, recounting the French names of villages such as Laborie, Choiseul, Vieuxfort, or Dennery. This meditation is followed by an enumeration of apple types which can be associated with other islands, and the lyrical 'I' admits: "I have forgotten/what pomme for/the Irish potato" (CP 310). A few stanzas further, reactions of fellow St. Lucians are echoed: "Oh, so you is Walcott?/you is Roddy brother?" (312). Celebrating the area's oral tradition, part three of the poem presents a "St. Lucian conte, or narrative Creole song, heard on the back of an open truck travelling to Vieuxfort, some years ago," and the translation of this song is provided in the following part four, the second to the last part of the poem. The inclusion of French Creole and Patwa thus emphasizes the diversity of St. Lucian culture. It serves a similar purpose in *Omeros*.

The first line of the epic poem I analyze in my first chapter, is part of Philoctete's direct speech: "This is how, one sunrise, we cut down them canoes" (3). As in Sam Selvon's novels or in Dionne Brand's representation of Elizete's voice, the Patwa is transferred into a stylized, literary version here. French Creole is usually accompanied with translations, as in the following argument between Achille and Hector:

“*Touchez-i, encore: N’ai fendre choux-ous-ou, salope!*”
“Touch it again, and I’ll split your arse, you bitch!”
“*Moi j’a dire - ‘ous pas prêter un rien. ‘Ous ni shallope,*

‘ous ni seine, ‘ous croire ‘ous ni choeur campêche?’”
“I told you, borrow nothing of mine. You have a canoe,
and a net. Who you think you are? Logwood Heart?”

“*‘Ous croire ‘ous c’est roi Gros Îlet? Voleur homme!*”
“You think you’re king of Gros Îlet, you tin-stealer?”
Then in English: “I go show you who is king! Come!” (15-6)

The last stanza of this excerpt suggests a casual switching between the two registers. Incredibly enough, Walcott succeeds in integrating both languages together in the *terza rima* of this text. At other instances, he employs the knowledge of the creole to express a pun in ‘standard English’. When Helen visits Maud to beg for money, Maud greets her in British English: “‘So, how are you Helen?’” (124). Helen’s response reflects the creole *Mwen là* (je suis là): “‘I dere, Mdam’” (I am there). This translation is turned into a pun when the narrator continues: “At last. You dere. Of course you dare,/come back looking for work ...” Even without the knowledge of the creole version, the reader understands the transformation of Helen’s speech. Helen’s as well as Achille’s and Hector’s characters certainly appear more distinct and lively through the inclusion of their Creole and Patwa. Similarly, the vision and representation of their environment becomes more complete.

Astrid Roemer employs creoles in a less playful way, but to the same effect in her Suriname Trilogy. As my epigraph shows, Roemer represents all the different ethnicities interacting in former Dutch Guiana. She explains the various creoles, the Sranan, the Sarnami of the Hindustanis, and the Saramaccan of the *bosnegers*, as well as terminology used by the Amazon Indians, in a glossary especially in the second part of the trilogy. As in

“Sainte Lucie,” a recurrent song in Sranan emphasizes the importance of oral traditions (*LoL* 19). Like Walcott, Roemer thus expresses a specifically Caribbean consciousness. As J. Michael Dash puts it in “Psychology, Creolization, and Hybridization”: “the process of linguistic creolization, of the free and spontaneous intermingling of words and ideas, is seen as exemplary of the Creole sensibility which radically rethinks notions of originality, genealogy, and mimicry” (Dash 1996, 50). One may want to add ‘languages’ to the “words and ideas” that intermingle.

The examples by Walcott and Roemer shall suffice to illustrate the literary representation of the coexistence of creoles, such as Sranan, Papiamentu, or French Creole and the European languages English, French, Spanish, and Dutch in the Caribbean. From this linguistic form of displacement within the region, I turn to the language switching which occurs when writers from the non-Anglophone part of the area move to the United States. In this context, a special role is played by Puerto Rico, which constitutionally belongs to the United States, and which cultivates two European languages, namely Spanish and English, as its official languages. Puerto Rico seems uniquely situated within or in-between three cultural systems: Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States.

Language Switching

The fact that artists, in particular artists in exile, chose a language other than their mother tongue as their medium is certainly not a uniquely Caribbean or ‘New World’

phenomenon. Samuel Beckett, Paul Celan, Isak Dinesen, Vladimir Nabokov, and Joseph Brodsky are prominent examples of European writers who have worked in adopted languages. For film makers, such as Ernst Lubitsch, Douglas Sirk, or Wim Wenders, xenophony was the only way into Hollywood's industry. John Sayles is so far the odd exception of a North American director who has taught himself Spanish in order to make a movie about Latin America. His *Hombres armados* was released in the United States as *Men With Guns* (1997). Nevertheless, translanguaging is by no means necessarily related to career orientation, to the access to larger markets.

In an interview with Allan Vorda, Jamaica Kincaid explains why she needed a pseudonym to be able to write at all.² The choice of a different language may have a similar effect for other authors, especially if they migrate to a place where this other language is spoken. Although, with regard to the Antilles, most of these migrants whose departure engenders a linguistic switch depart from the Hispanic Caribbean, there are exceptions like Edwidge Danticat who moved to New York from Haiti. All of Danticat's publications, *Krik?Krac!*, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, and *The Farming of Bones*, have so far been in English. Similarly, Julia Alvarez, who left the Dominican Republic during the notorious Trujillo regime, wrote her novels *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, *In the Time of the Butterflies*, and *Yo!* in the US. It is often through translation that these texts, like Cristina

² Asked about the implications of her pseudonym, Kincaid states: "I could never lose the Elaine Potter Richardson identity, but I wanted to say things about the people in Antigua. [...] This was a way to talk about things without people knowing it was me. I wanted to be able to be free of certain things. I wanted to speak truthfully about what I knew about myself without being myself" (Vorda 90).

Garcia's Dreaming in Cuban or *The Agüero Sisters*, reach that part of the world in which they are set, and from which they really originate.

As I mention above, Puerto Rico plays a special role in the scenario of translingualism because the majority of its inhabitants grow up not only bilingual but also tricultural. In "Writing in Between" Rosario Ferré discusses the effect bilingualism and the question of national citizenship have on Puerto Rican identity. Considered *gringos* in Latin America and Latinos in North America, Puerto Ricans also enjoy the good of two worlds: "Come what may, Puerto Ricans will not voluntarily give up their American citizenship. Like the Spanish language, it is not negotiable; it represents for us economic stability and the assurance of civil liberties and democracy. Thus Puerto Rico's status is a paradox: We refuse to give up mutually exclusive things" (Ferré 103). Obviously, these things, US-citizenship and the Spanish language, are not really mutually exclusive as they have coexisted in Puerto Rico for several decades by now. One wonders whether developments within the United States may make their coexistence even more wide-spread in the future. After all, there are already contests for Spanish-language literature produced in the US,³ and the percentage of Hispanics keeps growing steadily in some areas of this North American nation.

When Ferré moves on to explain why she sometimes prefers to write in English rather than in Spanish, and vice versa, she supports all the stereotypes about Anglo-Saxons on the one hand, and about Latinos on the other. Whereas "English has Milton, Shakespeare, and

³ For a detailed report of the Letras de Oro contest, which was established in 1986 in Washington, D.C., see Joaquín Roy's "Writing in Spanish in the United States" (Gracia/Camurati 149-67). Roy informs that the Hispanic population in the United States is estimated to reach 23 to 27 million in the year 2000.

the King James Version of the Bible standing behind it, swords drawn,” she writes, Spanish has more of an oral quality to it and “doesn’t have to be taken so seriously.” One wonders whether Ferré might not have read any of Shakespeare’s comedies on the one hand, or any of Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s tragedies, or César Vallejo’s poetry on the other. “I love to make love in Spanish,” she continues, “I’ve never been able to make love in English.” I am sure it is not merely against my own German background that I can credit the English language with romantic as well as erotic qualities. What Ferré’s exaggerations, however, amount to, and what I certainly agree with, is the fact that different languages do carry different traditions, are associated with different environments, and necessarily lead to different perspectives. Accordingly, the knowledge of several languages encourages a sense of multiperspectivity. As Ferré puts it: “Bilingualism is a tremendous advantage; I see no reason to give up a language if I can help it. Having two different languages, two different views of the world, is profoundly enriching” (105). To be sure, her article does not appear to be a strong reflection of the enrichment in question.

Glissant’s notion of ‘free’ as opposed to ‘forced poetics’ should be recalled at this point. As I explain in “Caribbeanness in *De laatste vrijheid*,” Glissant defines free or natural poetics as “any collective yearning for expression that is not opposed to itself either at the level of what it wishes to express or at the level of the language that it puts into practice” (*Discourse* 120). In this respect, Glissant emphasizes the communal aspect: “J’appelle langage une pratique commune, pour une collectivité donnée, de confiance ou de méfiance vis-à-vis de la langue ou des langues qu’elle utilise” (*Discours* 236; 120: I call self-expression a shared attitude, in a given community, of confidence or mistrust in the language

or languages it uses). If one considers that English was imposed on Puerto Rico with the Jones Act, then the medium of free poetics for the Puerto Rican writers would certainly be Spanish. Since this imposition happened several decades ago, and the coexistence of the two languages has long since become a fact of life, it is the very choice which constitutes this freedom. As in the other parts of the Caribbean, where writers choose between the various creoles and the European languages, or combinations of the two, it is the very option which has become the essence of natural poetics in the Glissantian sense.

With regard to this free choice of language, Glissant has a predecessor in Bakhtin, who prophecies an increasing polyglossia in *The Dialogic Imagination*. Analyzing the development of the novel, Bakhtin stresses the “multitude of different languages, cultures and times” which are suddenly interacting in Europe (Bakhtin 11). In this context he states that the novelty is not the mere existence of polyglossia, but its employment in literary expression: “Polyglossia had always existed (it is more ancient than pure canonic monoglossia), but it had not been a factor in literary creation” (12). With the development of the novel genre, which is paralleled with an increasing global mobility, the “artistically conscious choice between languages” came to express a new consciousness: “The new cultural and creative consciousness lives in an actively polyglot world. The world becomes polyglot, once and for all and irreversibly. The period of national languages, coexisting but closed and deaf to each other, comes to an end.” Bakhtin’s theories were mostly concerned with the European situation, but they precisely describe the scenario of the Americas in general, and of the Caribbean in particular. Not only do writers have the choice between several tongues within their home environment. More and more frequently do they move

North and adopt yet another language. In this context, a language switching can indicate either a distancing from the home culture or, similar to translations, a mediating of the familiar for the foreign culture. As Ana Lydia Vega points out in an interview with Elizabeth Hernández and Consuelo López Springfield, island and mainland Puerto Ricans, whether they write in Spanish or English, are still “part of the same literature” (*Callaloo* 819). Furthermore, additional linguistic options continue to be created, one of them being ‘Spanglish’, a vernacular spoken by Hispanic, most prominently Cuban or Puerto Rican, immigrants in the United States. In what is left of this chapter I analyze Ana Lydia Vega’s “Pollito Chicken,” a short story entirely written in a stylized version of Spanglish.

The Significance of Spanglish

“Pollito Chicken” tells the story of Suzie Bermiúdez, a Nuyorican who visits Puerto Rico after having lived in New York for ten years. Suzie’s decision for the one-week vacation is inspired by a poster at the travel agency. Accordingly, she seems driven not by nostalgia and a quest for her roots, but by the image of a “beautiful” couple in front of a big hotel with beach. Ezra S. Engling is probably right to suspect that these “beautiful people” are not native Puerto Ricans “but perfectly tanned white tourists” (Engling 343)⁴. Suzie thus

⁴ The extent to which Engling quotes from Vega’s story, doubtlessly in admiration of her style, gives a ‘Spanglish’ quality to the article, “Thematic and Narrative Strategies in Lydia Vega’s ‘Pollito Chicken,’” itself.

enacts the typical foreigner who is seduced by the tricks of the tourist industry. Then again, the developments in the course of the story give reason to question the subconscious motives underlying Suzie's trip. The story's climax is placed along with Suzie's climax while making love to the bartender of her hotel. During her orgasm she screams: "¡VIVA PUELTO [sic] RICO LIBREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!" (79) - a slogan previously linked to "esos filthy, no-good Communist terrorists." And the irony of this scene prevails all through the entire story. As Catherine Den Tandt puts it in "Caribbean Sounds: Salsa and Cultural Identity in Puerto Rico": "in a sense, the story consistently laughs at itself" (Den Tandt 111).

While Suzie always appears very firm in her intentions, the reader is constantly asked to challenge her subconscious agenda. Her true connection to the island shows, for example, in the fact that while she is preparing her return, she reflects on the aspects of US culture which prompted her migration. Her perception of 'First World' values culminates in the picture of a potential husband:

Cuando Suzie Bermiúdez se casara porque maybe se casaría para pagar menos income tax - sería con un straight All-american, Republican, church-going, Wall-Street businessman como su jefe Mister Bumper porque esos sí que son good husbands y tratan a sus mujeres como real ladies criadas con el manual de Amy Vanderbilt y todo. (76).

(Should Suzie Bermiúdez get married - because she might get married to save income tax - it will be to a straight All-American, Republican, church-going, Wall-Street businessman, like her boss Mister Bumper, because those are good husbands and treat their women like real ladies brought up with the Amy Vanderbilt manual and all.)

Not only does the authorial voice mock Suzie's vision of First World capitalism through the combination of adjectives such as 'Republican' and 'church-going' with 'All-American', making aware of the fact that the Americas include many countries besides the United States,

although the latter is commonly called 'America' and its inhabitants 'Americans'. While Suzie's stereotype is unmistakably US-American, the specification "All-American" therefore receives a sarcastic quality. Vega also supports and enforces her own mockery by the vision of the very "Republican, church-going, Wall-Street businessman," impersonated by the boss, of Puerto Ricans. Mister Bumper's secret question why these "Spiks don't stay home and enjoy it" (75) more than ridicules Suzie's possibility to ever marry such an 'All-American'.

In *Virgins and Fleurs de Lys: Nation and Gender in Québec and Puerto Rico*,⁵ an exploration of the parallels between the status of Québec within Canada and that of Puerto Rico within the United States, Den Tandt discusses two critics, Aurea María Sotomayor and Margarita Fernández Olmos, who are too preoccupied to fit Vega's story into their feminist readings to credit artistic qualities such as style. Adjectives like "superficial" and "uncontrolled" used by these critics to define the language of "Pollito Chicken" completely eliminate Vega's authorial presence. As Den Tandt has it, "she becomes an anthropologist transcribing voices rather than a writer purposefully creating a fictional world." Vega's choice of language for this particular story is also the point of attack for obviously offended mainland Puerto Ricans. Nicholasa Mohr, for example, who considers herself a "native New Yorker" by birth, feels the need to defend her mainland community against the "Island's intellectuals" (Mohr 90). Claiming that the cross between English and Spanish as used by Vega is "incorrect" and "ludicrous," she not only fails to acknowledge the parodic nature of

⁵ This study, which concentrates on texts by France Théoret on the one hand, and by Ana Lydia Vega on the other, is forthcoming with the University of Puerto Rico Press in 2000.

“Pollito Chicken.” She also misses the point that this story is least of all about linguistic authenticity.

Sandra María Esteves explains the development of Spanglish in an article on poetic perspectives of the Nuyoricans: “El lenguaje del Nuyorican es básicamente un lenguaje de raíces callejeras y surge de la mezcla natural de gentes de diversos géneros. Todavía en la infancia, es una mezcla lírica del inglés, español, de ritmo de bomba africana y variedad tropical” (Esteves 196: The language of the Nuyoricans is basically a language with its origins in the streets, and it stems from a natural mixture of diverse kinds of people. Already in childhood, there is a lyrical merging of English, Spanish, a rhythm of the Bomba Africana and a tropical variety). The editors of the new cultural review *Hopscotch* consider this hybrid language important enough to devote several pages of their inaugural issue to a brief lexicon of Spanglish. In their preceding article, which sounds slightly too militant, they mention other reference sources, such as *Diccionario del español chicano* (1989) by Roberto A. Galván and Richard V. Tescher, or *A Dictionary of New Mexico and Southern Colorado Spanish* (1983) by Rubén Cobos.⁶

Like the creoles, this language is then a linguistic expression of hybridity and displacement or, as Mayra Santos-Febres calls it, ‘translocality’.⁷ In “Pollito Chicken” it is

⁶ For further references see “The Sounds of Spanglish” (*Hopscotch* 1.1 (1999): 160-71). Published by Duke University Press, *Hopscotch*’s Editor-at-Large is Antonio Benítez-Rojo, and among the members of the advisory board are Cristina Garcia, Julia Alvarez, and Rosario Ferré.

⁷ Santos-Febres completed her dissertation on “The Translocal Papers: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Puerto Rican Literature” in 1991 at Cornell University.

the bartender who summarizes the contradictory nature of Suzie's identity in a conversation with "sus buddies": "La tipa del 306 no se sabe si es gringa o pueltorra, bródel. Pide room service en inglés legal pero, cuando la pongo a gozal, abre la boca a grital en boricua" (79: The chick from 306 doesn't know whether she is a Gringa or a Pueltorra, brother. She ordered room service in legal English, but every time I get her off she opens her mouth and starts screaming in Puerto Rican).

Unlike the creoles, Spanglish does not originate in an environment in which a population is deprived of social and family structures. Especially in the case of Puerto Rican migration, families often move in their entirety. Otherwise, those members who depart for the urban centers in North America are usually free to return frequently. The commuting of Puerto Ricans between their island and mainland communities is the subject of Luis Rafael Sánchez' "La guagua aérea," a story about the airbus between San Juan and New York. Spanglish thus reflects the interaction between influences from Puerto Rico's Hispanic culture and its US-American one. This combination, present on the island, is enforced by physical traveling to the mainland. It is contextualized by Vega's title "Pollito Chicken," which refers to the beginning of a song used by English teachers in Puerto Rican elementary schools (Santos-Febres 93).

To summarize, then, the cultures of the Caribbean are characterized by a hybridity which is reflected in the various languages of the area. Besides the European languages imposed by the colonizers, several creoles and pidgins are employed by Caribbean writers. Derek Walcott includes not only French Creole but also Patwa in some of his texts. As I

discuss in previous chapters, the local patois is also prominent in Sam Selvon's *Moses Trilogy* and in Dionne Brand's *In Another Place*. Curaçao's Papiamentu occurs in Frank Martinus Arion's *De laatste vrijheid*, and the complexity of Suriname's society is symbolized by Astrid Roemer's references not only to Afro-Surinamese Sranan, but also to the Sarnami of Hindustanis and the Saramaccan of *Bosnegers*. Guillermo Cabrera Infante claims that *Tres tristes tigres* was written in Cuban rather than Spanish. The Caribbean seen as one cultural system thus illustrates what Bakhtin defined as 'polyglossia'. It is up to the individual writer to make his or her own linguistic choices. Yet for those writers who move to North America from the Hispanic, Dutch, or Francophone Caribbean, translingualism is added to the polyglossia present in their homelands. English is sometimes preferred by Puerto Rican's like Rosario Ferré. Other immigrants like Edwidge Danticat from Haiti or Julia Alvarez from the Dominican Republic are already immersed to the point that all their texts are published in English. Ana Lydia Vega, on the other hand, chooses to represent the typically Puerto Rican sense of displacement within or in-between US- and Latin-American as well as Caribbean cultures through a stylized Spanglish in her short story "Pollito Chicken."

9. Homecomings Without Home? Commuting Within a *chaos monde*

La créolisation exige que les éléments hétérogènes mis en relation “s’intervalorisent,” c’est-à-dire qu’il n’y ait pas de dégradation ou de diminution de l’être soit de l’intérieur, soit de l’extérieur, dans ce contact et dans ce mélange.

- Édouard Glissant, *Introduction à une Poétique du Divers*

Jamaica Kincaid’s *A Small Place*, which I discuss in a comparative analysis with *Tres tristes tigres* in chapter three, is based on a visit to Antigua after the author has lived in the United States for several years. The publication of the nonfictional account of this visit made her a *persona non grata* in her home country. Much later visits are referred to in Kincaid’s *My Brother*. Officials have become more tolerant, but the writer’s judgments are not less critical. The experience of return does not play a similarly crucial role in the *oeuvres* of all the authors addressed in the present study, but nearly all of them describe their ‘going back’ on one occasion or another.

The first part of my title refers to Derek Walcott’s poem “Homecoming: Anse La Raye.” This poem is dedicated to Garth St. Omer, another St. Lucian writer, and reveals in the first stanza that “there are no rites/for those who have returned” (CP 127). Supporting his mood by a gloomy and frustrated tone, the poet discovers that the population of his home country, the very heroes of his poetry, are ignorant of his work. This discovery engenders the realization that “there are homecomings without home” (128). While Kincaid’s frustration

is grounded in the political and socio-economic circumstances of Antigua, that of Walcott in this particular poem reflects a primarily personal alienation which does, however, imply a more public concern, namely the educational system.

No matter how much time a migrant spends abroad, upon returning he or she necessarily approaches the familiar environment with new perspectives. This experience is the more dramatic the more isolated the place of departure is from other parts of the world. Which effects have processes like creolization and transculturation then on the traveler? Will the coexistence of an increasing number of different cultural traditions in all the corners of the earth still allow for the possibility of a foreign perspective, or will the various continents eventually all become familiar to one another? And where does the Caribbean fit in in a resulting *chaos monde*? As much as I agree with Glissant that his project is not only a nice but absolutely necessary risk to run, my prediction would be that unequal power distributions and value judgments about the elements of different cultures will never be completely eliminated. The traveler will therefore continue to choose elements of one over elements of another and thus contribute actively to the developments of certain cultures. Besides, no matter how far creolization can actually progress, it will still continue to depend on different spaces, and although multicultural societies may be similar in their hybridity, they will always be located in diverse landscapes. Nevertheless, in the course of this final chapter, in which I analyze various representations of returns by the writers discussed throughout this study, the questions revolving around the effects of creolization and the idea of a *chaos monde* will always be kept in mind.

The fictional return of Suzie Bermiúdez, narrated in Ana Lydia Vega's "Pollito Chicken," is the satire of a Nuyorican's relationship to Puerto Rico. As seen in the preceding chapter, Suzie takes a trip to the island after having lived in New York for ten years. The fact that she has a fling with the local bartender can be related to the behavior of a stereotypical tourist. Yet during orgasm, Suzie expresses solidarity with the Puerto Rican independence movement, which parodies her true connection with the country. Intending to leave the impression of a self-confident visitor, she escapes into nationalist propaganda during ecstatic moments. In comparison, the Puerto Ricans might be the most displaced population of the region, combining US-citizenship with a predominantly Hispanic culture and a location in the Caribbean Sea. On the other hand, this combination also allows for easier access to the three spaces concerned.

In contrast to Suzie's subconscious nationalism, Verlia, one of the protagonists in Dionne Brand's *In Another Place*, displays an outspoken political agenda. Having been part of the Black Power Movement in Toronto, Verlia returns to the Caribbean in order to advocate her revolutionary theories. When the revolution is paralyzed by an invasion, Verlia enters the tradition of Caribbean 'resistance suicides' by jumping off a cliff. Certain circumstances regarding the fictional character's return reflect the author, Brand's involvement in Grenada's revolution which ended in an invasion by the US in 1983. In an interview with Frank Birbalsingh, Brand comments that all the shortcomings and conflicts of Maurice Bishop's policies "don't detract from the whole process of overturning an oppressive colonial structure" (Birbalsingh 127). Reminding that these policies were given only four years to correct a five-hundred-year-old problem, Brand's assessment holds

primarily foreign forces responsible for the failure. Besides this return to the region, but not the home island, Brand also portrays that kind of homecoming that is less involved with specific policies, and more with abstract and universal issues regarding the distinction between 'home' and 'abroad'.

The essay from *Bread out of Stone* which describes Brand's experience of return to her home island is entitled "Just Rain, Bacolet," after a specific place and a climatic condition in Trinidad. The island itself and all its familiar features, such as the type of rain encountered there, make the author realize that "knowing is always a mixed bag of tricks and so is travelling back" (Brand 1994, 52). Plagued by the cycles of departure or "flight," as Brand puts it, and return, she enjoys familiar experiences and childhood memories while remembering the need for distance: "You are not a tourist, you must understand. You must walk more carefully because you are always walking in ruins and because at the top of a windmill one afternoon on your way back from the beach near Courland Bay you can tremble" (55). As much as one may be fascinated with the rediscovery of a familiar environment, one is bound to cringe at some of its elements, precisely because they are familiar. The knowledge of a place includes the knowledge of its advantages as well as disadvantages, and also the reminiscence of the good as well as the bad times one has witnessed there. It is this dilemma which Brand describes as a "mixed bag."

Throughout these observations, the use of pronoun is remarkable. The "you" could be singular as well as plural. It could imply that the author is addressing herself, but she could also be addressing the individual reader or even the entire audience. This ambiguity gives the text a universal tone which is contrasted by the naming of places, such as "Bacolet"

or “Courland Bay,” or of people, such as the travel companion Faith. In contrast to the criticism which Kincaid brings to the Caribbean in which she grew up, Brand emphasizes memories she is fond of. The visit described in this essay tempts both women to stay. And the idea of going back takes on a fundamental dimension:

Travelling is a constant state. You do not leave things behind or take them with you, everything is always moving; you are not the centre of your own movement, everything sticks, makes you more heavy or more light as you lurch, everything changes your direction. We were born thinking of travelling back. (58)

This last sentence calls for associations with possible realms of the unborn, be they in the womb or beyond, in what metaphysics describes as Nothingness. The preceding sentences, on the other hand, evoke the idea of Glissant’s *chaos-monde* in which everybody is constantly in motion, in which heterogeneous elements therefore mingle and reduce the opportunities for discrimination. I turn to this vision in greater depth in the final part of this chapter.

Often, the experience of return is accompanied by judgements from the distance. In several interviews, Jamaica Kincaid emphasizes that she remains a citizen of Antigua although she cannot work there and has therefore made her second home in the United States more than twenty-five years ago: “I think of Antigua as my home. I’m not [a US-]American citizen. I haven’t become [a US-]American because I don’t think [the US] need another writer. Antigua needs a writer more than it needs [a US-]American citizen” (Vorda 98). Besides the lack of professional opportunities, Kincaid holds her safety responsible for the choice of living abroad: “God knows if they would shoot me, but it’s a criminal place. I wouldn’t be surprised if they had henchmen who would do it, because politics in the West

Indies is very tribal” (98-9).

In contrast to the mess Kincaid observes in her homeland, she glorifies conditions in the United States. She thinks the freedom she encountered in the US would have been denied in England or Canada. Ignorant of the less privileged in this North American nation and of threats to safety during riots, Kincaid celebrates the “American Dream” when she says that “when you are in [the US] you can invent yourself” (Birbalsingh 139). Such glorifications also downplay the extent to which the United States, in a neocolonialist way, interferes with the developments in the Caribbean among other parts of the so-called Third World, among other parts of the world in general. Kincaid realized, for example, that “a country like Trinidad was robbed blind of its oil wealth by its rulers. The kind of violence that now occurs in these places never took place before Independence” (141). Although I agree that local elites share the responsibility for post-independence turmoil, one also has to acknowledge that these rulers are most likely at the mercy of some more powerful country’s economic interests. Kincaid stops short when she fails to mention the neocolonial aspect of post-independence developments:

I hate to speak for other countries that have been and are in the situation Antigua is in, which is a former colony that is now independent. The sad fact is that they are all in the same boat. It’s very hard to admit this, but they were all better off under colonial rule than they are now. This isn’t to say that I want colonial rule back. I’m very glad to get rid of it. I’m only sad to observe that the main lesson we seem to have learned from colonial rule is all the corruption of it and none of the good things of it. (Vorda 84)

This picture remains incomplete without the idea that the corruption referred to may be further cultivated and even enforced by new foreign economic domination. As much as Brand may be biased in blaming the United States exclusively, Kincaid is biased in her

glorifications. While both Brand's and Kincaid's statements are thus concerned with government politics, with specific socio-economic circumstances in the Caribbean, I concentrate on more universal aspects with regard to Walcott's poetic rendition of return in *The Bounty* in the following part of this chapter.

The Bounty

The Bounty is in many ways a synthesis of Walcott's previous work. On the level of form, the first part, an elegy for the author's mother Alix, continues *Omeros*, while the poems of the second part follow the style developed in *Midsummer*. With regard to content, many issues echo earlier treatment and naturally, a series of ten poems entitled "Homecoming" is to be found in the midst of North American as well as European locations also addressed in preceding collections.¹ "The Bounty" is the title not only of the entire collection but also specifically of the elegy for the mother. The more general idea of 'bounty', of generosity, something given freely, or being awarded also leads to more specific associations. There is, first of all, the biblical reference to the bounty of Eden. Then there is Yeats' "Bounty of Sweden."² Finally, there is the H.M.S. Bounty, the ship on which William

¹ Robert D. Hamner's "Reaping Walcott's *Bounty*," a useful content survey, addresses the "Homecoming" cycle only in a very short paragraph (*Commonwealth Essays and Studies* 20.2 (1998): 9-13).

² Numerous references to Eden occur in "The Bounty," the elegy. One of the "Six Fictions" in the second part of the collection begins with the following lines: "Awakening

Bligh was supposed to transport the breadfruit tree from the South Sea to the West Indies. The success of Bligh's mission was prevented by Fletcher Christian's mutiny. Walcott addresses this latter association in the title poem when he recounts the initial plan according to which "the breadfruit plants on the *Bounty*/will be heaved aboard, and the white God is Captain Bligh" (*Bounty* 9), one example of the colonizers' interference with nature's generosity. Yet, Walcott's poetic version of the historical events does not conceal that "faith grows mutinous" and that "the God-captain is cast adrift/by a mutinous Christian." This development, the lyrical 'I' seems to suggest, could serve as a model if the remaining dependence on foreign forces was to be overcome. A major issue of "Homecoming" is the personal confrontation of this persistent dependence.

Like the entire collection echoes themes addressed in earlier poems, the cycle "Homecoming" continues and complements the returns of prior texts. As in "Sainte Lucie," the opening evokes and meditates on the tangible environment, on the St. Lucian landscape. Whereas the earlier poem describes the villages surrounded by the sea, the meditation included in *The Bounty* celebrates this scenery in musical terms. "My country heart, I am not home till Sesenne sings," is the first line of "Homecoming" (31). Sesenne's singing is accompanied by the road's "cuatros" which "tighten [the narrator's] heartstrings," as well as by the rattling of the "shac-shacs," a term which resembles a creolized version of the one

to gratitude in this generous Eden,/far from frenzy and violence in the discretion of distance,/my debt, in Yeats's phrase, to 'the bounty of Sweden'/that has built this house facing white combers" (*Bounty* 61). Included in Yeats' *Autobiographies*, "The Bounty of Sweden" is an account of his trip to Stockholm to accept the Nobel Prize.

used for the same accommodations in earlier texts.³ The dances associated with this music, “*bel-air, quadrille, la comette,*” are square dances from the French tradition. They contrast the calypsos and *merengues* more popular among contemporary islanders. Whereas the latter would refer to everyday impressions, the former are reserved for special occasions.

While the younger narrator in “Sainte Lucie” is still concerned with his “growing no nearer/to what secret eluded the children” (*CP* 309) and with “something always being missed/between the floating shadow and the pelican/in the smoke from over the next bay,” the matured voice of *The Bounty* is content with accepting and enjoying the environment exactly the way it is perceived and represented by Sesenne’s singing. No longer plagued by quests, the narrator knows that this home environment’s language is “as small as the cedar’s and sweeter than any/wherever” he has ever gone (*Bounty* 31).

Likewise, this older narrator seems more at ease with his own alienation. Whereas in “Sainte Lucie” he pleads, “come back to me,/my language” (*CP* 310), and laments that he has never been able to do justice to his love for the country and its people “with [his] young poet’s eyes” (314), he accepts unavoidable limitations as well as his role of someone who has returned in *The Bounty*:

Shadows cross the plain
of Vieuxfort with her voice. Small grazing herds
of horses shine from a passing cloud; I see them
in broken sunlight, like singers remembering the words

³ “Shac-shac” also recalls the instrument Walcott refers to in his Nobel Lecture: “One rose hearing two languages: one of the trees, one of schoolchildren reciting in English [...] while in the country to the same metre, but to organic instruments, handmade violin, chac-chac, and goat-skin drum, a girl named Sensenne singing” (*Fragments* 266). Most likely due to the meter, Sensenne becomes Sesenne in *The Bounty*.

of a dying language. I watch the bright wires follow
Sesenne's singing, sunlight in fading rain,
and the names of rivers whose bridges I used to know.

These are the closing lines of the first poem in the "Homecoming" cycle. They express neither the youthful eagerness present in "Sainte Lucie," nor the bitterness prevailing in "Homecoming: Anse La Raye" or "Return to D'Ennery; Rain." The narrator who seems enchanted by Sesenne's song, knows that he had to forget details about the familiar environment, which necessarily changed in his absence. The fact that he forgot about the bridges rather than the rivers, or their names, underlines the fact that it is the manmade constituents of an environment which are bound to change faster than the natural ones. Moreover, the formula "I used to know" supports the idea of recognition.

If the natural environment is alive and participating in its musical celebration, it is personified even more explicitly in the second poem of the cycle, where "the palms of the breadfruit shrugged," "the bougainvillea's lips" are divided, and the larger part of the poem is taken up by a dialogue between the narrator and the surrounding vegetation:

'We offered you language early, an absolute choice;
you preferred the gutturals of low tide sucked by the shoal
on the grey strand of cities, the way Ireland offered Joyce
his own unwritten dirt road outside Choiseul.'
'I have tried to serve both,' I said, provoking a roar
from the leaves, shaking their heads, defying translation.
'And there's your betrayal,' they said. I said I was sure
that all the trees of the world shared a common elation
of tongues, gommier with linden, *bois-campêche* with the elm. (32)

In the continuous controversy between the poet and those who attack his reliance on classic European traditions, the Caribbean space itself is here finally given a voice. If Walcott countered opponents by making them aware of English as the "language of exegesis"

(*Twilight* 31) or of the poet's debt to "the Muse," that source of inspiration whose means of expression are usually not questioned (9), he seems more remorseful in confrontation with the landscape itself. Throughout "**Displacement Within the Caribbean**" I emphasize the role this landscape plays with regard to Caribbeanness. The poet's contribution to a regional consciousness is summarized by Walcott's idea of 'Adam's task'. This idea is based on the Caribbean writer's capability to finally describe his or her own environment from a local perspective. If, in this process, European languages and conventions are preferred over Creoles and, for example, elements of Caribbean oral traditions, then, for Walcott, the former are still employed for a new purpose, and "nothing will always be created in the West Indies, for quite long time, because what will come out of there is like nothing one has ever seen before" (*Mimicry* 9). The metaphysical implication of this statement is taken up in "Homecoming" when, at the end of the sixth poem "the surf, older than your hand, writes: 'It/is nothing, and it is this nothingness that makes it great'" (*Bounty* 36).

In contrast to such confident and promising prospects, the above quoted reactions to the landscape's reproaches sound much more subdued. Whereas at the close of the sixth poem, the surf, a constituent of the landscape, replaces the narrator, the trees portrayed in dialogue in the second poem appear irreconcilable over the poet's oppression. Even the fact that this poet has mediated his knowledge of the Caribbean does not excuse his betrayal on the native landscape, the leaves are "defying translation." The foreigners' views of the colonies, still dominate the depiction of the area, even through the eyes of its local artists. The local language might well be a "dying language."

With regard to poetic traditions, one should not neglect the fact that this

“Homecoming” (by one such local artist), included in a collection entitled *The Bounty*, occurs at a specific point in a career. Especially the death of parents necessarily reinforce the awareness of one’s own mortality. Following the elegy for the mother, this homecoming has therefore the tone of returning at the end of a life’s journey, of returning to the Nothingness Brand alludes to above, in the first part of this chapter. This tone is supported by the presence of earth creatures such as worms, ants, and termites. It is also supported by references to the daughters and their children, by the recollection of “all your sins” (37), and by the metaphor of a soul which “travelled the one horizon like a quiet snail,/infinity behind it, infinity ahead of it” (39). In this light, the confrontation with the native landscape turns into an evaluation of the artist’s *oeuvre*, the question about the extent to which ‘Adam’s task’ was realized, and ultimately an assessment of this task’s relation to more universal poetic concerns.

When the poet responds to the leaves’ accusation that “all the trees of the world shared a common elation/of tongues,” he may have in mind that once the breadfruit tree, for example, was transported from the South Sea to the Caribbean, that there is no tracing its ultimate geographic origin, and if it is today part of the Antillean environment, today’s name for it might as well be accepted. More obviously, the poet’s response alludes to the different linguistic treatments for similar or identical phenomena. In a sense, Walcott recalls in these lines Glissant’s vision of multilingualism.

As I explain in my first chapter, in the context of new epic literature, Glissant’s idea of multilingualism does not assume the coexistence or the knowledge of several languages, but the presence of the world’s languages in the practice of one’s own (*Introduction* 41). This idea seems to underlie Walcott’s “common elation/of tongues.” The relationship between

signifiers and signifieds may, as de Saussure has demonstrated, be arbitrary, its mere existence is still common to all the world's languages. Multilingualism, as Glissant presents it, demands the awareness of other possible signifiers when using those of a familiar language. Inasmuch as languages represent cultures, this kind of multilingualism describes ultimately the type of tolerance, or the expression of this tolerance, that is at the root of creolization and the *chaos-monde*, which I turn to in what is left of this closing chapter.

Constructive Chaos or Destructive Disorder

In the introductions to *Caribbean Discourse* Glissant advocates the right to 'opacity' or 'obscurity' (*opacité*) as opposed to "Western" transparency. This opacity, and with it the rhizomatic identity, is the basis for creolization, for the interaction of heterogeneous elements without diminution. Once creolization spreads, one arrives at a *chaos-monde* which, as Glissant emphasizes in *Introduction à une Poétique du Divers*, is a constructive chaos:

Ayons la force imaginaire et utopique de concevoir que ce chaos n'est pas le chaos apocalyptique des fins du monde. Le chaos est beau quand on en conçoit tous les éléments comme également nécessaires. [...] C'est pourquoi je réclame pour tous le droit à l'opacité. Il ne m'est plus nécessaire de 'comprendre' l'autre, c'est-à-dire de le réduire au modèle de ma propre transparence, pour vivre avec cet autre ou construire avec lui. (*Introduction* 71)

(Let us have imaginary and utopian powers to comprehend that this chaos is not the apocalyptic chaos at the end of the world. The chaos is beautiful if one considers all its elements equally necessary. [...] That is why I claim the right to opacity for everyone. I do not need to 'understand' the other anymore, which means to reduce him [or her] to the model of my own transparency, in order to live or construct with this other.)

Through his appeal to utopian potential, Glissant is himself suggesting that this vision will never be shared by a majority of the world's population. As I point out in the introduction to this chapter, an equal acceptance of individuals and their cultures by all other individuals and communities is more than unlikely to ever materialize. Power distributions will continue to be unequal, and preferences for certain cultures or at least certain elements of cultures will therefore remain. Yet, like any utopia used to be, and contrary to the claims of early postmodern thinkers, this vision of global creolization is crucial to the development of today's societies. The idea of a constructive worldly chaos responds to a spreading multiculturalism, a phenomenon which is at the center of "Pieces of a Canadian Mosaic." Although Glissant is aware of the question of disorder, "how to be oneself without shutting the other out, and how to open up to the other without losing oneself," he insists that attempts to solve the dilemma are certainly worth the effort.

In *Traité du Tout-Monde* Glissant summarizes the idea of a constructive chaos with regard to cultures rather than individuals. Here, he also emphasizes the explosive character of the developments inherent in this chaos:

J'appelle *Chaos-monde* le choc actuel de tant de cultures qui s'embrasent, se repoussent, disparaissent, subsistent pourtant, s'endorment ou se transforment, lentement ou à vitesse foudroyante: ces éclats, ces éclatements dont nous n'avons pas commencé de saisir le principe ni l'économie et dont nous ne pouvons pas prévoir l'emportement. Le Tout-Monde, qui est totalisant, n'est pas (pour nous) total. (*Traité* 22)

(I call *chaos-monde* the current clashing of so many cultures which embrace or reject each other, disappear, persisting still, rest, or transform themselves, slowly or with smashing speed: these bursts, these explosions of which we have not begun to understand the principle or the economy, and of which we cannot foresee the consequences. The *Tout-Monde*, which is totalizing, is not (for us) total.)

Such a vision of unpredictable interaction appears, as I have indicated in my analysis of Roemer's *Suriname Trilogy*, to challenge what has become popularly known as globalization. The latter is discussed most prominently in European and North American settings and consequently rests on the silent assumption that "Western," in particular US culture is spreading. The fact that, for example, certain food chains are introduced in all the corners of the earth, or that all of the world's movie and TV industries are dominated by the single wealthiest one, is ingrained in the discourse of globalization. Glissant's vision, on the other hand, is based on more reciprocal exchanges. It leaves room for contributions by all the existent cultures. In his utopia of creolization he even goes so far as to suggest interaction without diminution, without unequal power distribution.

All of Glissant's concepts, opacity, the rhizomatic identity, *le divers*, creolization, and the *chaos-monde*, are linked to the space to which he always returns if not physically then at least spiritually. It is not surprising that the Caribbean, characterized by displacement of all kinds, should inspire such philosophies. Although located on the same continent as the United States, the Caribbean does not belong to "the West," and participates more on the receiving end of that globalization referred to above. At the same time, the Caribbean society itself consists of diverse cultural traditions combined in a comparatively small space, in an insular space in which people move from one island to another, from which they also depart and return. In his attempt to situate this space within a global context, Glissant relies, like Benítez-Rojo in *The Repeating Island*, on chaos theory. He thereby combines, as J. Michael Dash points out, the mathematical with the poetic (Dash 1995, 176). Explaining the interconnectedness of events in different parts of the world, Glissant arrives at his own

terminology to describe a sense of, as Dash has it, “global flux and fragmentation - ‘le tout-monde’, ‘écho-monde’, ‘identité-relation’” (177). Such flux and fragmentation is continuously enforced by departure and return, by global displacement.

My analyses of essays and interviews at the beginning of this chapter have shown diverse views of Caribbean writers of their homeland. Based on visits from their different exiles or diaspora communities as well as on judgements from the distance, these accounts combine comments on specific political and socio-economic developments with more abstract sentiments inspired by the experience of going back. The latter sentiments are foregrounded in Walcott’s *The Bounty*, which is at the center of the second part of this chapter. The ten-poem cycle “Homecoming,” included in this collection, is situated at a later stage in the poet’s career and influenced by the experience of the mother’s death. An evaluation of the service the poet has done his native environment is thus unavoidable. As I point out in “Creating and Celebrating a Caribbean Environment,” the landscape itself often functions as a protagonist in both Walcott’s and Glissant’s poetry. As all of the writers discussed throughout this study, they return, if not physically, then at least in their writing constantly to the environment they grew up in. As much as this environment feeds fictions, as much does it catalyze Glissant’s theories. One of these theories, that of a *chaos-monde*, a constructive worldly chaos closes my discussion of homecoming, return, and commuting. Based on the idea of global creolization, this chaos envisions constant displacement, departure and return as the roots of cultural exchange. And the Caribbean is an area in which such exchanges have been taking place for a few centuries by now.

Conclusion

In the context of comparative Caribbean literary discourse, displacement includes spiritual and physical exile, as well as that sense of dispersion and hybridity which can be identified as the main characteristic of a regional consciousness, of an identity defined as Caribbeanness. Throughout the chapters of the present study I show how Caribbean writing, no matter of which genre, often revolves around one aspect of displacement or another, and frequently around their interconnectedness. A common history of colonization, of slavery and indentured labor has led to the coexistence of ethnicities and cultural traditions characteristic for the current Caribbean society. The attempt to celebrate this hybridity as a defining element of Caribbeanness is faced with a reality of persisting European domination and of new economic dependencies. The European legacy, which has divided the comparatively small insular space into four different linguistic entities, and which has not yet cut even all the constitutional ties, renders cooperation and factual independence very difficult if not impossible.

Caribbean intellectuals consequently appear as hopeless idealists when they formulate their visions of a regional consciousness, of Caribbean subjectivity, and of cultural independence separate from economic conditions. I have nevertheless chosen to rely predominantly on their discourse, rather than on more mainstream postcolonial theory, with regard to my own theoretical premises which I establish in “Caribbeanness in *De laatste vrijheid*.” Following Walcott’s and Glissant’s poetic creation and celebration of the Caribbean environment, this second chapter introduces in particular Glissant’s main

philosophical concepts. These concepts can be situated within the context of postcoloniality as well as postmodernity. Departing from definitions of opacity, cross-cultural poetics, creolization, and *antillanité*, I point out parallels to ideas expressed in Wilson Harris' *The Womb of Space* and in Antonio Benítez-Rojo's *The Repeating Island*. Glissant, Harris, and Benítez-Rojo, each from a different linguistic part of the region, equally emphasize the potential of their cross-cultural environment, of unity created by diversity. Replacing "Western" transparency with opacity, they reject oppositions such as the one between 'familiar' and 'other', or the one between 'center' and 'periphery'. Rather than a reversal of the center/periphery model, they advocate its deconstruction. Building on these theoretical foundations, I am able to arrive at further Glissantian concepts, for example, the detour, free versus forced poetics, and the *chaos-monde* in my succeeding chapters.

Whereas both the poetic celebration and the theoretical conceptualization of the area stress positive prospects and constructive potential, the texts discussed in "*Tres tristes tigres, A Small Place, and Other Disillusionments*" foreground the bleak reality. While the idea of Caribbeanness counts on cooperation in the attempt to gain at least a greater cultural independence, the fact is that rivalries between individual islands, between linguistic entities, and between those territories different in political status remain. What might be even worse than those rivalries is the mutual ignorance of developments in surrounding parts of the region. Such ignorance is obviously encouraged by the language barrier, which is part of the colonial legacy. Also at least to some degree due to this legacy is the economic decline especially in those countries which did gain constitutional independence. The resulting difficult living conditions are among the main factors which engender the migrations at the

center of the latter two parts of this study.

All the texts analyzed in “**Displacements Within the Caribbean**” are largely set within the area. Both *Omeros* and *Les Indes* have a foundational character in that they celebrate the Caribbean space and its heroes, and in that they provide it with new perspectives on its history. The role these two texts play for a Caribbean tradition can be compared to the one Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* plays for US-American, and Neruda’s *Canto general* for Latin American literature. As in Whitman’s and in Neruda’s work, the landscape is given a special significance in Walcott’s as well as in Glissant’s text. In both *Omeros* and *Les Indes* the Caribbean landscape functions not only as one of the characters but often as protagonist. Curaçaoan Martinus Arion’s *De laatste vrijheid* revolves around one specific element of this landscape. A volcano, about to erupt, symbolizes the dangers as well as the benefits of independence in the general sense of freedom. And the landscape also plays an important role in my comparative analysis of Cabrera Infante’s *Tres tristes tigres* and Kincaid’s *A Small Place*. Rather than celebrate its natural beauty, however, Cabrera Infante’s and Kincaid’s texts point out the abuse this landscape is subjected to by the growing tourist industry.

At this point I want to borrow from J. Michael Dash’s conclusion of *The Other America*. Dash refers to García Márquez’ character José Arcadio Buendía who creates his Arcadian paradise in Macondo. This reference serves Dash to establish an analogy to “an elemental New World drama, that of discovery, foundation, and the establishment of a new origin in the tangled jungle of competing discourses” (Dash 1998, 159). It is precisely this drama, and in particular the crucial part given to the respective environment in this New

World, which informs the present study and especially its first three chapters. As in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* there is a dystopia to the utopia created by some participants in the competing discourses. The landscape which is celebrated in its natural, authentic beauty as the monument of Caribbeanness also has to be seen in the light of its exploitation. Enormous hotels and resorts have in this context succeeded the plantation structure of previous centuries. Although both economic phenomena create occupations for the local population, they are controlled from abroad and consequently leave only a minimal profit in the area itself. Better professional opportunities are among the major driving forces of the migrations addressed throughout chapters four to nine.

A considerable part of Caribbean writing originates outside the region. These texts, often set in diaspora communities or at least informed by the experience of exile and journeying, are the subject of “**Migration to the ‘Old World’**” and “**Movement to the North of the Americas.**” I have already indicated that the departure from the Caribbean is frequently encouraged by the urge to find better living conditions elsewhere. This type of motivation is described, for example, in Sam Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners*. Another motivation is the quest for cultural roots, as Maryse Condé presents it in *Heremakhonon*. Attempts to chronologize have often considered the migrations to the “Old World” a first wave, but such a chronology applies in fact to the Anglophone Caribbean only. Inhabitants of the French Overseas Departments or of the Netherlands Antilles continue to move to the metropolises in Europe, whereas Hispanic Caribbeans have always preferred the United States as their destination. Independence of the former British colonies naturally shifted the focus from the former ‘mother-country’ to English-language North America, as texts by Kincaid,

Dionne Brand, or Walcott testify. As much as the distance to the native environment causes an alienation from it, as much does it, on the other hand, enforce an identification with the space in question. Not surprisingly, many of Glissant's, Harris', and Benítez-Rojo's theories were, if not formulated, then at least influenced by studies carried forth abroad.

A pioneering theoretical movement which emerged in Paris and through the collaboration of Caribbean with African intellectuals, most notably Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor, is the *négritude* movement. I recall its origins and aims in "Destination Africa" in order to emphasize the influence the Negritude ideology has had on fictional texts, such as *Heremakhonon* or the long poem *Stemmen uit Afrika*, as well as on practically all the theoretical ones consulted in this study. Although the equal importance of all the traditions interacting in the region is idealized in the theories of Caribbeanness, the African element is usually favored. It accounts for the largest influence to forcefully contrast and battle the European one. Although *créolité* and *antillanité* strive to move beyond essentializing Africanism, their proponents are all of African descent and necessarily caught up in their own background. I should repeat Walcott's assessment from "Necessity of Negritude," that "Negritude offers an assertion of pride" but not of a complete identity "since that is mixed and shared by other races whose writers are East Indian, white, mixed, whose best painters are Chinese, and in whom the process of racial assimilation goes on with every other marriage" (Walcott 1993, 23). All contemporary Caribbean intellectuals agree on this point in theory, yet they relapse into Negritude occasionally.

A Caribbean country in which rivalries between ethnicities contributed considerably to the failure of constitutional independence is Suriname. Some of the larger ethnic groups

here are the Afro-Surinamese in the coastal regions, the so-called *Bosnegers* in the interior, the Europeans, Amazon-Indian as well as Hindu and Indonesian communities. The inability of the first Surinamese government to cater to all these diverse groups was among the main factors that lead to the military coup in 1980, to Bouterse's dictatorship, and all the turmoil referred to throughout Astrid Roemer's *Suriname Trilogy*. Through the eyes of her various characters, Roemer describes the developments in Suriname and its relationship to the Netherlands within the past decades. Post-independence Suriname lead the Netherlands Antilles to prefer their membership in the Kingdom from separation. In this respect, the status of Suriname as part of the Dutch Caribbean is comparable to that of Haiti as part of the Francophone one. Roemer expresses the need for a fresh start through the cleansing trial projected on the beginning of the new millennium in the second part of the trilogy. Throughout her texts Roemer supports the idea of that cultural identity which is at the center of Caribbeanness. Among the devices employed for this aim are the reliance on oral traditions and the incorporation of the diverse Surinamese creoles. Emphasizing the coexistence and equal importance of the individual ethnicities, Roemer explains terms from the Sranan of the Afro-Surinamese, from the Sarnami of the Hindu communities, the Saramaccan of the *Bosnegers*, and even the Amazon-Indian vocabulary in her glossary.

I discuss the commitment to local languages in greater detail in "Choosing a Language," where I concentrate on the linguistic expression of displacement. Most authors mentioned in this study refer to their creoles and local dialects more or less frequently. Selvon represents all the voices of his lonely Londoners in a stylized Trinidadian patois. Brand uses her version of the same dialect in *In Another Place, Not Here* to distinguish her

first protagonist, Elizete the cane-worker, from her second one, Verlia who returns after many years in Canada. The use of dialect allows Brand to render Elizete's initial skepticism of Verlia's articulate propaganda more powerful:

This little girl too fast again. Her mouth too fast, she tongue flying ahead of sheself. [...] I en't talk to she then. They tell me she is for the revo, that she is for taking all the land and giving it to people who work it all their life. Revolution, my ass. Let foolish old people believe she. (13)

In a tragic way, this statement also comments on the effects of Communist attempts to escape the continuous dependence on the so-called "First World." Although such issues would be far from Elizete's concerns at this stage of her relationship to Verlia, her statement could be read as a reference to the revolutions in Cuba or Grenada. In any case, Elizete's dialect is one of the crucial characteristics which describe her personality. It also illustrates the sense of displacement within the region which I address throughout my first part of this study. Walcott's inclusions of French Creole, or Martinus Arion's of Papiamentu have a similar effect and equally serve the purpose of local color.

Displacement related to migration, on the other hand, is expressed linguistically through language switching, for example Rosario Ferré's or Edwidge Danticat's choice of English over their native Spanish and French respectively. Apart from the actual switching there is the possibility of combining. The result of the latter are hybrids, such as the Spanglish spoken for example by Cuban communities in Miami or by so-called Nuyoricans. Ana Lydia Vega presents a stylized version of Spanglish in "Pollito Chicken," a brief account of the return of a Puerto Rican who has lived in New York for a decade. Trying to appear as a self-confident tourist, she orders room service in "legal English," but before she

checks into the hotel which had attracted her on a poster at a New York travel agency, she considers the grandmother's place in the country: "on second thought se dijo que ya había hecho reservaciones en el Conquistador y que Grandma bastante bitchy que había sido after all con ella y Mother diez años ago" (76: on second thought she told herself that she had already made reservations in the Conquistador and that grandma had after all been bitchy enough with her and her mother ten years ago). The grandmother had never approved of her son-in-law's African descent, another example of the shortcomings of harmonious creolization. Suzie, Vega's protagonist, herself dreams about marrying a "straight All-American, Republican, church-going, Wall-Street businessman." On the other hand, she takes to nationalist propaganda during her fling with the bartender of her hotel with the symbolic name Conquistador. Comparatively speaking, Puerto Ricans may be the most displaced population in the area in that they combine US-citizenship with a Latin American tradition and a location in the Caribbean Sea. On the other hand, every part of the area is characterized by its own sense of similar displacement. While St. Lucia's official language is English, its Creole is French Creole. Curaçao's Papiamentu displays strong Spanish and Portuguese influences. Sint Maarten takes up the southern part of an island whose northern part is under the protectorate of Guadeloupe. Former Hispaniola is divided into Francophone Haiti to the west and the Hispanic Dominican Republic to the east. Nevertheless, at least on the intellectual level, the concept of Caribbeanness based on a regional unity is subject to elaborations.

No matter where their migrations lead them, Caribbean artists never lose sight of the environment they have grown up in. Comments from the distance and spiritual returns are

often accompanied by physical homecomings and the application of insights gained abroad. The native environment also provides the point of departure for fictional as well as theoretical writing. An example of the latter, with which I close my study, revolves around Glissant's idea of a *chaos-monde*, a constructive global chaos which opposes the popular discourse of globalization in that it is based on reciprocal exchanges rather than on the spreading of dominant, more powerful cultures. In Glissant's vision, a space like the Caribbean, which is in itself exemplary for the underlying creolization, contributes equally to the explosive development of global multiculturalism. The further development of a Caribbean culture naturally supports the region's contribution to and participation in the *chaos-monde*. With regard to literature, a Caribbean canon has emerged only in the course of the twentieth century. Its gradual expansion has, however, rendered it possible for Caribbean writers to refer to compatriots, in the sense of 'from the same area' rather than 'from the same island', instead of or in addition to foreign classics. Caribbean intertextuality is growing steadily, especially with the increasing availability of Caribbean texts in translation. An even broader rendition of Caribbean writing, in particular including Dutch Caribbean writing, might encourage more comparative studies, such as this one, in the future. Numerous other themes, such as the incorporation of folklore, the representation of women, the significance of certain musical styles, or the portrayal of social structures, could be dealt with alongside that of displacement.

As Caribbean literature hopefully joins the more common options of the diverse literature departments, the literary landscape of the region might also lend itself to more specific approaches. While areas such as German or Medieval literature are taken for granted

everywhere, a project in the field of Caribbean literature is still bound to meet with a surprisingly widespread unfamiliarity of its subject matter. I realize that the extremely short history of the latter contributes to this problem. The area of Caribbean literature can not be divided into centuries yet. It could, however, be studied with regard to different generations of writers. Similarly, a scholar could focus on one specific cultural influence, such as the East Indian one, which could, for example, include Trinidadian Sam Selvon as well as Surinamese Chitra Gajadin. Roemer's *Suriname Trilogy* could be taken up in an essay on Caribbean revolutions. In its broader approach, my study intends to encourage this kind of more specific, yet comparative, Caribbean literary scholarship.

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