CONSTRUCTING AND CONSUMING THE FRENCH CARIBBEAN: AN ECOCRITICAL APPROACH

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the links between literature and the environment in the Francophone Caribbean, focusing on the Martinican author Patrick Chamoiseau and the Guadeloupean author Maryse Condé. This interdisciplinary and comparative study engages with postcolonial ecocriticism and investigates the roles of construction and consumption in the authors' work in relation to the links between nature and humanity. The research begins with a comparative exploration of Condé's *Le Cœur à rire et à pleurer* (1999) and Chamoiseau's *Chronique des sept misères* (1986) before moving to consider *Texaco* (1992). It then focuses on Chamoiseau's *Les neuf consciences du Malfini* (2009) before returning to Condé and her texts *Victoire*, *les saveurs et les mots* (2008) and *Mets et merveilles* (2015). The final chapter provides a close reading of Chamoiseau's 2011 essay 'Le Diamant: la beauté comme conscience'. This thesis posits that despite the many differences between Chamoiseau and Condé's approaches to identity and the environment, similarities also emerge as their work progresses over time. A focus on the relationship between humans and both the natural and man-made environment can particularly be found in Chamoiseau's novels, an element that develops in his later work. In Condé's texts, a link between the consumption of food, as an extension of the natural environment, and the representation of self and home is also found. This thesis makes an original contribution by demonstrating how both authors express a deep connection to, and a direct relationship with, the land despite colonialism and its enduring structures in the post-colonial era in the Antilles. It argues that both authors bring ecological and political issues to the forefront through their literary works to discuss how to move forward to bring greater food autonomy for the region and protection for an increasingly fragile environment.

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INTRODUCTION

CONSTRUCTING AND CONSUMING THE FRENCH CARIBBEAN: AN ECOCRITICAL APPROACH

In 2010, Richard Watts issued a stark call for a turn towards postcolonial ecocriticism, arguing that '[i]f the field of postcolonial studies is primarily concerned with the problem of representation in the context of imperial injustice, then it needs to widen its remit to include more than injustice to humans.'[1] This thesis, located at the intersection of postcolonial studies and ecocriticism, responds to Watts' call through the analysis of authors from the Francophone Caribbean region, who bring nature to the foreground as they probe a specific Antillean relationship to the land. The field of postcolonial studies encompasses a broad range of approaches which focus on the exploration of colonial forms of domination and exploitation. In the Francophone Caribbean, the colonial project was developed through such forms of domination as the transatlantic slave trade and the plantocracy, which began with the initial colonisation of the islands by Spanish conquistadors in the fifteenth century.

[1] Richard Watts, 'Etat présent: Francophone Postcolonial Studies With(out) Ecocriticism, *Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, 1(2) (2010), 2-7 (p. 6), <http://sfps.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/BFPS-1.2-online.pdf> [accessed 10 December 2021].

Despite being initially abolished in 1794, slavery[2] was reinstated by Napoléon Bonaparte in French sugarcane colonies in 1802 and it continued to be the foundation of the colonies' economic and social organisation until its final abolition in France and overseas colonies in 1848.

Analysis of the representation of the Caribbean land raises wider questions about the construction, domination, and management of Caribbean spaces by European powers. This thesis provides a series of close readings of literary texts and other cultural output by two critically acclaimed and internationally recognised authors, Patrick Chamoiseau from Martinique, who was awarded the Prix Goncourt in 1992 for *Texaco*,[3] and Maryse Condé from Guadeloupe, the recipient of the New Academy Prize in Literature in 2018,[4] to demonstrate how the authors undertake innovative literary representations of the environment in order to depict the violence wrought on Caribbean societies — and landscapes — by European colonialism. This thesis uses a methodological approach that uses the authors' texts as a starting point to analyse the contemporary debates concerning Martinique and Guadeloupe within the context of the colonial history of the islands and includes some scientific research on environmental problems. This approach has been chosen as it centres the authors' voices and allows analysis of their work over time to investigate how their work changes in relation to an increase in awareness of ecological issues facing both the region and the rest of the world. The two authors have been chosen as they present the environment in their work in different ways, and analysing their work

[2] During the preparation of this thesis, there has been a semantic shift away from terms such as 'slavery' and 'slaves' towards the terms 'enslavement' and 'enslaved people'. This thesis is attentive to this shift and retains the use of 'slavery' and 'slaves' when appropriate for context.
[3] Patrick Chamoiseau, *Texaco* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).
[4] Awarded in place of the Nobel Prize which was cancelled for various reasons that year.

together allows a comparative approach. Furthermore, the texts examined here have thus far received sparse attention in terms of ecocritical analysis, therefore this research makes an original contribution to the field.

This thesis commences with a review of the existing — and rapidly increasing — body of work that constructs links between ecocriticism and postcolonialism, particularly in Chamoiseau and Condé's work, an area of study developed by scholars such as Renée K. Gosson (2003),[5] Watts (2003, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011),[6] Deborah B. Gaensbauer (2004),[7] Heidi Bojsen (2005),[8] Lorna Milne (2006),[9] Valérie Loichot (2013),[10] Hannes De Vriese (2015),[11] Louise Hardwick (2016, 2017, 2018),[12] Keithley P. Woolward (2016),[13] and Christina Kullberg (2015, 2018),[14] amongst others, as explored in the chapters that follow. These

[5] Renée K. Gosson, 'For What the Land Tells: An Ecocritical Approach to Patrick Chamoiseau's "Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows"' *Callaloo,* 26(1) (2003), 219-234.

[6] Richard Watts, '"Toutes ces eaux!": Ecology and Empire in Patrick Chamoiseau's *Biblique des derniers gestes*', *MLN*, 118(4) (2003), 895-910; 'Contested Sources: Water as a Commodity/Sign in French Caribbean Literature, *Atlantic Studies*, 4(1) (2007), 87-101; 'Towards an Ecocritical Postcolonialism: Val Plumwood's *Environmental Culture* in Dialogue with Patrick Chamoiseau', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing,* 44(3) (2008), 251-261'; 'État present'; and 'Poisoned Animal, Polluted Form: Chamoiseau's Birds at the Limits of Allegory', *Pacific Coast Philology*, 46(2) (2011), 177-193.

[7] Deborah B. Gaensbauer, 'Reconfiguring Boundaries in Maryse Condé's *Crossing the Mangrove*', *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature*, 28(2) (2004), 396-410.

[8] Heidi Bojsen, 'Flashbacks of an Orchid' in *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture,* ed. by Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Renée K. Gosson, and George B. Handley (Charlottesville; London: University of Virginia Press, 2005), pp. 213-225.

[9] Lorna Milne, *Patrick Chamoiseau: espaces d'une identité antillaise* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006).

[10] Valérie Loichot, *The Tropics Bite Back: Culinary Coups in Caribbean Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

[11] Hannes De Vriese, 'Écritures antillaises entre géopoétique et écopoétique: sur la nature des cataclysmes chez Patrick Chamoiseau et Daniel Maximin', *Revue critique de fixxion française contemporaine,* 0(11) (2015), 16-27 <http://revue-critique-de-fixxion-francaise-contemporaine.org/rcffc/article/view/fx11.14/990> [accessed 11 January 2022].

[12] Louise Hardwick, 'Towards Biopolitical Ecocriticism: the Example of the *Manifeste pour les 'produits' de haute nécessité',* in *French Studies*, 70(2) (2016), 363-382; *Joseph Zobel: Négritude and the Novel* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017); 'Autour du Rocher du Diamant: Chamoiseau et la démarche écocritique', in *Patrick Chamoiseau et la mer des récits*, ed. by Pierre Soubias, Catherine Mazauric, Marie-José Fourtanier, Guy Larroux, and Delphine Rumeau (Pessac: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2018), pp. 189-206.

[13] Keithley P. Woolward, 'Patrick Chamoiseau's *Texaco* or the Ecology of Caribbean Identity', *Journal of West Indian Literature*, 24(2) (2016), 63-73.

[14] Christina Kullberg, 'L'écriture arborescente de la caraïbe: esquisse d'une ecopoétique en situation', *Revue critique de fixxion française contemporaine,* 0(11) (2015), 6-15, <www.revue-critique-de-fixxion-francaise-

existing links will be discussed in further detail after a review of the broader field with reference to how this thesis moves beyond existing studies to discuss the construction and consumption of the environment alongside identity in Francophone Caribbean literature. My research demonstrates that exploring identity and the natural environment together offers fertile and often unexpected ground for exploration. For Chamoiseau, the environment offers a means to develop debates on identity through allegorical representations with a focus on resistance in his earlier narratives, while environmental debates become more central in his later work. Another compelling connection that emerges is between the consumption of food and identity, through the former's potential to demonstrate creolisation and resistance in the latter. This mixing of cultures through food and allegorical readings of its consumption are particularly present in the work of Condé. In addition to reading the texts with a view to connections between identity and the natural environment, this thesis responds to urgent contemporary debates on ecological problems such as food insecurity and declining biodiversity in the Caribbean region — a necessary development in both ecocritical and postcolonial work.

It is also important to note the historicization of the region in relation to the treatment of both people and the land as the domination of people and land has continued from the initial colonisation and slavery, through to emancipation and into the post-colonial era with the departmentalisation of Martinique and Guadeloupe, as will be explored throughout this thesis. Historians of empire and environment Alfred Crosby[15] and John

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contemporaine.org/rcffc/article/view/fx11.14/998> [accessed 16 March 2022]; '*Créolité* and the Regime of Visibility: Reading *Les neuf consciences du Malfini* by Patrick Chamoiseau', *Small Axe*, 22(1) (55) (2018), 115-125.

[15] Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Mackenzie[16] have provided detailed analysis of the environmental impacts of European colonialism and imperialism in an historical context.

After undertaking a review of major studies of Francophone Caribbean literature and postcolonial ecocriticism, which takes an interdisciplinary approach to include research published in the Social Sciences and Environmental Humanities more generally, this thesis works through a carefully selected range of French Caribbean literature. It begins with a comparative exploration of Condé's *Le Cœur à rire et à pleurer* (1999)[17] and Chamoiseau's *Chronique des sept misères* (1986).[18] Little critical attention has been paid to the ways in which these authors depict the environment in their discussions of identity, assimilation and resistance, a gap addressed by the chapter. The analysis then moves to consider *Texaco* (1992),[19] which analyses the founding of a shantytown named after the global oil company and considers the interplay between nature and human-driven environmental exploitation. The following chapter considers Chamoiseau's *Les neuf consciences du Malfini* (2009)[20] as an allegorical and literal representation of environmental degradation in the Caribbean, analysing Chamoiseau's efforts to unify humans and nature while advocating for local and global environmental change. I then return to Condé, considering her key texts *Victoire*, *les saveurs et les mots* (2008)[21] and *Mets et merveilles* (2015),[22] focusing on rebellion and how food and culinary practices function as a metaphor for the reconciliation of multiple cultural

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[16] John MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), and *Imperialism and The Natural World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).

[17] Maryse Condé, *Le Cœur à rire et à pleurer* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1999). Referred to hereafter as *Le Cœur*.

[18] Patrick Chamoiseau, *Chronique des sept misères* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998[1986]). Referred to hereafter as *Chronique*.

[19] Chamoiseau, *Texaco*.

[20] Patrick Chamoiseau, *Les neuf consciences du Malfini* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010[2009]). Referred to hereafter as *Les neuf consciences*.

[21] Maryse Condé, *Victoire*, *les saveurs et les mots* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008). Referred to hereafter as *Victoire.*

[22] Maryse Condé, *Mets et merveilles* (Paris: JC Lattès, 2015). Referred to hereafter as *Mets.*

influences in the Caribbean space. The final chapter is a close reading of Chamoiseau's 2011 essay 'Le Diamant: la beauté comme conscience',[23] as an exploration of ecoliteracy, eco-consciousness and mindfulness, in which the author calls for a focus on an interconnected *Relation* between all living things, thus developing the Martinican poet-philosopher Édouard Glissant's fundamental concept.[24] Analysing the texts in this order allows not only a chronological approach to the authors' works which highlights progression of themes in their work but it also allows a narrative that moves from pollution and destruction to complete devastation, before moving to reconciliation which appears in the final two chapters in the two authors' texts in different ways. This reflects the tone of the authors' works which can be analysed as a journey from despair to hope as the authors develop and mature.

The texts will be analysed in a semi-linear progression to show how the authors' approaches to the representation of the environment alongside political and postcolonial questions of identity have evolved over the three decades in which they were written, and to allow an investigation into areas where the two authors' approaches have become closer together, or further apart. As becomes clear, Chamoiseau's approach evolves over this time to bring nature to the forefront of his writing in a way that challenges the existing domination of humans over the natural environment, as well as to highlight the need for collective responsibility. Condé's writing evolves to challenge memory and how the environment, and the consumption of food, is linked to an ever-widening sense of belonging. I also refer briefly to novels and essays from the authors' wider output, for

[23] Patrick Chamoiseau, 'Le Diamant: la beauté comme conscience', in *Le grand livre de la biodiversité de Guadeloupe et de Martinique,* ed. by Joël Beuze, Lyne Rose and Grégory Guida (Paris: HC Éditions, 2011), pp. 114-119. Referred to hereafter as 'Le Diamant'.
[24] Édouard Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation (Poétique III)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990).

example Chamoiseau's *L'Empreinte à Crusoé*[25] and *Le Papillon et la lumière*,[26] and Condé's *Traversée de la Mangrove*,[27] which are all the subjects of several existing articles on Francophone Caribbean ecocriticism, which provide useful analytic models.[28]

This thesis expands on postcolonial ecocritical analyses of Condé's *Traversée de la Mangrove* to include less obvious examples of postcolonial ecocriticism in three of Condé's other texts: *Le Cœur*, *Victoire*, and *Mets*, which are usually analysed in terms of Francophone Caribbean identity representation relating to diaspora and belonging. A 2015 article by Kullberg[29] analyses the symbolism of the mangrove in *Traversée de la Mangrove* in a volume of the *Revue critique de fixxion française contemporaine*,[30] but does not reference Condé's other texts, therefore this thesis takes the opportunity to develop such ideas in a wider focus. The volume, entitled 'écopoétiques', offers ecocritical readings of other key postcolonial Caribbean literary texts including work by Chamoiseau. It also features an interview between De Vriese and Chamoiseau which references *Texaco* and *Les neuf consciences*,[31] and an article by De Vriese providing ecocritical analysis of these novels along

[25] Patrick Chamoiseau, *L'Empreinte à Crusoé* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012).
[26] Patrick Chamoiseau, *Le Papillon et la lumière* (Paris: Philippe Rey, 2011).
[27] Maryse Condé, *Traversée de la Mangrove* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1989).
[28] For example: on *L'Empreinte à Crusoé*, see: Elena Pessini, 'Patrick Chamoiseau, *L'Empreinte à Crusoé*', *Studi Francesi*, 171, 57(3) (2013), 657-658, Orane Onyekpe-Touzet, 'Un langage pour écrire la nature dans *Lucy* de Jamaica Kincaid (1990) et *L'Empreinte à Crusoé* de Patrick Chamoiseau (2012)', in *Paysages littéraires: Nature, écologie, écocritique dans les littératures caribéennes*, ed. by Pauline Amy de la Bretque and Natacha d'Orlando (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2023), pp. 67-88; on *Le Papillon et la lumière*, see: Joe Nickels, *World Literature and the Geographies of Resistance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); and on *Traversée de la Mangrove*, see: Gaensbauer, 'Reconfiguring Boundaries', Kullberg, 'L'écriture arborescente de la caraïbe', and Sarah Phillips Casteel, *Second Arrivals: Landscape and Belonging in Contemporary Writing of the Americas* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007).
[29] Kullberg, 'L'écriture arborescente de la caraïbe'.
[30] Alain Romestaing, Pierre Schoentjes, and Anne Simon, 'Ecopoétiques', *Revue critique de fixxion française contemporaine,* 0(11) (2015), <http://www.revue-critique-de-fixxion-francaise-contemporaine.org/rcffc/issue/view/21> [accessed 16 March 2022].
[31] Patrick Chamoiseau and Hannes De Vriese, 'L'écriture de la nature ou le texte vivant', *Revue critique de fixxion française contemporaine,* 0(11) (2015), 128-132 <www.revue-critique-de-fixxion-francaise-contemporaine.org/rcffc/article/view/fx11.14/998> [accessed 16 March 2022].

with *Chronique* in relation to their representation of natural and man-made environmental degradation,[32] and such material is discussed and expanded in relation to identity construction and consumption and through comparisons with Condé in this thesis.

Chamoiseau and Condé approach identity in different ways. Chamoiseau's novels are poetic and rich in *oralité*, often exploiting the metonymic gap to provide juxtapositions between French and Creole languages and cultures, and repeatedly showing Creole to be a tool against the way in which French language has worked to dominate Creole culture under the *mission civilisatrice*.[33] Chamoiseau favours a collective approach which can often be male-centred, for example *Éloge de la Créolité*, which he co-wrote with Jean Bernabé and Raphaël Confiant, and which emphasised a need for recognition of Creole identity, which they argue comes from an in-between, hybrid position.[34] The male-centred approach of *Créolité* has been criticised by scholars such as Laura Loth who argues that the movement is 'dominated by a limited number of strong male voices',[35] as discussed further in chapter one. Condé has also challenged *Créolité*, arguing instead for a more individualistic approach to identity and she often shows the potential positive influences of French language and culture, for example in *Le Cœur*. In an interview with Hardwick, she explained that in terms of Creole and writing from a position of individuality, she has never felt a sense of collectivity and has 'toujours été une personne un peu à part'.[36] A comparative approach to the authors'

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[32] Hannes De Vriese, 'Écritures antillaises entre géopoétique et écopoétique'.

[33] It is important to note here that there are links to be made between the death of a language (or linguicide), the repression of knowledge (or epistemicide), and the destruction of the environment (or ecocide).

[34] Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité /In Praise of Creoleness*, bilingual edition, trans. by Mohammed B. Taleb-Khyarn (Paris: Gallimard, 1993[1989]), p. 26.

[35] Laura Loth, 'Rethinking Caribbean Communities: The Dynamics of Natural Disasters in the Works of Gisèle Pineau', in *Caribbean Dynamics: Re-configuring Caribbean Culture*, ed. by Béatrice Boufoy-Bastick and Savrina Chinien (Kingston, Jamaica; Miami, FL: Ian Randle Publishers, 2015), pp. 36-53 (p. 37).

[36] Louise Hardwick, '"J'ai toujours été une personne un peu à part": Questions à Maryse Condé', *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, 9(1) (2006), 111-124 (p. 118).

texts reveals that these two authors' approaches to the representation of the environment are also very different. Chamoiseau overtly links the environment to a collective Caribbean identity, while these connections are often hidden in the work of Condé who focuses on an individual sense of belonging within different environments.

This thesis also examines the role of the production and distribution of food in Chamoiseau's narratives and the consumption of food in Condé's narratives, and how both can be related to identity, applying the methodologies of ecocriticism and postcolonialism to deepen the understanding the relationship between humans, the environment, and food in the French Caribbean. Awareness of global food systems is particularly important in postcolonial regions such as Martinique and Guadeloupe which rely on external food production. More attention is currently being paid to what food contains, where it is sourced, and how food can be distributed fairly; this is increasingly one of the most pressing issues to face humanity throughout the world. The dependency of the islands on the *métropole* for food is a key issue in Francophone Caribbean postcolonial ecocriticism and is discernible in both Chamoiseau and Condé's work. The French decision to continue to develop Martinique and Guadeloupe as what Robert Aldrich and John Connell have named 'transfer economies or consumer colonies'[37] has rendered food security a major issue in the French Caribbean and this dependency was increased further following the decision to make the islands DOMs (*départements d'outre-mer*)[38] in 1946 under the leadership of politician and poet Aimé Césaire. Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert points out that approximately only 2% of

[37] Robert Aldrich and John Connell, *France's Overseas Frontier: Départements et Territoires d'Outre-mer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 7.
[38] Martinique became a *collectivité territoriale unique* in December 2015, while Guadeloupe rejected this proposal. The difference between these two statuses is that Martinique now has one legislative house, whereas Guadeloupe still has two: regional and departmental. See: Britannica, *Martinique* (n.d), <https://www.britannica.com/place/Martinique> [accessed 17 November 2022].

food consumed in Martinique is currently produced there, which is especially concerning when combined with the *bétonisation* (cementification) of the land, the pollution of soils and water, and the destruction of wildlife.[39] These phenomena, combined with a lack control over food production all perpetuate a cultural alienation of people from their land which began with the transatlantic slave trade when Africans, from whom the majority of the French Caribbean population are descended, were uprooted and transported to the Caribbean region.

Moreover, the current trade policy in Martinique and Guadeloupe continues to position the island as an outpost on the periphery, and as a place of consumption which benefits the French metropole, an issue underscored by the 2009 general strikes,[40] which were an example of an attempt to redefine the relationship between the islands and the *métropole*. The strikes highlighted the cost of living in the French overseas departments of Guadeloupe, Martinique, and French Guiana, and the term 'la vie chère' was used to draw attention to inequalities between the *départements* and the French mainland after the sole supplier of petrol to the French Antilles, the SARA,[41] increased prices.[42] Discussing the impact of imported products in Martinique and Guadeloupe, Hardwick quotes studies which show that 'consumer goods and services in the French Antilles cost anything between 20 per cent and 170 per cent more than on the mainland', yet average wages are significantly lower.[43] This increased cost of food is largely because in the region:

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[39] Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, 'Food, Biodiversity, Extinctions: Caribbean Fauna and the Struggle for Food Security during the Conquest of the New World', *West Indian Literature*, 24(2) (2016), 11-26 (p. 23).
[40] Louise Hardwick, 'Depicting Social Dispossession in Guadeloupe: *Nèg maron*, *Lettre ouverte à la jeunesse* and the General Strike of 2009', *Forum of Modern Languages Studies*, 48(3) (2012), 288-305.
[41] Société Anonyme de la Raffinerie des Antilles.
[42] Hardwick, 'Towards Biopolitical Ecocriticism', 363.
[43] *Ibid.,* 373.

> [i]mported products are subject to a unique added tax called 'l'octroi de mer', or sea charge, which originates from 1670 and is a remnant of the colonial mercantilist policy known as the 'droit de poids', one of the earliest examples of an instrumental attitude towards the nonhuman.[44]

Hardwick also argues that '[t]he neo-liberal phase of multi-national global capitalism has served to further exacerbate economic dispossession in the Antilles',[45] further damaging the Antillean relationship between land and food production. This highlights the political and cultural urgency of debates about the metropolitan domination of the French Caribbean environment and the continuation of an enforced estrangement between Antilleans and the land. Yarimar Bonilla points out that the 2009 strikes transformed daily life and led to the use of local markets and Guadeloupean people's own gardens for food.[46] As it will be seen in chapters two and three, this is comparable to the actions taken by characters in Chamoiseau's publications *Chronique* and *Texaco*, which predated the strikes, in response to French domination of the land and food distribution methods. Bonilla also argues that the strikes enabled the islands to both imagine and experience 'economic, social and political configurations […] by providing a break from the nexus of quotidian life'.[47] This imagination and experience of economic, political, and social alternatives can be seen in the poetic rhetoric in *Manifeste pour les 'produits' de haute nécessité,* written during the strikes by well-known cultural figures based in Martinique, including Chamoiseau and Glissant. *Manifeste* is written as a challenge against consumerism and capitalism, which the authors claim exploit the islands and as a result, 'il y a donc une haute nécessité [...] de [créer] notre

[44] *Ibid*.
[45] *Ibid*., 367.
[46] Yarimar Bonilla, 'Guadeloupe Is Ours', *Interventions*, 12(1) (2010), 125-137 (p. 126).
[47] *Ibid*., 127.

autosuffisance énergétique et alimentaire'.[48] The idea of self-sufficiency is also hinted at in 2001 essay *Lettre ouverte à la jeunesse*, as Guadeloupean author Ernest Pépin urges younger populations to break away from '[l]a sacro-sainte consummation'.[49] Hardwick discusses *Manifeste* to highlight how Glissant and other authors have been criticised by scholars such as Chris Bongie and Peter Hallward for a lack of political activism in their later work which coincided with a shift towards aesthetics and poetics.[50] She mentions that to the contrary, Charles Forsdick and Celia Britton 'identify a militant politics still at work' in Glissant's later work.[51] She identifies *Manifeste* as a specific example, arguing that it:

> offers an opportunity to work through a politics of culture as it emerges in the context of the social unrest of 2009. In so doing, strategies with which to implement change and to challenge the dominant political order — particularly where the environment is concerned — become apparent.[52]

For Hardwick, an ecocritical reading of *Manifeste* demonstrates its 'contribution to wider debates on questions of food security and climate change in the Caribbean'.[53] Reliance on food imports has been further exacerbated by the *chlordécone* (kepone) scandal, which emerged in 2007,[54] as explored in detail in chapter two. The pesticide's use against weevils

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[48] Ernest Breleur, Patrick Chamoiseau, Serge Domi, Gérard Delver, Édouard Glissant, Guillaume Pigeard de Gurbert, Olivier Portecop, Olivier Pulvar, and Jean-Claude William, *Manifeste pour les 'produits' de haute nécessité* (Paris: Galaade Éditions, 2009), p. 5.
[49] Ernest Pépin, 'Lettre Ouverte à la Jeunesse', *Rapport du Conseil Economique et Social, Régional de Martinique* (2010), 5-22 (p. 6).
[50] See: Chris Bongie, *Friends and Enemies: The Scribal Politics of Post/colonial Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008); Peter Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing between the Singular and the Specific* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).
[51] Hardwick, 'Towards Biopolitical Ecocriticism', 364. See: Celia Britton, 'Globalization and Political Action in the Work of Édouard Glissant', *Small Axe*, 13 (2009), 1-11; Charles Forsdick, 'Local, National, Regional, Global: Glissant and the Postcolonial Manifesto', in *Caribbean Globalizations, 1492 to the Present Day*, ed. by Eva Sansavior and Richard Scholar (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), pp. 227-244.
[52] *Ibid*., 363.
[53] *Ibid.*, 364.
[54] For more information about the scandal and its effects see: John Lichfield, '"Health disaster" in French Caribbean linked to pesticides', *Independent* (19 September 2007) <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/health-disaster-in-french-caribbean-linked-to-pesticides-402816.html> [accessed 6 July 2022], and Didier Torny, 'Managing an Everlastingly Polluted World. Food

on banana plantations has 'resulted in the long-term pollution of Caribbean DOM soils' due to its continued use despite being banned years earlier in metropolitan France.[55] The effects of this pesticide are predicted to last for centuries, demonstrating another domination of land and food production by the French *métropole*, and highlighting the negative effects of a continued dependency of Martinique and Guadeloupe on imported produce, a critique that can be seen in many of Chamoiseau's novels, and adding to the problems raised during the 2009 strikes. Furthermore, as Watts argues, there has been a lack of ecocritical work in the field of postcolonial studies, reinforcing this construction of the environment as an 'Other' dominated by (post)colonialism.[56] The word 'Other', capitalised, is used throughout the thesis to mean the 'Other' constructed by colonialism. Chamoiseau often reappropriates and reifies this word using capitalisation such as in *Frères migrants* (2017), his work on the importance of human interconnectedness in the face of repeated migrant crises and tragedies: 'Les poètes déclarent que le racisme, la xénophobie, l'homophobie, l'indifférence à l'Autre […] est un acte criminel'.[57] The 2009 strikes, as well as more recent ones in 2021 and 2022 against rising prices and mandatory vaccinations for healthcare workers during the Covid-19 pandemic — a reluctance that can be linked to the continued effects of *chlordécone* and a related mistrust of the health system[58] — demonstrate that there is an urgent need for

Policies and Community Health Actions in the French West Indies', in *Toxicants, Health and Regulation since 1945*, ed. by Soraya Boudia and Nathalie Jas (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), pp. 117-134.

[55] Hardwick, 'Depicting Social Dispossession', 301.

[56] Watts, 'Towards an Ecocritical Postcolonialism', 253.

[57] Patrick Chamoiseau, *Frères migrants* (Paris: Seuil, 2017), p. 133.

[58] See: Romain Cruse, 'Frustration in the French Antilles', *Le Monde Diplomatique* (7 February 2022) <https://mondediplo.com/2022/02/07guadeloupe> [accessed 23 August 2022]; and Tiffany Fillon 'As social unrest explodes in French West Indies, chlordecone is key to the crisis', *France24* (8 December 2021), <https://www.france24.com/en/americas/20211208-as-social-unrest-explodes-in-french-west-indies-chlordecone-is-key-to-the-crisis> [accessed 23 August 2022].

the kinds of discussions concerning metropolitan domination of the French Caribbean environment that this thesis promotes.

The ongoing effects of human attempts to master the global environment from the time of colonisation onwards inform much of the discussion of climate change in the Caribbean. Demonstrating the importance of breaking down boundaries between not only humans and nature, but also national borders in the Caribbean, Matthew Bishop and Anthony Payne have argued that climate change 'is the ultimate Pan-Caribbean issue',[59] underscoring the importance of applying an ecocritical postcolonial approach to the Caribbean in a way that works across linguistic and geographical borders. Considering the effects of natural and anthropogenic environmental problems in a literary space highlights the potential of postcolonial ecocritical studies to work beyond these constructed borders. It also demonstrates the urgency of applying the field to the Caribbean region which allows the potential for suggested ways to move beyond a constructed nature/culture dualism. There are also strong links to be found between climate science and postcolonial ecocritical, and ecoliteral, theories and literature. British scientist, James Lovelock's 1972 Gaia theory,[60] that everything on Earth is part of one interconnected and self-regulating eco-system has formed the basis of much research on climate science,[61] and can be linked to Glissant's theories of *Relation* and *Tout-Monde*, and by extension to Chamoiseau's arguments in much of his work about the necessity to consider the world as one interconnected 'horizontale plénitude du vivant', a concept which is explored shortly and in chapters four and six.

[59] Matthew Bishop and Anthony Payne, 'Climate Change and the Future of Caribbean Development', *Journal of Development Studies*, 48(10) (2012), 1536-1553.
[60] James Lovelock, 'Gaia as Viewed Through the Atmosphere', *Atmospheric Environment*, 6(8) (1972), 579-580.
[61] Tim Radford, 'James Lovelock at 100: the Gaia Saga Continues', *Nature.com* (25 June 2019) <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-01969-y> [accessed 4 August 2022].

Highlighting the links between ecocritical work and postcolonial studies (focusing on Spanish post-colonial[62] locations), Paravisini-Gebert argues that 'environmental problems are a manifestation of other, larger problems endemic to culture, society, and economic structures in colonized societies struggling to continue to exist in a globalized world'.[63] She seems to imply here that to solve environmental problems, such as climate change, it is necessary to look at the problems that are ingrained in certain cultural, societal and economic structures. It appears she is therefore also saying that to solve the problems that arise because of these structures, an exploration of environmental problems is needed, requiring work to combine the fields of postcolonialism and ecocriticism. Some of the 'larger' problems to which she could be referring are concepts that are key in postcolonial criticism — capitalism, the Hegelian master-slave dialectic,[64] orientalism, subjugation, and dualism, which for the purposes of this work can all be extended to the environment and are all explored further throughout the thesis. Applying ecocriticism, as 'the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment' which allows 'an earth-centred approach to literary studies',[65] to postcolonialism is an important development in scholarship as it demonstrates that it is not only the human population that has been affected by colonialism, but also the environment and food production methods. Considering René Descartes' declaration in 1637 that man should become the 'maîtres et

[62] This term is used throughout to differentiate from 'postcolonial' to mean the period of time after colonisation, rather than the persistence of the impact of colonialism on structures, people, and land in previously colonised regions.
[63] Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, 'Extinctions', in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* ed. by Greg Garrard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 354.
[64] Explained in more detail in chapter one. See: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Bamberg und Würzburg: Bey Joseph Anton Goebhardt, 1807). Translated into English as: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A. V Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).
[65] Cheryll Glofelty, 'Introduction', in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. by Cheryll Glofelty and Harold Fromm (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), p. xix.

possesseurs de la nature',[66] a sentiment that underpinned the colonisation of the Americas (and elsewhere), alongside an increasing climate emergency demonstrates that it is necessary to deconstruct this human/nature hierarchy and dualism through an application of the aforementioned postcolonial theories to the environment, something that is highlighted in Chamoiseau's writing. In interviews, Condé has criticised this dominating and compartmentalised mode of thinking: 'le colonisateur a toujours voulu posséder le monde, détruire le monde, dominer le monde. Nous, nous nous contenons de découper le monde en parties et de posséder certaines parties du monde',[67] a critique which also emerges in her literary work. This provides a starting point for an ecocritical exploration into how identity and environment have both been constructed for metropolitan 'consumption', and how the two are intertwined in Francophone Caribbean literature and culture.

Both the identities and the environments of Martinique and Guadeloupe have been shaped and constructed by the same (post)colonial forces, yet responsibility and rights are not always met equitably. Throughout this thesis, I argue that construction can refer to the way in which the Caribbean has been both literally and metaphorically altered and exploited by European powers since the initial colonisation by Christopher Columbus of an island in the Bahamas on 12 October 1492, and his subsequent arrival in Guadeloupe in 1493 during his second voyage to the Americas, and in Martinique during his fourth voyage in 1502.[68] Underpinning analysis throughout this thesis is the notion of how 'consumption' is entwined with the 'construction' of the French Caribbean. The term consumption is also understood

[66] René Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode* (Cork: Primento Digital Publishing, 2015[1637]), p. 70.
[67] Dawn Fulton, '"Respecter l'étrangeté de l'autre": entretien avec Maryse Condé', *Dalhousie French Studies*, 76 (2006), 149-153 (p. 152).
[68] Christopher Columbus, *The Journal of Christopher Columbus*, translated by Cecil Jane, revised and annotated by L.A. Vigneras (London: A. Blond & Orion Press, 1960[1492]).

both literally and metaphorically. On the one hand, it refers to the literal exploitation of the land and its natural resources by European powers since early colonisation, and to the ways in which this continues to affect the relationship in the French Caribbean between people and the land, inviting a reading which considers the theoretical insights of ecocriticism alongside key postcolonial concepts. On the other hand, it refers to the metaphorical consumption of the literary and cultural representation of identity and the environment by French metropolitan audiences,[69] as well as the literal and metaphorical borders through which these current relationships have been created and maintained. At the centre of this investigation is the argument that cultural output from the islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe responds to and critiques the construction and consumption of identity and environment, in a postcolonial strategy of resistance against European hegemony, taking aim at the historical and ongoing dominant European construction and consumption of Caribbean space.

Chamoiseau and Condé represent identity and the environment as interconnected elements, in dialogue with each other. This thesis analyses a common theme — resistance — which emerges in the works of the two authors in quite distinct ways. My comparative approach enables the two very different authors' methods of engaging with the environment to be analysed. I demonstrate that Condé favours what I term an 'indirect' approach which harnesses personal, individual stories to emphasise the ways in which the Caribbean environment, and the preparation and consumption of local food in particular, are an integral component of Caribbean culture. In contrast, I argue that Chamoiseau adopts

[69] It is important to note that this thesis uses a different approach to those works which have exoticised or subjugated the region and its people for 'consumption', as it will use the authors' voices as a tool to explore ecocriticism, as a way of presenting the region from the 'inside'. However, this work aims to be consciously aware of its privileged and outside view of the Caribbean from Europe in order to avoid any objectification.

a ‘direct’ approach which confronts the devastating effects of colonialism on the environment in a direct and poetic way, but also focuses on specific Martinican practices of growing and consuming food which arise from colonialism. In particular, Chamoiseau focuses on how these traditions are now under threat from modern global consumerism, a phenomenon which he critiques, as it relies on patterns of obtaining food which still directly echo the pattern of dependency between colony and metropolitan centre set up under colonialism. Using the lens of ecocriticism to analyse the effect of colonialism on Francophone Caribbean literature and culture allows for a move away from anthropocentrism in order to analyse the construction of the Caribbean in a way that incorporates the domination of the environment in postcolonial discourse. This approach exemplifies this thesis’ claim that Francophone Caribbean literature presents identity and the environment as deeply interconnected.

In all the literary texts and essays analysed in this thesis, the construction of the environment serves as a lens through which a postcolonial Francophone Caribbean identity is explored. The literal and metaphorical consumption of the environment and food can be compared to the consumption of humanity by (post)colonialism and this highlights the ongoing struggle for autonomy in the region, particularly against the backdrop of urgent climate change debate. Following a review of the field of postcolonial ecocriticism in chapter one, chapter two examines the role of assimilation and estrangement in the construction and consumption of both identity and the environment as a location of both home and resistance in Condé*’s Le Cœur* and Chamoiseau’s *Chronique*. The chapter builds on a small body of ecocritical work on Chamoiseau’s *Chronique* by Gosson (2003) and Milne (2006), and provides new insights into Condé*’s Le Cœur,* which has received no ecocritical attention. The

chapter focuses on key postcolonial concepts *Créolité* and dualism to argue that the authors bring a sense of self and their environment together; for Chamoiseau, it is using anthropomorphism and for Condé, the focus is on consumption and belonging. The chapter also begins to consider key contemporary issues that emerge through both authors' work such as the *chlordécone* scandal, food production, and consumerism and analyses the resultant sense of estrangement between people and land.

Chapter three investigates Chamoiseau's *Texaco* and how the sites of l'En-ville and le Quartier, and indeed the novel's form itself as parallel to this, operate in terms of both sites of consumption and as a wider ecosystem of identities which overlap and intertwine. The chapter develops Woolward's contention that the protagonist's identity in Chamoiseau's *Texaco* is formed in 'the interactions between bodies and land in the dynamic and transformative "eco-system" that is the Caribbean',[70] highlighting Chamoiseau's attempts to unite humanity and nature. Watts' concept of a 'pollution of form'[71] will also be analysed in terms of Chamoiseau's criticism of European hegemony and domination of both nature and humanity. The chapter focuses on imperial dominance, contamination, and pollution to argue that while the novel serves as an alternative history of Martinique, it also functions as a site of discussion about how to resist and move beyond human and environmental exploitation.

Chapter four explores how Chamoiseau's *Les neuf consciences* progresses the author's earlier work on identity and resistance in *Chronique* and *Texaco* to explore how to move beyond dualism, while also highlighting the destruction of the Rabuchon forest in

[70] Woolward, 'Patrick Chamoiseau's *Texaco*', 72.
[71] Watts, 'Contested Sources', 93-24.

Martinique through the eyes of birds who live there. The chapter develops ideas presented by Kullberg, who argues that Chamoiseau's *Les neuf consciences* depicts Martinique from a bird's-eye view to show a different way of viewing Martinique than has been promoted through 'the other's gaze'.[72] This chapter considers the novel's structural form alongside a construction-consumption dynamic in relation to the representation of the degradation of Martinique, in addition to investigating the functions of *Créolité*, *Relation*, allegorical representation, Buddhism and of horizontality in the novel and how Chamoiseau brings ecological problems to the forefront of his writing. The analysis moves beyond existing studies of the novel to explore these environmental issues as they emerge in the narrative, for example global warming, the sargassum seaweed problem, droughts, conservation, and changing ecosystems.

Chapter five returns to Condé, investigating the role of environment and food in a sense of belonging and home in *Victoire* and *Mets*, and demonstrating how Condé uses food and culinary practices as a metaphor for the reconciliation of multiple cultural influences in the Caribbean space and as a way of forging a more direct relationship with the Caribbean environment. It also analyses the roles of gender and nationality in the works and how they relate to the construction and consumption of food and identity. The chapter investigates how Condé unites cooking and writing while simultaneously exploring how the themes of memory, rebellion, and location work to highlight links to the Guadeloupean and overseas environments that Condé has experienced.

Chapter six turns to Chamoiseau's essay 'Le Diamant', to argue that he now invites his readers to think ecoliterally about the world around them and to highlight once more, in

[72] Kullberg, '*Créolité* and the Regime of Visibility', 116.

a more direct way, the necessity of bringing humans and nature together. His concepts of 'beauté' and the related 'horizontale plénitude' emerge here as essential ways of viewing the world, and his concept of *trace-mémoire* brings these ideas together with the history of the Rocher du Diamant and the bay that overlooks it to suggest that we all need to look more closely at every living thing.

Both authors use their work to highlight the importance of a connection to their surrounding environments and how this has been disrupted by colonialism and imperialism. My study shows how in Chamoiseau's later work he attempts to give the natural world a voice and to bring the consequences of colonialism and imperialism on it to the forefront, while Condé brings cooking and writing together to demonstrate how the use of the lands' resources is connected to a sense of self and belonging. The thesis advances the idea that there is the potential to break down a dualism between humanity and the environment in the Francophone Caribbean as a form of resistance against European hegemony over history, language, culture, politics, and the environment. Underpinning this research is a consideration of the above in conjunction with contemporary climate change and food insecurity debates, and a decentring of humans from postcolonialism.

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ecocriticism and Environmental Change

The intertwining of humanity, the humanities, and the understanding and representation of nature and science characterises the field of ecocriticism and is the position from which this thesis is written. In *Ecocriticism*, Greg Garrard quotes Cheryll Glofelty's 1996 definition that 'ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment', allowing 'an earth-centred approach to literary studies.'[1] Garrard adds to this definition that '[e]cocriticism is the study of the relationship of the human and non-human, throughout human and culture history and entailing critical analysis of the term 'human' itself.'[2] Hardwick writes while 'there is no single definition of this broad concept', ecocriticism 'implies a sustained focus on interactions with and reactions to the environment

[1] Glofelty, 'Introduction', p. xix.
[2] Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), p. 5.

in the literary sphere.'[3] In their 2011 article 'Literature and Environment', Lawrence Buell, Ursula Heise and Karen Thornber discuss the origins of the term, which they trace back to Joseph Meeker's *The Comedy of Survival* (1972) and William Rueckert's *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism* (1978).[4] Buell, Heise and Thornber explore the development of the field as an increasingly worldwide movement which developed firstly as analysis of the self-nature relation with an emphasis on place-attachment at a local/regional level, and which moved towards a collective experience as an historical force with a focus on environmental injustice and belonging.[5] They also point out how the field has expanded to other forms of expressive media such as art and music.[6] Garrard argues that ecocriticism 'is unique amongst contemporary literary and cultural theories because of its close relationship with the science of ecology'.[7] He argues that it is important for ecocritics to 'transgress disciplinary boundaries and develop their own "ecological literacy" as far as possible' in order to acknowledge that there are 'serious arguments about the existence of the problems, their extent, and the nature of the threat and the possible solutions to them'.[8] Buell, Heise and Thornber also argue that literature 'can contribute significantly to the understanding of environmental problems' and that today's increasing 'environmental concerns must be addressed qualitatively as well as quantitatively.'[9] The authors call for

[3] Hardwick, *Joseph Zobel*, p. 56.
[4] Lawrence Buell, Ursula K. Heise, and Karen Thornber, 'Literature and Environment', *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 36 (2011), 417-440 (p. 418).
[5] *Ibid*., 433.
[6] An example of this can be seen in the work of photographer Lucas Foglia, who focuses on the human relationship to changing landscapes using photographs in his book *Human Nature* (Paso Robles, CA: Nazraeli, 2017). Further examples can be found in the conclusion to this thesis.
[7] Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, p. 5.
[8] *Ibid*.
[9] Buell, Heise, and Thornber, 'Literature and Environment', 418.

ecocriticism to respond to changes in environmentalism and to confront emerging concerns such as climate change, a call to which this thesis responds.

In discussing the origins of ecocriticism, Garrard locates Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1963), as 'the founding text of modern environmentalism'.[10] This cultural-scientific book denounced the use of pesticide DDT (Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane) as the cause of the poisoning of food chains from insects to birds whose numbers were decreasing rapidly in both the United Kingdom and United States of America.[11] Robin McKie points out that Carson's influence was so far-reaching that Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth trace their origins back to the text,[12] and Jonathon Porritt, former director of Friends of the Earth, argues that 'Carson was the first to give a voice to that concern in a way that came through loud and clear to society'.[13] *Silent Spring* made the topic accessible to a wider audience, demonstrating the power of literature and academic work in raising awareness of environmental issues. It was not until over a decade later that DDT was banned in the USA, and 1984 in the UK, and despite Carson's exposure of the dangers of pesticides for fragile ecosystems, they continue to be used and threaten the environment today, as seen in the *chlordécone* scandal that affects the Francophone Caribbean, discussed in more detail in chapters two and six. This hierarchy of humans above both non-human animals and the natural environment, constructed as a nature/culture dualism, is a key focus of ecocritical studies and something that ecocriticism aims to denounce and deconstruct. The underlying message of *Silent Spring* is that everything in nature is related and interwoven, which is

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[10] Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, p. 2.
[11] Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (New York: Houghton Miffin, 1962).
[12] Robin McKie, 'Rachel Carson and the legacy of Silent Spring', *The Guardian* (27 May 2012) <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2012/may/27/rachel-carson-silent-spring-anniversary> [accessed 9 October 2017].
[13] *Ibid*.

echoed in Chamoiseau's literary and non-literary work, and in the work of his collaborator/mentor figure Glissant before him.

The heightened awareness and investigation of the interwoven systems found in nature is central to the discipline known as ecoliteracy, to which I turn in chapter six. The term, coined by physicist and philosopher Fritjof Capra, is about an applied approach to the environment which focuses on the education of ecosystems. In 1995, Capra co-founded the Center for Ecoliteracy in California, which aims to bring an ecoliteral education to every child, encouraging every school to commit to 'cultivating ecological literacy through transformational experiences in the cafeteria, classroom, and garden that educate students about the food system and its connection to the environment.'[14] Professor of ecological linguistics, Arran Stibbe, has written about the importance of ecological education in his edited 2009 interdisciplinary book, *The Handbook of Sustainable Literacy*, which reflects on the skills people need to thrive in relation to the many environmental threats facing the world today.[15] Stephan Harding, based at Shumacher College in Totnes (UK) which focuses on sustainable living education, has also written about the importance of sustainable thinking and education that considers ecological systems in his 2011 book *Grow Small, Think Beautiful*,[16] which includes contributions from Lovelock and Capra.

In terms of the interdependence and consciousness of all living beings, anthropologist Philippe Descola explores the idea that all beings have a consciousness through his assertion that non-human beings are distinguishable from humans 'only by their

[14] Center for Ecoliteracy, *What We Do* (n.d), <https://www.ecoliteracy.org/about> [Accessed 13 March 2023].
[15] Arran Stibbe, *The Handbook of Sustainable Literacy: Skills for a Changing World* (Totnes: Green Books, 2009).
[16] Stephan Harding, *Grow Small, Think Beautiful: Ideas for a Sustainable Planet* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2011).

different physical aspects and their lack of language', highlighting an interrelatedness.[17] Philosopher Giorgio Agamben also writes about the ways in which humans have been thought of as superior to and distinct from animals and he investigates how the man/animal distinction that has been developed in Western thought has had a lasting impact on a wide range of academic disciplines.[18] A similar message can be seen in ecological philosopher Timothy Morton's *Ecology without Nature*, in which he argues that everything in the universe has a consciousness and is interdependent.[19] This is similar to the way in which Chamoiseau discusses high- and eco-consciousnesses in his interview with De Vriese,[20] concepts that emerge in his novels *Chronique* and *Les neuf consciences* and his essay 'Le Diamant', discussed in chapters two, four and six. Eco-consciousness can be explored through the Hegelian master-slave dialectic[21] to show the ways in which the natural environment, alongside identity, has been constructed and mastered both literally and metaphorically in the (post)colonial world. The dialectic, explored further in chapter two, can be interpreted to mean that all consciousnesses are inextricably interwoven and the master (human) cannot realise self-consciousness without identifying with the 'Other' (nature) and therefore realising their consciousness.

More recently, ecocriticism has started to focus on an increasing awareness that human activity is damaging the environment at an unprecedented rate. Nobel Prize–winning chemist Paul Crutzen coined the term 'Anthropocene' in 2000 in a paper written with

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[17] Philippe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, trans. by Janet Lloyd (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 5.
[18] Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. by Kevin Attell (Stanford: University of Stanford Press, 2004[2002]).
[19] Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (London: Harvard University Press, 2007).
[20] Chamoiseau and De Vriese, 'L'écriture de la nature'.
[21] Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*.

limnologist Eugene Stoermer.[22] Crutzen argued that human activity has damaged the environment at such a rate that we entered a new geological epoch which may have begun in the late 18th century. The term has now become widely used in many disciplines to describe the unprecedented change that humans have inflicted on the Earth since the industrial revolution and is increasingly being used in ecocritical studies. It is important to note that this change can be seen earlier in the Caribbean region as a result of colonialism, capitalism, and extractive plantations, and that all humans are not equally responsible for epochal change, an argument central to the term 'plantationocene'.[23] The term is also central to Martinican philosopher and scholar Malcom Ferdinand's work, discussed shortly.

In Anglophone ecocritical studies, Sarah Phillips Casteel extended the work of Buell (who proposed a combination of nature and culture rather than seeing them as separate worlds) to include non-white narratives of landscape in an original book-length study *Second Arrivals*.[24] Alongside narratives from Korea and Japan, she writes about the Caribbean region's rich texts in an ecocritical examination of displacement and diaspora, including English translations of work such as Condé's *Traversée de la Mangrove*. Phillips Casteel compares Condé's novel to Antiguan author Jamaica Kincaid's *My Garden Book*,[25] which explores the physical replication of one landscape into another as the protagonist accidentally re-creates a nostalgic map of the Caribbean and the sea around it using plants in her garden in Vermont, USA, explored further in chapter five in relation to Condé's *Mets*. Phillips Casteel links ecocriticism to postcolonial and diasporic identities to show how rural

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[22] Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, 'The "Anthropocene"', *Global Change Newsletter*, (41) (2000), 17-18.
[23] For the origin of the term, see: Donna Haraway et al., 'Anthropologists Are Talking – About the Anthropocene', Journal of Anthropology, 81(3) (2016), 535-564.
[24] Phillips Casteel, *Second Arrivals.*
[25] Jamaica Kincaid, *My Garden (Book)* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1999).

spaces are represented as sites of emplacement in postcolonial literature, and discusses the role of the city in juxtaposition to the countryside as a tool not of inclusivity and empowerment, but as a distraction.[26] This thesis expands these insights to include Francophone texts by Chamoiseau and Condé, to examine the authors' approaches to rural and urban landscapes in terms of postcolonial identity, paying attention to the contention that an ecocritical approach should bring nature and humanity together into the same analytical space.

As the locations studied in this thesis are islands, water emerges as a key theme linking identity and a sense of belonging in the natural environment. In *The Other America* (1998), J. Michael Dash investigates the influences of water on the creation of a Caribbean identity, with a specific focus on using Glissant's analysis to approach Caribbean literature. In his introduction, Dash investigates the sea as a symbol of the Caribbean, agreeing with Cuban author Antonio Benítez-Rojo, who argued in *La isla que se repite*[27] that the Caribbean sea explodes outwards from the islands, pushing people in different directions.[28] Dash points out that this imagery is also used by Glissant in *Le Discours antillais*[29] and *Poétique de la Relation,*[30] as Glissant posits that the Caribbean sea is 'not an inland, centralizing body of water but one that explodes outward'.[31] The sea also plays an important role in Chamoiseau's novels, for example in *Chronique* in which Chamoiseau uses imagery of the

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[26] Phillips Casteel, *Second Arrivals,* pp. 4-6.
[27] Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *La isla que se repite: el Caribe y la perspectiva posmoderna* (Hanover: Editions del Norte, 1989); Translated into English as *The Repeating Island,* trans. by James Maraniss (London: Duke University Press, 1996).
[28] J. Michael Dash, *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), pp. 8-9.
[29] Édouard Glissant, *Le Discours antillais* (Paris: Seuil, 1981).
[30] Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation.*
[31] Dash, *The Other America*, p. 14.

waves and drowning to highlight the collective memory of struggles experienced during enslavement. Examples of the sea's importance can also be found in Condé's work, particularly in *Victoire* and *Le Cœur*, in which the sea appears to represent identity turbulence, as explored further in chapters two and five.

In the context of the sea, it is also important to note the islands' vulnerability to rising sea levels, an important factor in the wider Caribbean region's voice in global climate change debates. A number of articles discuss the vulnerability and visibility of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), a grouping of 39 small islands and low-lying coastal states in multiple locations around the world,[32] on the world stage.[33] In 2012, Bishop and Payne discussed the effects of climate change on the future of Caribbean development, pointing out the role of all islands in the climate change debate.[34] They argue that despite islands being the areas of the world that are most vulnerable to global warming, they are the communities that are currently being ignored on the world stage, perpetuating domination of (post)colonial regions by larger states. Bishop and Payne posit that for there to be any significant change, the problem of climate change must be recognised as pan-Caribbean, through a 'reconstruction of broad regional academic, political and policy linkages.'[35] They argue that there is a lack of climate change literature focusing on its socio-economic and political impact on the Caribbean region, and due to climate change's 'intrinsic trans-boundary nature, it will, over time, come to impact upon the political economy of every territory of the

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[32] For more on AOSIS and its members, see: Alliance of Small Island States, *About Us, AOSIS Member States* (n.d), <https://www.aosis.org/about/member-states/> [accessed 14 November 2022].
[33] For example: Bishop and Payne, 'Climate Change', and Richard Benwell, 'The Canaries in the Coalmine: Small States as Climate Change Champions', *The Round Table*, 100 (2011), 199-211.
[34] Bishop and Payne, 'Climate Change'.
[35] *Ibid*., 1550.

region in broadly similar and possibly dramatic ways'.[36] Although Martinique and Guadeloupe are not members of AOSIS due to their status in relation to metropolitan France, these issues nevertheless directly apply to them as small Caribbean islands. Martinique and Guadeloupe are associate members of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) UN group,[37] who 'face unique social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities',[38] and are supported by UN projects, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF),[39] and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC).[40]

Bishop and Payne analyse the difficulties that small island states have faced in demanding influence in climate change negotiations as the aims of AOSIS have been at odds with the increasingly large powers of the G7 plus China group.[41] Richard Benwell also argues that small states 'cannot turn the tide of international events,' and that independence from larger states is not an option, pointing to the example of not being able to afford adequate flood defences.[42] However, Payne argues that through AOSIS and SIDS, the Caribbean has been able to respond to climate change at a global level, by demanding 'reductions in CO2 and rates of deforestation' and 'financial support for climate change mitigation and

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[36] *Ibid*.
[37] United Nations, *List of SIDS* (n.d), <https://www.un.org/ohrlls/content/list-sids> [accessed 9 March 2023].
[38] United Nations, *About Small Island Developing States* (n.d), <https://www.un.org/ohrlls/content/about-small-island-developing-states> [accessed 9 March 2023].
[39] A parallel can be drawn here between the destruction of the Caribbean islands as a result of colonialism and the destruction of Pacific islands by imperial nuclear testing by the United States, the United Kingdom, and France which lasted around fifty years. See: Nic Maclellan, 'The Nuclear Age in the Pacific Islands', *The Contemporary Pacific*, 17(2) (2005), 363-372, and Bengt Danielsson, 'Poisoned Pacific: The Legacy of French Nuclear Testing', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 46(2) (1990), 22-31.
[40] United Nations, *About Small Island Developing States.*
[41] Bishop and Payne, 'Climate Change', 1542.
[42] Benwell, 'The Canaries in the Coalmine', 200.

adaptation'.[43] COP-23, in November 2017, was significant in this respect as it was presided over by Fiji, the first small island state to do so.

Vulnerability and dependency have continued in many areas in the Caribbean region due to the replacement of economic reliance on exportation of commodities such as bananas and sugar with a dependence on tourism.[44] Rising sea levels will greatly affect Caribbean coastal tourist zones and as Bishop and Payne point out, a 'dependence upon air travel, the tendency of cruise liners to pollute the Caribbean Sea, the wider issue of heavy exploitation of uniquely delicate eco-systems, all render the [tourism] industry's developmental benefit, at best, ambiguous.'[45] Furthermore, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)[46] has predicted that the increasing vulnerability of islands to rising sea levels will also lead to compromised drinking water as the sea contaminates freshwater resources. Watts points out that France plays 'a significant role in the commodification of water and the social organization that it implies.'[47] For the Francophone Caribbean, rising seas could increase dependency on bottled water from the metropole. Watts explains that French water privatisation companies — Suez and Vivendi Environment — 'operate extensively in the Francophone post colonies', providing an example of colonial networks

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[43] Anthony Payne, *The Global Politics of Unequal Development* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 208.

[44] Bishop and Payne, 'Climate Change', 1538. This dependence on tourism has been discussed by Mimi Sheller in her article 'The New Caribbean Complexity: Mobility Systems, Tourism and Spatial Rescaling', *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 30(2), 189-203. For more on the links between tourism and environmentalism in a global context, see: Stefan Gössling 'Global Environmental Consequences of Tourism', Global Environmental Change, 12(4) (2002), 283-302. The issue of sustainable tourism is increasingly important in the Caribbean region, something Sheller has written about in her article 'Reconstructing Tourism in the Caribbean: Connecting Pandemic Recovery, Climate Resilience and Sustainable Tourism Through Mobility Justice', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, (2020), 29(9) (2021), 1436-1449, and that Maharaj Vijay Reddy and Keith Wilks focus on in their edited book *Tourism, Climate Change and Sustainability* (London: Routledge, 2013).

[45] *Ibid*.

[46] See: IPCC, *The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (n.d), <www.ipcc.ch/> [accessed 13 March 2023] for more information about the work of this organisation.

[47] Watts, 'Contested Sources', 91.

being 'reformulated into neo-colonial ones.'[48] He analyses symbolism of the metropole's power over Francophone postcolonial autonomy through the imagery that French bottled water conveys — the evocative names and bottles of Evian, Volvic and Vittel and the purity of French springs. He argues that pollution of, or conflict over, water in postcolonial narratives is reflected in what he calls a 'pollution of form' — 'chronologically discontinuous, generically unstable, multilingual narratives'.[49] He analyses this hypothesis in Chamoiseau's *Biblique des derniers gestes*,[50] work I develop in chapters three and four, through analysis of Chamoiseau's use of footnotes, Creole language and overlapping, mosaic narratives in *Texaco* and *Les neuf consciences*.

The influence of natural disasters is also explored in this thesis when the changes wrought by both humans and the natural environment itself reflect wider societal shifts. The Caribbean islands are subject to violent volcanic eruptions; Jean Khalfa discusses the volcano for Césaire as a symbol of activity, or 'l'événement volcanique',[51] as well as of 'd'une conscience aliénée vidée de sa capacité a l'insurrection'.[52] In *Texaco,* the eruption of Mount Pelée in 1902 plays a shaping role in Esternome's life and, as will be seen, is a catalyst for social change, and in *Le Cœur* the later eruption in 1932 is linked to a sense of loss and missed opportunity. Bishop and Payne point out that the islands of the Caribbean are more dramatically affected by environmental catastrophes but 'are also disproportionately less able than richer countries to fund adaptation.'[53] This can be seen in Haiti, where the

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[48] *Ibid*., 91-92.
[49] *Ibid*., 93-94.
[50] Patrick Chamoiseau, *Biblique des derniers gestes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001).
[51] Jean Khalfa, 'Césaire volcanique', *L'Esprit Créateur*, 45(2) (2005), 52-61 (p. 54).
[52] *Ibid*., 52.
[53] Bishop and Payne, 'Climate Change', 1540.

destructive spiral triggered by the 2010 earthquake continues,[54] and more recently following hurricanes in the region. For Martinique and Guadeloupe, which still depend on exports as well as tourism, recent hurricanes have further highlighted the continued dependency on, and lack of adequate response from, the metropole. In September 2017, following the devastation caused by hurricanes Irma and particularly Maria, the aid received from metropolitan France was criticised as insufficient. In October 2017, French President Emmanuel Macron declared that the region was in an '*état de catastrophe naturelle*'; however, it has been argued that compensation received by Guadeloupe only covered damage made by water, thus failing to cover any damage caused by wind, for example to the banana plantations (Guadeloupe's main export crop); moreover the compensation scheme did not cover certain municipalities.[55] Environmental concerns such as a lack of crop diversification and a reliance on imports can be seen explicitly in *Chronique*, and concerns about pollution and environmental degradation structure *Texaco* and *Les neuf consciences*, all explored in this thesis.

In terms of French engagement with the conservation of Caribbean ocean ecosystems in Martinique and Guadeloupe, *le Parc naturel marin de Martinique* was created on 5 May 2017 by the French government, after years of consultation with over 200 Martinican stakeholders following the identification of a need for a national sea park in 2010.[56] According to the park's website, the project 'vise à la connaissance et à la protection

[54] For more on the 2010 earthquake in relation to Caribbean literature, see: Martin Munro, *Writing on the Fault Line* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014).

[55] Le Parisien and AFP, 'Ouragan Maria: l'arrête de catastrophe naturelle fait des remous en Guadeloupe', *Le Parisien* (24 September 2017), <http://www.leparisien.fr/societe/ouragan-maria-l-arrete-de-catastrophe-naturelle-fait-des-remous-en-guadeloupe-24-09-2017-7283706.php> [accessed 17 April 2018].

[56] Parc naturel marin de Martinique, *Qui sommes-nous?* (n.d), <https://parc-marin-martinique.fr/editorial/qui-sommes-nous> [accessed 3 December 2017].

du milieu marin ainsi qu'au développement durable des activités maritimes', which includes the preservation of mangroves, sea grass and reefs.[57] Pierre Failler, professor of economics at the University of Portsmouth, has co-published a study estimating the economic value of the 20 km^2 of mangroves, 50 km^2 of sea grass and 55 km^2 of coral reefs which surround Martinique to be 250 million euros per year (as of 2015), data intended to be used as a justification for conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems.[58] Yet I would ask, as a deliberately provocative question, why it takes the generation of revenue to justify the conservation of natural life, while also pointing out the apparent contradiction in the findings, as the revenue-generating activities are precisely those which risk degrading the environment.

Postcolonial Ecocriticism

Postcolonial ecocriticism is an important development in scholarship as it is not only humans that have been affected by colonialism, but the 'natural world' too. In 'Towards an Ecocritical Postcolonialism' (2008), Watts identifies three key stages of postcolonial academic discourse:[59] the first stage being the 'early master thinkers' who defined key terms and theories and laid the foundations. The second stage defined the contours of the field

[57] Parc naturel marin de Martinique, *Objectifs* (n.d), <https://parc-marin-martinique.fr/editorial/objectifs> [accessed 3 December 2017].
[58] Pierre Failler, Élise Pètre, Thomas Binet and Jean-Philippe Maréchal, 'Valuation of Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Services as a Tool for Conservation: The Case of Martinique in the Caribbean', *Ecosystem Services*, 11 (2015), 67-75.
[59] Watts, 'Towards an Ecocritical Postcolonialism'.

and includes anthologies such as *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*,[60] and the third stage (which he argues postcolonialism had reached in 2008) is 'the moment of interrogation',[61] in which the assumptions of postcolonialism are questioned from within the field. Part of this recent questioning has been the application of postcolonialism to ecocriticism. In a later 2010 article, Watts points out that Francophone postcolonial ecocriticism has often failed to recognise, or underscore, geographical specificities, for example making the distinction between West and North Africa.[62] The geographical specificity of the French Caribbean is essential for any understanding of identity and history in relation to the environment. This thesis explores how postcolonial identity and the representation of the environment can be linked, and the cultural implications of the domination of both identity and the environment by (post)colonial force. Hence, key theories of postcolonial identity construction in the French Caribbean will now be explored before bringing them into dialogue with the field of ecocriticism.

Theories of postcolonial identity such as those expounded by Aimé Césaire, Glissant and the créolistes demonstrate that representation of nature is deeply ingrained in a postcolonial consideration of the self in the French Caribbean, and such theories are interwoven in, and central to, the work of both Chamoiseau and Condé. In *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*,[63] Martinican author and politician Aimé Césaire attempted to forge a collective Black identity and suggests that the answer to a lack of unified identity in the Caribbean is a physical or spiritual return to Africa which will bring about greater

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[60] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2005). Also see: Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (London: Routledge, 2009).
[61] Watts 'Towards an Ecocritical Postcolonialism', 251.
[62] Watts, 'Etat présent'.
[63] Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1983[1939]).

reconciliation with the Caribbean land: ‘ce pays dont le limon entre dans la composition de ma chair’.[64] As Hardwick notes, prior to *Tropiques*, a key publication of the *Négritude* movement founded in 1941 by Aimé Césaire, Suzanne Césaire and René Ménil, there were publications that encouraged ‘the public to become interested in the Negro Renaissance movement’, which prefigured *Négritude*, such as *Le Sportif* in which Joseph Zobel contributed articles under the pseudonym ‘Kay-Mac-Zo’, for example a short story, ‘Mon Village’, in December 1940.[65] As Hardwick argues, with his first little-known novels *Diab'-là* (1945) and *Les jours immobiles* (1946), Zobel wrote what can now be understood as early ecocritical Caribbean literature, and he is not the only ‘forgotten’ figure of both the *Négritude* movement and ecocriticism; it is only fairly recently that postcolonial ecocritical studies have turned towards Suzanne Césaire.[66] Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting has written about the recent ‘reclamation’ of Martinican women writers including Suzanne Césaire, and the Nardal sisters (Jane, Paulette and Andrée), from the margins of *Négritude* analysis, which remained for too long a male-centred space.[67] Anny Dominique Curtius writes that ‘In Suzanne Césaire’s ecopoetics, the morne is a locus of entanglements where social cataclysms, ecological disturbances, land dispossession, political awareness, and cultural agency are constantly interrogated,’ linking her writing to that of Glissant to note a missed

[64] *Ibid*., p. 22.
[65] Hardwick, *Joseph Zobel*, p. 51. Myriam Moïse notes that Jane Nardal’s ‘Internationalisme noire’ was published in 1928, 10 years earlier than Aimé Césaire’s *Cahier*, yet it has rarely been considered in analysis of the beginning of the *négritude* movement. See: Myriam Moïse, ‘Antillean Women and Black Internationalism: The Feminine Genealogy of Negritude’, *The Black Scholar,* 51(2) (2021), 23-32 (p. 2).
[66] Hardwick, *Joseph Zobel*, p. 51.
[67] Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Negritude Women* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2002).

opportunity for dialogue between Glissant and Suzanne Césaire regarding relationality between community and land.[68]

For Hardwick, Zobel's *Diab'-là* is a novel that constructed a discourse on environment and Black identity which repays investigation through ecocriticism, and she argues that it was 'ahead of its time in recognising Martinique's exceptional biodiversity'.[69] She highlights the novel's descriptions of the Martinican soil's fertility and its centrality to the narrative and Zobel's development of ideas of greater independence for the Black population. Hardwick also points out links between Zobel and Haitian author Jacques Roumain's 1944 novel *Gouverneurs de la rosée*,[70] which, as Hardwick argues, is widely 'held to be the defining work of mid-century Francophone Caribbean ecocriticism'.[71] She argues that both novels can be read as a reimagining of physical and metaphorical liberation in reference to the potential of their native soil — for Roumain against US incursions, and for Zobel as a response to béké domination and Vichy rule.[72] Hardwick analyses how Zobel uses surrealist imagery aligned with the *Négritude* movement and reverses the imagery of slave labour in the fields and changes it into a playful act, 'working for aligned individual and collective goals' rather than for a master.[73] This imagery is similar to Afoukal's *paroles rêvées* in which the labour undertaken in the fields is described in a similar surrealist manner, as shown in chapter two on *Chronique*.

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[68] Anny Dominique Curtius, 'Cannibalizing Doudouisme: Conceptualizing the Morne: Suzanne Cesaire's Caribbean Ecopoetics', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 115(3) (2016), 513-534 (p. 523).
[69] Hardwick, *Joseph Zobel*, p. 81.
[70] Jacques Roumain, *Gouverneurs de la rosée* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l'état, 1944).
[71] Hardwick, *Joseph Zobel*, pp. 81-82.
[72] *Ibid*. p. 82.
[73] *Ibid*.

Despite its potential to show early, subversive links being made between identity and the environment in the Francophone Caribbean, Mireille Rosello points to a contrasting view that *Négritude* in fact 'reproduced the stereotypical images produced by the occident'.[74] Moreover, it can be argued that the concept of *Négritude* maintained the physical and psychological colonial boundaries between Black and White identities that postcolonialism works to break down and in doing so, did not allow for anything in between. Glissant's theory of *Antillanité* was an attempt to celebrate and define this in-between identity. In *Le Discours antillais*, he suggests that an Antillean identity is fluid, constantly changing, and hybridised (creolised), in opposition to the more rigid idea of a return to African roots which was key to *Négritude*. For George Handley, Glissant presents nature as 'dynamic, fluid, and resistant to naming', and where narratives, as '"aesthetics of disruption and intrusion"', as Glissant puts it, become 'not a copy of the world but a poetics, a world (re)making.'[75] In *Le Discours antillais*, Glissant discusses the role of the environment in the creation of a French Antillean history and argues for inclusion of the landscape as a full and central character rather than as a decorative or supportive role. He posits that '[l]'individu, la communauté, le pays sont indissociables dans l'épisode constitutive de leur histoire. Le paysage est un personnage de cette histoire.'[76] He also writes that the Antillean writer must 'dévoiler la vivacité féconde d'une dialectique réamorcée entre nature et culture antillaises.'[77] Bringing the natural environment to the forefront as a character is key in Chamoiseau's novels,

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[74] Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land = Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, trans. by Mireille Rosello with Annie Pritchard; introduction by Mireille Rosello (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1995[1939]), p. 49.

[75] George B. Handley, 'The Postcolonial Ecology of the New World Baroque: Alejo Carpentier's *The Lost Steps*', in *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* ed. by Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 117-135 (p. 121).

[76] Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 343.

[77] *Ibid*., p. 133.

particularly in *Les neuf consciences*. In other novels, it can be seen to represent or mirror struggles that characters experience, particularly in terms of remembering the history of enslavement in the region, for example in *Chronique*. In his work, the land therefore often becomes a place of historical awakening in terms of both collective and individual identity. In terms of this awakening, Elizabeth DeLoughrey and Handley argue that '[s]ince it is the nature, so to speak, of colonial powers to suppress the history of their own violence, the land and even the ocean become all the more crucial as recuperative sites of postcolonial historiography'.[78]

In *Poétique de la Relation,* Glissant argued for his theory of *Relation,* which is created by encounters and clashes between what he terms atavistic identities, such as those suggested by the *Négritude* movement. In contrast to such approaches to identity, he proposes the process of creolisation which in turn makes possible and epitomises his notion of *Relation*, a concept which has its focus on perpetual evolution and 'becoming', rather than a static concept of 'being'. Glissant himself constantly returns to and reworks his notion of *Relation*, and the concept is expanded by Chamoiseau to include the interrelatedness of all living things, both in the human and non-human sense. Chamoiseau, a long-time friend and collaborator of Glissant, particularly in Glissant's later career, demonstrates the influence of Glissantian *Relation* in his literature, interviews and essays, for example in *Les neuf consciences* and 'Le Diamant', in his discussions of consciousness and the 'horizontale plénitude du vivant' — concepts which are explored throughout this thesis in relation to the construction of identity and the environment. Strong traces of Glissant's *Tout-Monde* can

[78] Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literature of the Environment* (Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 8.

also be found in Chamoiseau's work, something he discusses in a 2008 interview, arguing that 'it is not the language that gives the key to identity or to a kind of classification […] it's the structure of the imaginary that is going to give the real connections […] on the scale of the whole world community, within the diversity of the world […] the totality of the world.'[79]

In terms of representations of the environment in Francophone Caribbean literature Kullberg has analysed the ecocritical symbolism of trees, *mornes*,[80] and the land, pointing to the haunting symbolism of trees in a Caribbean forest: at once a Haitian symbol of resistance against exploitation, an African symbol of the guardian of memory, and also of the European family tree and supposed 'superior' or 'pure' lineage.[81] She argues that the mangrove, with its tangled roots symbolising links between different Caribbean islands, demonstrates the links between the stories of Condé's characters in *Traversée de la Mangrove.* Kullberg also compares the tree to characters with multiple identities, commenting that 'l'arbre n'est pas nécessairement assigné à une seule fonction au sein du même roman'.[82] The concept of lineage is also analysed by Bojsen as signifying 'centralized hierarchies', in contrast to the mangrove's rhizomatic roots which spread outwards.[83] The notion of the rhizome, which was expounded by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Mille Plateaux,*[84] is central to Glissant's theory of *Relation*. For Glissant, the mangrove also serves as a form of resistance against non-European notions of genealogy which he has criticised for their atavism, namely *Négritude* in its various forms, predominantly under Aimé Césaire and Senghor. The

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[79] Janice Morgan, 'Re-Imagining Diversity and Connection in the Chaos World: An Interview with Patrick Chamoiseau', *Callaloo,* 31(2) (2008), 443-453 (p. 447).
[80] A word used for hills in the French Antilles, often associated with *marronage*.
[81] Kullberg, 'L'écriture arborescente de la caraïbe'.
[82] *Ibid*., 11.
[83] Bojsen, 'Flashbacks of an Orchid', p. 215.
[84] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1998[1980]).

representation of the mangrove is central to both Chamoiseau and Condé's development of identity discourse, particularly in *Éloge de la Créolité* which is analysed in more detail in chapter two, yet they operate differently in their representations.

In his public letter announcing the publication of Condé's *Traversée de la Mangrove,* which can only be sourced in English translation, Chamoiseau reacted positively to the inclusion of the mangrove, describing it as a 'sensitive figure in our collective consciousness', and as 'a cradle, a source of life, of birth, and rebirth'.[85] However, Gaensbauer explains that there are also negative connotations in Condé's novel as '[a] mangrove in the French language does not represent only the tropical tree or shrub as it does in English but the dense, swarming, swampy area where this vegetation flourishes' and she points to a moment in the novel in which the crossing of the mangrove is presented by one of the female protagonists as 'a suffocating trap'.[86] This negative description by Condé of this natural location, that the créolistes present positively, as a trap can be contrasted to the presentation of the spider's web as a fascinating and magical trap in Chamoiseau's novels, as explored in chapters four and six. Gaensbauer argues that *Traversée de la Mangrove* also represents Condé's return to the Guadeloupean stage and that '[l]ike Chamoiseau, critics for the most part have responded to this novel as a positive indication of Condé's "reconciliation" with Caribbean roots' and as 'as an expression of the Creole "density" that is extolled in *Éloge de la Créolité*.'[87] However, a negative representation of the mangrove as a 'trap' does not seem to suggest a positive return for Condé, and therefore shows how she

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[85] Patrick Chamoiseau, 'Reflections on Maryse Condé's *Traversée de la Mangrove',* trans. by Kathleen M. Balutansky, *Callaloo*, 14(2) (1991), 390.
[86] Gaensbauer, 'Reconfiguring Boundaries', 397.
[87] *Ibid*., 398.

feels in relation to prescribed notions of a 'Caribbean' identity, as mentioned in some of her essays and interviews.[88]

The two authors studied in this thesis approach the idea of a French Caribbean identity differently. Handley argues that ecology is not only 'ecosystems and their myriad complexes of interdependencies' but also 'a dynamic space of change, imbalance, and even chaos'.[89] This way of exploring ecology could be used to describe the two authors' approaches to identity in relation to the natural environment; while Chamoiseau's thinking represents the interdependencies that exist in both nature and *Créolité*, and perhaps despite its professed openness tends towards a vision which is at once more collective and Caribbean-centric, Condé's work represents the dynamic chaos and imbalance that can be found in nature and creoleness, expressed through a greater focus on individual experiences and the Caribbean diaspora. A comparative approach to the two authors suggests these two ways of thinking complement each other to represent different voices from the Francophone Caribbean and demonstrate the multiple ways in which identity and environment are linked, thought about, and developed in the region. While at the time of *Créolité*'s emergence in the early 1990s, Chamoiseau argued that using the Creole language is an essential part of what it means to have a Creole identity, Condé reveals that this is not true for a large part of the region's population and it is necessary to acknowledge these other identities as also being Creole, or Antillean. In an interview with Hardwick, she

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[88] In a 2015 interview, she explained that of all her books, *Traversée de la Mangrove* is the one that expresses the true Guadeloupean that she is and said that 'J'ai en effet essayé de peindre au mieux les personnages qui composent la Guadeloupe. Le poids du passé, l'avenir du pays et le grand mystère que sera demain...' . See: Marine Rebut, 'Maryse Condé: "Très tôt, l'art d'assembler les saveurs m'a passionnée"', *Amina*, July 2015, 16-17, <https://aflit.arts.uwa.edu.au/AMINACondé15.html> [accessed 6 September 2022].

[89] Handley, 'The Postcolonial Ecology of the New World Baroque', p. 119.

expressed her troubled position against what she perceives as prescribed notions of *Créolité* in *Éloge*: 'Je ne crois pas que la langue soit le seul signifiant d'une culture'.[90] As Bonnie Thomas points out, she often discusses writing 'ni en français, ni en créole. Mais en Maryse Condé',[91] a phrase that can also be found in her novel *Mets*, as discussed in chapter five. In an interview with Silva Cappellini, she explains that this means 'la langue que j'utilise est chargé de sons et d'images que ne sont pas seulement empruntés au français et au créole mais à d'autres langues' that she knows or understands, of which there are many.[92] In her 1993 essay, Condé responded directly to the créolistes: 'Are we condemned *ad vitam aeternam* to speak of vegetable markets, story tellers, 'dorlis', 'koutem'…? Are we condemned to explore to saturation the resources of our narrow islands?'.[93] Here Condé's main contention seems to be the way in which the créolistes '[equate] identity to language' and as a result they ignore the identities of a large population of the islands.[94] In 1995, Condé wrote again about *Créolité* in a volume co-edited with Madeleine Cottenet-Hage,[95] which came from papers given at a conference held at the University of Maryland in 1993. In the volume, A. James Arnold[96] and Françoise Vergès[97] criticise the male-domination of the movement and Condé herself writes an article about the role of Creole language.[98] In an

[90] Hardwick, ''J'ai toujours été une personne un peu à part', 114.
[91] Bonnie Thomas, *Connecting Histories: Francophone Caribbean Writers Interrogating Their Past* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017), p. 25.
[92] Silva Cappellini, '"Ce besoin d'expliquer le monde, mon monde à moi, cela me pousse à écrire", entretien avec Maryse Condé', *Francofonia,* 31(61) (2011), 221-229.
[93] Maryse Condé, 'Order, Disorder, Freedom, and the West Indian Writer', *Yale French Studies*, 83(2) (1993), 121-135 (p. 130).
[94] *ibid*.
[95] Maryse Condé and Madeleine Cottenet-Hage, *Penser la créolité* (Paris: Karthala, 1995).
[96] A. James Arnold, 'The Gendering of Créolité', in *Penser la créolité,* ed. by Maryse Condé and Madeleine Cottenet-Hage (Paris: Karthala, 1995), pp. 20-40.
[97] Françoise Vergès, 'Métissage, discours masculin et déni de la mère', in *Penser la créolité,* ed. by Maryse Condé and Madeleine Cottenet-Hage (Paris: Karthala, 1995), pp. 69-83.
[98] Maryse Condé, 'Chercher nos vérité', in *Penser la créolité,* ed. by Maryse Condé and Madeleine Cottenet-Hage (Paris: Karthala, 1995), pp. 305-311.

interview with Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant about *Éloge*, Lucien Taylor suggests that Condé criticises the créolistes for exoticising Creole language in order to succeed in metropolitan France.[99] Chamoiseau and Confiant respond directly to this; Confiant accuses her of being 'dishonest' and 'ducipitous', and asks if she has ever been sued by a *béké* for her work,[100] and Chamoiseau argues that she criticises movements, such as theirs and *Négritude*, without offering alternatives and that her suggestion that they are 'Creole sectarians who want to cast into Hell anyone who isn't rooted exclusively here [in Martinique and Guadeloupe]' is 'ridiculous'.[101] In response to the suggestion that *Créolité* could be perpetuating a binary position between French and Creole, Chamoiseau and Confiant argue that Condé is a 'prisoner' of French and that they did not create the conflict between the two languages, instead it simply exists and *Éloge* is about *Relation* and connectedness; they go as far as to argue that they are 'the only people who relink Creole and French.'[102] In response to the argument that their novels are anti-feminist, Chamoiseau argues that many of his novels have been about women but because they are not 'Western' women who, he claims, are the focus of feminism, the characters are not considered to be 'feminist' by critics; he writes that his characters are 'Creole women, *matadoras* — women who come from matrifocal families and have always had to fight, to develop strategies of survival and resistance.'[103]

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[99] Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, Jean Bernabé and Lucien Taylor, 'Créolité Bites', *Transition*, 74 (1997), 124-161 (149-150).
[100] *Ibid*., 150. Here, he is referencing the case against his novel *Le nègre et l'admiral* in which he was sued for 400,000 francs (See page 149 of the interview).
[101] *Ibid*., 150.
[102] *Ibid*., 152.
[103] *Ibid.*, 154.

Representation emerges as a key theme in both authors' works as well as in the wider field of postcolonialism. The concept of consumption in relation to the representation of both humans and the environment is explored throughout this thesis and is particularly evident in chapter five, where it is presented in consideration with the literal consumption of land, and chapter six, which explores Chamoiseau's argument that this 'consumption' has been a barrier for Caribbean peoples writing about their own lived environments. Today, tourist advertisements focus on the same imagery that can be found in early colonial descriptions of the Caribbean region — clean, sandy beaches that are packaged as 'paradise', while a large part of the islands remains 'hidden', and a similar dynamic of concealment appears to be at work in depictions of the environment. In 'Le grand camouflage', the final essay of seven that Suzanne Césaire wrote for *Tropiques*, she writes: 'le paysage caribéen n'est pas source d'errance pastorale, mais témoin des traumatismes de la colonisation'.[104] She is arguing that all too often in French Caribbean poetry the natural landscape has camouflaged the human suffering that exists within it. She calls on poets to reveal this suffering — hunger, fear and hatred — rather than focusing only on the beauty of the landscape.[105] Dash argues that in the early accounts of the region written for Europeans, an exotic discourse was created that 'reduces other cultures to the realm of the id, the libidinal, and the savage' which was opposed to Western notions of 'civilization',[106] and this line of thought can be extended to the perception of the environment. This exoticism, or doudouism, of the region's environment is explored in more detail in chapter six when the thesis turns to Chamoiseau's essay 'Le Diamant'. Mimi Sheller writes that '[t]he Caribbean

[104] Suzanne Césaire, 'Le grand camouflage', *Tropiques*, 13-14(3) (1945), 267-273 (p. 269).
[105] Suzanne Césaire, *Le grand camouflage: Ecrits de dissidence (1941-1945)* ed. by Daniel Maximin (Paris: Seuil, 2015).
[106] Dash, *The Other America,* p. 23.

has been repeatedly imagined and narrated as a tropical paradise in which the land, plants, resources, bodies, and cultures of its inhabitants are open to be invaded, occupied, bought, moved, used, viewed, and consumed in various ways.'[107] Dash argues that '[t]he Caribbean archipelago, conceived as an absolute "elsewhere", as irreducibly different, was from its very inception invented as a blank slate onto which an entire exoticist project could be inscribed', arguing that since Columbus' 'discovery' of the 'New World' — the flora, fauna and people — the Caribbean has been described in relation to European thought.[108] Early 'doudouist' exoticising writing exemplifies how writers sought to present the islands for a European audience and to construct them as 'othered' and as elsewhere in order to justify colonial violence. The metaphorical consumption of the region, represented in contemporary touristic descriptions as a 'perpetual Garden of Eden in which visitors can indulge all their desires and find haven for relaxation',[109] began with the 'discovery' of the region by Columbus and continued with travel writers who included religious missionaries such as Père Jean-Baptiste Labat and Père Jean-Baptiste Du Tertre.

In terms of the early European 'construction' of the Caribbean region, the *encomienda* system, which prefigured the transatlantic slave trade,[110] 'assigned Native Americans to Spaniards for profit through either labor or tribute, but in return Spaniards were to instruct Indians in Christianity'.[111] This system derived from the *Requerimiento,* 'a

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[107] Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 13.
[108] Dash, *The Other America*, p. 17.
[109] Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, p. 13.
[110] Leslie B. Rout Jr. points out that 'an unknown number of black and mulatto servitors were in Ovando's entourage when it landed at Hispaniola in April 1502', laying the foundations of the Atlantic slave trade. See: *The African Experience in Spanish America: 1502 to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 22.
[111] Kathleen Ann Myers, *Fernandez de Oviedo's Chronicle of America: A New History for a New World* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), p. 114.

legal document which stipulated that the native population should submit to the Spaniards and accept the Christian faith' or war would be declared on them, [112] showing how European written law has been imposed and transposed on the region from the initial encounter. A critique of this 'written' importance in terms of European domination of the Caribbean can be seen in many of Chamoiseau's novels and is explored further in chapter three on *Texaco*. In 1552, Bartolomé de Las Casas wrote that anyone who survived this war would be 'shared out between the victors' and enslaved in the mines and fields,[113] highlighting how the European construction of Caribbean identity was key in the use and justification of the use of enslavement in the region. Showing an early example of the construction of the natural environment by Europeans in the Caribbean, the conquistadors saw it as their responsibility as the first Christians in the region to 'name' the pineapple.[114] However, as highlighted by Anne Breuil in *Le grand livre de la biodiversité de Guadeloupe et de Martinique*, the pineapple originated from central Brazil and the French name 'ananas' can be partly attributed to 'les Indiens Tupi',[115] emphasising the multiple influences on both flora and fauna and on language in the Caribbean region. This verbal domination is resisted by Chamoiseau, who incessantly renames and manipulates names in his novels. Moreover, as historian Anthony Pagden points out, the Catholic church argued that nature 'had been created in a state of potentiality, as an inert undriven mass whose *actuality* could only be

[112] Claire Taylor, 'The Spanish and Portuguese Empires', in *The Routledge Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by John McLeod (New York; London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 46-58 (p. 51).
[113] Bartolomé de Las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies,* trans. by Nigel Griffin (London: Penguin, 1992[1552]), p. 24.
[114] Myers, *Fernandez de Oviedo's Chronicle of America*, p. 162.
[115] Anne Breuil, 'Les grands écosystèmes terrestres', in *Le grand livre de la biodiversité de Guadeloupe et de Martinique,* ed. by Joël Beuze, Lyne-Rose Beuze and Grégory Guida (Paris: HC Éditions, 2011), pp. 67-113 (110).

realized through the purposeful action of men',[116] highlighting how Catholic understanding of moral duty presented those who changed nature for man's purpose as 'civilised' and showing the division between nature and humanity within religious narratives.

In terms of flora and fauna, Paravisini-Gebert has written about the physical effects of colonialism on the natural environment in the Caribbean. In a 2016 article, she points out how the second European settlement in the Caribbean — La Isabela — 'marked the introduction into the New World of European domestic fauna (pigs, horses and dogs) and crops',[117] and was a test of Spain's colonisation of the region.[118] This led to the 'traumatic decimation of the original inhabitants of the Greater Antilles' due to the introduction of diseases for which the inhabitants had no immunological defence.[119] Echoing the eradication of Amerindians in the region shortly after Columbus' 'discovery' of the region, Paravisini-Gebert points out that until recently there were no remaining endemic animals in Martinique,[120] and that the extinction of the Caribbean monk seal is one in a 'growing list of victims of ecological changes unleashed by colonialism and postcolonial tourism development in the Caribbean basin'.[121]

Zooming in: Francophone Postcolonial Ecocriticism and Caribbean Postcolonial Ecocriticism

[116] Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: from Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 6.
[117] Paravisini-Gebert, 'Food, Biodiversity, Extinctions', 11.
[118] For example, the creation of *encomiendas*, the introduction of European fauna and flora, the imposition of Spanish and Catholicism, and the development of an exploitative export economy. Paravisini-Gebert, 'Food, Biodiversity, Extinctions', 12.
[119] *Ibid*.
[120] Paravisini-Gebert points to the native parrot which has recently been re-introduced to the island, in 'Extinctions'.
[121] Paravisini-Gebert, 'Extinctions', p. 341.

Different strands of thinking on scientific environmental debates, put forward by individual nations and indeed 'zones' which share a common language, can be discerned; these different currents also underpin cultural production. Much as there has been a French response to the climate change debate and to conservation efforts, there has been a French response to the primarily Anglophone field of ecocritical studies. Stephanie Posthumus and Daniel Finch-Race point out that although Anglophone ecocriticism has been growing rapidly since the 1990s, the development of a French ecocriticism has been much slower. They argue that a reason for this is that in France there has been a history of 'suspicion of politically driven cultural studies',[122] because this has been perceived as ignoring aesthetic elements of cultural production. This thesis is mindful of the Francophone suspicion of the encroachment of politics into the humanities as identified by Posthumus and Finch-Race and aims to adopt an approach that avoids these criticisms through performing close contextual analysis of Chamoiseau and Condé's novels in such a way that the analysis of form and structure in the literary works is not subservient to a political and cultural approach, but rather drives the analysis. Posthumus and Finch-Race make a distinction between an ecopolitical approach and an ecopoetic one, the latter of which they argue focuses on 'a text's formal aesthetics',[123] and they argue that both approaches can exist together. In another article in the volume, Karen Quandt argues that ecopoetic suggests 'lyrical incitation to act on a collective scale'.[124] This term can be applied to many of Chamoiseau's works which aim to convince the reader to act collectively on both postcolonial and environmental

[122] Stephanie Posthumus and Daniel A. Finch-Race. eds., *French Ecocriticism: From the Early Modern Period to the Twenty-First Century* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2017), p. 9.
[123] Posthumus and Finch-Race, *French Ecocriticism*, p. 10.
[124] Karen F. Quandt, 'Victor Hugo and the Politics of Ecopoetics', in *French Ecocriticism*, pp. 61-79 (p. 61).

problems through poetic language, such as *Manifeste pour les 'produits'*, *Texaco* and *Les neuf consciences*.

Watts argues that a lack of a defined field of Francophone postcolonial ecocriticism does not equate to a lack of Francophone thinkers working on these concerns.[125] He suggests that instead this lack could be due to a refusal to categorise the field, similar to the situation in postcolonial studies explained by Forsdick and David Murphy in *Francophone Postcolonial Studies* (2003) as 'a post-1968 hesitancy regarding the "properly political".'[126] Watts argues that Francophone postcolonial studies has not been fully integrated into cultural studies, particularly in language-based subjects, in the way that Anglophone postcolonial studies has, a field which has taken on '"non-literary" concerns' without neglecting literature.[127] However, he writes that it is more likely that a lack of Francophone postcolonial ecocriticism is due to each of the individual terms '"ecocritical", "francophone", and "postcolonial"' having 'a different provenance' and each being 'deeply contested in its own right'.[128] Nevertheless, he argues that 'perhaps we have been practicing ecocriticism all along without being aware of it', quoting Dash's introduction to his translation of Glissant's *La Lézarde* as an example.[129] In the following section of the analysis, a discussion of the key thinkers to which Watts refers provides a starting point for an exploration of the ways in which ecocriticism is moving.

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[125] Watts, 'Etat présent', 2-7.
[126] Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, eds., *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction* (London: Arnold, 2003) p. 113.
[127] Watts, 'Etat présent', 3.
[128] *Ibid*., 4.
[129] *Ibid*., 5.

In 1975, André Gorz, a leading social philosopher who progressed political ecological thought in work such as *Écologie et politique* (1978), under the pseudonym Michel Bosquet, argued that '*la lutte écologique n'est pas une fin en soi, c'est une étape*' [original emphasis],[130] and suggests that an economic revolution would be necessary to establish 'un nouveau rapport des hommes à la collectivité, à leur environnement et à la nature'.[131] Here, Gorz links the environment to a collective identity through his argument that economic change is necessary for a better relationship between the two. The mobilisation of a *collectivité* emerges as a key notion in Chamoiseau's work, such as *Chronique,* as a way of pushing the colonial boundaries that enforce dualism. In 1990, Michel Serres explored an ecocriticism which attempts to transcend a nature/humanity dualism, in his text *Le Contrat naturel*.[132] Serres discusses the 'contract' that we need to have with the natural environment, and he claims that nature does not need to be personified as '[e]n fait la Terre nous parle en termes de forces, de liens et d'interactions, et cela suffit à faire un contrat'.[133] Despite this assertion by Serres, Chamoiseau's personification of the environment serves as a powerful link between nature and humanity as it presents them in the same literary space, and he moves beyond this in his later work to centre nature. Also connecting nature to politics, Bruno Latour, a key figure in anthropology and social sciences who proposed ideas such as nonmodernism, has suggested abandoning the idea of nature within political discourse in *Politiques de la nature*.[134] Proposing ideas similar to those expounded by Morton in *Ecology Without Nature*, Latour argues that it is not possible for political ecology

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[130] Michel Bosquet (André Gorz), *Écologie et politique* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1978), p. 9.
[131] *Ibid*.
[132] Michel Serres, *Le Contrat naturel* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992).
[133] Serres, *Le Contrat naturel*, p. 69.
[134] Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences Into Democracy*, trans. by Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); originally published in French as *Politiques de la nature: comment faire entrer les sciences en démocratie* (Paris: La Découverte, 1999).

to 'preserve' or 'save' nature, and that this notion of nature being separate and in opposition to society needs to change.[135] This development in French ecocritical thought coincides with a continued increasing awareness of what humans are doing to the natural environment. Political and legal steps have been taken to preserve or save nature, showing that little has changed in terms of thinking of nature as separate from society in political thought and that more needs to be done in this respect.

Alain Romestaing, Pierre Schoentjes and Anne Simon point to the need for environmental problems to be discussed across geographical and linguistic boundaries.[136] Highlighting potential advantages of a multi-geographical and multilingual approach to ecocriticism, Finch-Race and Julien Weber wrote that 'les différences culturelles entre la France et l'Amérique du Nord [ont] permis l'élaboration de discours alternatifs sur l'environnement'.[137] This approach to ecocritical studies, which Alain Suberchicot has also encouraged by examining French, American and Chinese texts together,[138] can be seen in Condé's approach to analysing dishes from around the world, as explored in chapter five. Suberchicot's French language approach to texts also contributes to the argument that Finch-Race and Posthumus set out in their introduction to *French Ecocriticism*[139] — that French and Francophone literature can be environmental, and therefore read ecocritically, without losing a focus on literary aesthetics. Buell, Heise and Thornber explain that the field of ecocriticism has recently shifted from Anglo-American romantic literature to include worldwide (including indigenous and minority cultures) and often (post)colonial literature.

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[135] *Ibid*.
[136] Romestaing, Schoentjes and Simon, 'Essor d'une conscience littéraire', 1.
[137] Daniel A. Finch-Race and Julien Weber, 'L'écocritique française', *L'Esprit Créateur*, 57(1) (2017), 1-8 (pp. 1-2).
[138] Alain Suberchicot, *Littérature et environnement* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2012).
[139] Finch-Race and Posthumus, *French Ecocriticism*, p. 9.

The authors argue that it has been necessary for ecocriticism to move to a further exploration of non-Western and non-Anglophone literature and move towards a cross-cultural analysis combined with specific cultural tendencies.[140]

The first book-length academic study to combine the fields of ecocriticism and postcolonial studies and to apply this new methodological framework to the Caribbean is *Caribbean Literature and the Environment*.[141] The editors, DeLoughrey, Gosson and Handley, discuss the importance of bringing these two fields together and applying this to the French Caribbean, stating that they:

> hope to reflect a postcolonial investment in what Fiona Barnes calls "the cultural and political ramifications of geography, the so-called sense of place" and a sustained ecocritical focus on the ways in which race, gender and other social vectors help constitute environmental experience.[142]

These are all factors which are explored throughout this thesis. Watts posits that it is necessary to combine the fields because 'environmental harm is distributed both in a global fashion and local ways that can be tied to the legacies of particular colonialisms (that is, the way in which overdevelopment in Martinique is a function of its elevated place in the hierarchy of overseas departments and territories).'[143]

DeLoughrey, Gosson and Handley highlight the importance of analysing the Caribbean as a 'construction' and write 'perhaps there is no other region in the world that has been more radically altered in terms of human and botanic migration, transplantation,

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[140] Buell, Heise, and Thornber, 'Literature and Environment'.
[141] Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, Renée K. Gosson and George B. Handley, *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture* (Charlottesville; London: University of Virginia Press, 2005).
[142] *Ibid*., p. 5.
[143] Watts, 'État present'.

and settlement than the Caribbean',[144] whilst also pointing out the importance of recognising that the region's history requires an approach that is different from other explorations of ecocriticism, such as those developed in North America and Europe. They discuss the use of language during the early colonisation of the Caribbean and point out how the arrival of Europeans and their belief that the land was 'new' led to the development of a Caribbean plantocracy which 'confused plant diversity with an extraordinary yield for food'.[145] This created a focus on both humanity and the land as commodities to satisfy those in power, thus the development of a plantocracy and the use of enslavement became a way to master both humanity and nature at once through the production of food. This creation of the dependency of the enslaved on 'masters' centred around food production has been perpetuated through the construction of a dependency of Martinique and Guadeloupe on France for the importation of food. Paravisini-Gebert describes the food insecurity faced in the early Spanish colonisation of the Caribbean through Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo's *La historia general y natural de las Indias* (1526). This begins with a tale of Amerindian resistance to the Spanish appropriation of land by refusing to plant crops, leading to widespread hunger, deaths, and 'dire consequences for some species of fauna' which were being eaten as the only remaining food source,[146] leading to their extinction and the subsequent 'decline of the human population.'[147]

The consumption of food has often been linked to the consumption of identity in Francophone Caribbean literature. Loichot has discussed the etymology of the word 'cannibal' and how it came to be used to describe inhabitants of the Caribbean islands,

[144] DeLoughrey, Gosson, and Handley, *Caribbean Literature*, p. 1.
[145] *Ibid.,* p. 6.
[146] Paravisini-Gebert, 'Food, Biodiversity, Extinctions', 12.
[147] *Ibid.*, 14.

owing to a mishearing of the word 'Cariba' by Christopher Columbus on his 'discovery' of the region.[148] Peter Hulme has also used examples from Columbus' journal to explain the use of this term as deriving from the use of the word 'Canibas' by the Taino people to describe another tribe in the region of which they were afraid.[149] The use of morality and religion to justify the treatment of people who were seen as the lacking 'Other' has had a lasting influence on the region. Loichot writes about an attempt to reverse this consumption, or exoticisation, of the 'Other' for metropolitan audiences in what she terms 'literary cannibalism' as a method of resistance to the images created through the colonial gaze, through literal and metaphorical acts of eating and cooking.[150] This is explored further in all texts studied where the consumption of food can be used to reverse structures enforced through colonialism and it can be seen to represent the mixing of identities in the novels of both Condé and Chamoiseau.

Watts has drawn attention to the eco-philosopher Val Plumwood's text *Environmental Culture* (2002) and her analysis of the 'effects of the exclusion of the environment from contemporary discussions of identity formation'.[151] He describes how the field of postcolonial studies uses 'botanical metaphors to convey its concepts of cultural mixing', such as diaspora which means 'the sowing or scattering of seeds' in Greek,[152] and points out how they can be found in the work of key poststructuralist theorists[153] — the 'rhizome' of Deleuze and Guattari's *Mille plateaux*, Glissant's concept of *Relation* in *Le*

[148] Loichot, *The Tropics Bite Back,* p. vii.
[149] Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492-1797* (London: Methuen, 1986).
[150] Loichot, *The Tropics Bite Back.*
[151] Watts, 'Towards an Ecocritical Postcolonialism', 254.
[152] *Ibid*. 252.
[153] *Ibid*.

Discours antillais, and Homi K. Bhabha's notion of 'hybridity' in *The Location of Culture*.[154] However, Watts criticises the field's isolation of humans at the centre of analysis from the non-human world and as a result 'the specific effect of the environment on the configuration of social groups' and its representation in literature, is elided.[155] His main criticism of this is that 'to talk about the "culture" of a place without reference to the natural environment' reinforces the idea of the environment as a postcolonial 'Other'.[156] Using ecocriticism to combine humanity and nature in postcolonial thought, Watts explains that '[in] the epistemology constructed by the colonizer, the colonized and nature occupy the same space of difference, which is external to the colonizer and can be exploited for economic benefit'.[157] Here, Watts is highlighting how like the (post)colonial 'Other', nature has often been presented in opposition to humanity and as a construction against the coloniser's image of the self. I aim to demonstrate how Chamoiseau and Condé's work shows the relationship between identity and the environment in a way that moves away from anthropocentrism, an ecocritical project that Plumwood has described as 'countering and subverting the human/nature dualism that is part of human-centeredness'.[158] Watts points out Plumwood's analysis of the colonisers' vision of a divided world which states that the enslaved person, or 'Other' is closer to nature and thus distanced from intellectual Reason and Mastery,[159] used as a validation of the use of enslavement in the Americas. The linking of a closeness to nature, and of intellectual mastery can be seen in Chamoiseau's novels, such as *Chronique* and *Texaco*, in which he re-appropriates this stereotype to present

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[154] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994).
[155] Watts, 'Towards an Ecocritical Postcolonialism', 252-253.
[156] *Ibid*., 253.
[157] *Ibid*., 255.
[158] Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: the Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 124.
[159] Watts, 'Towards an Ecocritical Postcolonialism', 255.

Antillean methods of gardening, medicine, and creativity as superior to their French counterparts.

Watts also explores the idea of the centre as a place of remoteness rather than the periphery, thus as a place where responsibility for the periphery can be ignored as it is not obvious to those who live there. He argues that in the French Caribbean, this began in the seventeenth century as the colonial peripheries were developed as sites of production, when for example, 'slavery […] remained a largely remote phenomenon in France'.[160] Watts concludes by asserting that 'Plumwood's ecophilosophy and Chamoiseau's literary production underscore the need for an ecologically embedded postcolonial cultural criticism that the generalized form of postcolonial studies might not be able to enact'.[161] Therefore, Watts argues that it is necessary for the field of postcolonial studies to move towards more region-specific theories which are attentive to nature and culture, rather than 'even more grandly universalizing theories of globalization, of Empire and Multitudes'.[162]

In an interview with De Vriese, Chamoiseau argues that ecological consciousness is a major part of what he calls 'haute conscience', to which this thesis returns in chapters four and six, and argues that ecological consciousness is an essential aspect of understanding that everything has its place, change is permanent, and renewal is essential.[163] This resonates with Chamoiseau's discussion of 'haute conscience' in 'Le Diamant', a quality which, according to the author, 'suppose cette vigilance qui dépasse la surface' and it 'demande aussi que nous cessions de nous ériger à la verticale au centre de la nature, et que nous

[160] *Ibid*., 258.
[161] *Ibid*., 259.
[162] *Ibid*.
[163] Chamoiseau and De Vriese, 'L'écriture de la nature ou le texte vivant'.

retrouvions pour l'idée de l'humain une inscription plus humble dans l'horizontale plénitude du vivant'.[164] For Hardwick, Chamoiseau's concept of the 'horizontale plénitude du vivant' is about recognising 'que nos rapports avec la nature doivent dorénavant se tisser de manière respectueuse, qui met l'humain sur le même plan que la nature, au lieu de prôner la domination totale de la nature pour subvenir aux besoins de l'homme.'[165] Chamoiseau's argument that we need to look more closely at the world around us and to decentre humans from the way in which we do this, and to consider everything living — past, present and future — horizontally rather than in a hierarchy, becomes increasingly present in his later writing and interviews and is explored at length in this thesis.

The symbolism of water in Francophone Caribbean literature has also been analysed through an ecocritical lens. In his article 'Contested sources',[166] Watts examines the way in which French (which he later terms universalising) notions of water have been imposed on African understandings in Martinique and Guadeloupe, before refashioning these ideas in French Caribbean literature. He posits that representations of freshwater have often been overlooked in analyses of French Caribbean literature, but that water 'is a crucial marker of conceptions of attachment to a place and, by extension (in the colonial context), of conceptions of self and other.'[167] Watts examines water's symbolic use in Western culture as the site of reflection on identity and its imposition on, and relation to, Caribbean culture. He points to the Narcissus myth (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) in which he falls in love with his own reflection and withers away and dies when he realises, explaining that in this European

[164] Chamoiseau, 'Le Diamant', p. 119.
[165] Hardwick, 'Autour du Rocher du Diamant', 206.
[166] Watts, 'Contested Sources'.
[167] *Ibid*.

myth, the unmediated gaze allows a confusion between self and other.[168] Watts uses analysis from Patrick Corcoran's *Black Narcissus* to argue that 'the colonized is unable to "feel that the other he perceives can become recognizable as himself" because of the intense mediation to which he or she is subject.'[169] He argues that this disruption of the scene of reflection is not restricted to the colonial moment in Caribbean novels and can also be found in a postcolonial context.

Moreover, in analysing a lack of work on the relation of freshwater to identity representation in Francophone Caribbean literature, Watts criticises chapters in *L'eau: Source d'une écriture dans les littératures féminines francophones* (1995),[170] arguing that these analyses do not consider the meaning of water in places where there is an 'anxiety about incipient precarious access to water', such as in Martinique and Guadeloupe, thus highlighting that socio-economic and cultural contextuality is essential in symbolic readings of postcolonial texts.[171] Watts explores Chamoiseau's *Texaco* in terms of symbolic associations of water and points out how the novel uses magical realism to show clashes of European and African oral cultures through the myths of mermaids and water sprites. Watts ends his article with Plumwood's analysis of nature as a colonial 'Other' whose agency is assumed but denied (continued in the postcolonial through capitalism's negative

[168] *Ibid*., 89.
[169] *Ibid*.
[170] Yolande Helm, *L'eau: Source d'une écriture dans les littératures féminines francophones* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1995)
[171] Watts, 'Contested Sources', 91.

externalities),[172] arguing that water's 'meaning has evolved in the colonial and postcolonial sphere to reflect this mutually subaltern status'.[173]

Handley discusses the term 'New World Baroque' arguing that the term is comparable to 'postcolonial ecology' as it strikes 'a balance between ecocriticism's important critique of anthropocentrism and postcolonialism's concern for social justice' which aims to disrupt (post)colonial power structures and categories, examples of which can be seen in the magical realism of Gabriel Garcia Marquez.[174] Magical realism can be found in some of Chamoiseau's novels in moments when the environment is brought to life and holds messages for the characters, for example in *Chronique*. While baroque can be found in some of Chamoiseau's earlier novels, his later works have moved away from this in favour of a more overtly political narrative that interrogates the interconnectedness of the 'vivant', leaning further towards a Glissantian style, for example in *Les neuf consciences*. Watts argues that in this novel,

> Chamoiseau eschews the baroque poetics [...] and produces an eco-fable that presents in very stark terms a choice between current environmental practices that the novel bluntly asserts will lead to ecosystemic collapse and an ethic of local stewardship coupled with a global consciousness, which together may stem the tide of global environmental change.[175]

He suggests that '[p]erhaps the increasingly explicit environmental rhetoric of recent works by Chamoiseau [...] demands a different hermeneutic' than that of the postcolonial baroque that had become the norm for postcolonial studies readings such as those by Dominique

[172] Plumwood, *Environmental Culture,* p. 28.
[173] Watts, 'Contested Sources', 100.
[174] Handley, 'The Postcolonial Ecology of the New World Baroque', 119.
[175] Watts, 'État present', 2.

Chancé, who criticises Chamoiseau's move away from the baroque style,[176] seen in both *Texaco* and *Chronique*. Watts argues that in order to acknowledge Chamoiseau's novels from both an ecocritical and Francophone postcolonial perspective, it is necessary to not simply 'subject the broad thematic orientation of the novel to an ecocritical reading by arguing, for instance, that Chamoiseau aims to break down the nature/culture distinction and acknowledge our ecological embeddedness in the mode of deep-ecological holism', as this 'would neglect the narrative's francophone postcolonial specificity'.[177]

Bojsen has analysed Chamoiseau's narration in *Biblique* as 'rhizomatic', arguing that the structure of the novel 'inscribes its characters in the environment by means of physical gestures and imagination, exploring the dynamics of rhizomatic mapping', as seen in *Créolité*, in opposition to nationalist discourses which are 'dependent on the arborescent scaffolding of roots and territory',[178] as seen in European colonialist discourse as well as in *Négritude*. This concept of 'rhizomatic mapping', or an interrelatedness between many overlapping narratives, which is similar to Wendy Knepper's discussion of 'mosaic' structures,[179] is explored in further detail in chapters two, three and four.

More recently, Ferdinand's *Une écologie décoloniale* introduces his concept of a 'double fracture' which 'persiste entre ceux qui craignent la tempête écologique à l'horizon et ceux à qui le pont de la justice fut refusé bien avant les premières rafales.'[180] He writes

[176] *Ibid*.
[177] *Ibid*., 3.
[178] Bojsen, 'Flashbacks of an Orchid', p. 222.
[179] Knepper, *Patrick Chamoiseau,* p. 113.
[180] Malcom Ferdinand, *Une écologie décoloniale* (Paris: Seuil, 2019), p. 13.

that a decolonial[181] ecology is conceptualised from the same place as the fight against enslavement, social justice, and political injustice, and that the Caribbean is 'au cœur du tempête moderne'.[182] He posits that it is necessary to combine ecological issues and colonial ones as their factures are the same. He also argues that the colonial gaze on the Caribbean persists through touristic representations of the region as 'une pause de sable depueple en dehors du monde', and an increase in ecological thought from the region, instead of simply about it, allows a reversal of this perspective and allows a consideration of the people of the region as real inhabitants.[183] He critiques the environmental discourse of everyone being equally responsible because in reality, populations have been disproportionally affected and the problems have been caused disproportionally too.

Another recent work focusing on the lasting effects of domination of the Caribbean environment is Jessica Oublié's bande-dessinée style report on the effects of *chlordécone*, *Tropiques toxiques*,[184] in which she investigates the history and effects of *chlordécone* in the region, using first-hand accounts and other local sources. The book includes an interview in 2018 between presenters at Martinique la 1ère and epidemiologist Luc Multinger on the effects of the pesticide on the population's health,[185] citing the televised exchange as the inspiration behind the book. The book's style is significant as it could bring wider public attention to the issue, discussed in more detail in chapter two of this thesis. The conclusion

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[181] It is important to differentiate between decolonial and postcolonial. For Walter Mignolo, decoloniality is about the epistemological undoing and redoing of colonial knowledge, and decolonisation was a late twentieth century attempt to take back control of states in regions of Asia, Africa, and South America. See: Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, *On Decoloniality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).
[182] Ferdinand, *Une écologie décoloniale,* p. 11.
[183] *Ibid.,* p. 13.
[184] Jessica Oublié, *Tropiques toxiques: le scandale du chlordécone* (Paris: Les Escales, 2020).
[185] Martinique la 1ère, *Chlordécone: le scandale est-il devant nous?*, online video recording, YouTube, 17 January 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xomZThPnGC8> [accessed 15 July 2022].

features an exchange between philosophers including Ferdinand, who points to the role of the plantation in the continuing destruction of nature and to the *chlordécone* scandal as an example of this. Ferdinand has written about the scandal in a 2019 chapter which links the pesticide contamination and the 2009 strikes,[186] and has given many interviews about the subject in recent years.[187]

Conclusion

It is evident that despite a recent increase in Francophone engagements with ecocriticism, there is still a lack of ecocritical postcolonial work specifically focusing on French Caribbean authors, a gap which this thesis aims to address. The present literature review reveals gaps in ecocritical work on Chamoiseau and Condé, particularly regarding the texts chosen for this thesis — 'Le Diamant', *Le Cœur, Victoire*, and *Mets*, and to a lesser extent *Les neuf consciences*, *Texaco* and *Chronique*. Combining the fields of postcolonialism and ecocriticism and applying these to Francophone Caribbean literature allows a comparison of the domination of humans and nature by the same (post)colonial force and an investigation into the ways in which these authors approach the construction and consumption of both identities and the landscape. The intertwining of nature and humanity in postcolonial

[186] Malcom Ferdinand, 'Bridging the Divide to Face the Plantationocene: The Chlordecone contamination and the 2009 Social Events in Martinique and Guadeloupe', in *The Struggle of Non-Sovereign Caribbean Territories: Neoliberalism since the French Antillean Uprisings of 2009*, ed. by H. Adlai Murdoch (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2021).
[187] For example: Malcom Ferdinand, *Episode 2: Penser l'écologie depuis le monde Caribéen: une écologie décoloniale Malcom Ferdinand* [podcast], Oliwon Lakarayib, 2020, <https://soundcloud.com/oliwon-lakarayib/episode-2-penser-lecologie-depuis-le-monde-caribeen-une-ecologie-decoloniale> [accessed 14 July 2022] ; and Malcom Ferdinand and Luc Multinger: 'Chlordécone et cancer: à qui profite le doute?', *theconversation.com* (14 March 2019) <https://theconversation.com/chlordecone-et-cancer-a-qui-profite-le-doute-113334> [accessed 14 November 2022].

analysis highlights the impact that humans have had, and are having, on the natural world and it also reveals new ways of considering the colonial domination of humans. In the chapters that follow, I demonstrate how Chamoiseau and Condé underscore these forms of domination in their literary and non-literary work, and how their work moves from a place of describing this domination to suggesting ways to overcome it, and to reconcile humans and nature. This thesis moves beyond existing ecocritical studies of the texts to explore how the themes that develop in the literature relate to current environmental and socio-economic debates. I aim in particular to include up-to-date information and studies from scientific disciplines to demonstrate how the issues raised by the authors are affecting both the Caribbean region, and, on occasions, the world more generally and to show how the authors bring, or fail to bring, current debates into their work.

CHAPTER TWO

ASSIMILATION AND RESISTANCE IN PATRICK CHAMOISEAU'S *CHRONIQUE DES SEPT MISÈRES* AND MARYSE CONDÉ'S *LE CŒUR À RIRE ET À PLEURER*

'"Il faut accompagner l'énergie du monde frère, pas la soumettre"' (140). This message, presented by Chamoiseau through the minor, but important, character of the Rasta in his first novel *Chronique des sept misère*s (1986),[1] epitomises the struggle between European power and the 'Other' during colonisation, and shows that nature and humans have been affected by the same colonial forces. A decade later, in his 1998 work for children *Émerveilles*, and in a similar tone, Chamoiseau wrote: 'Il ne s'agit pas de comprendre le monde mais de le deviner. Il ne s'agit plus de le dominer ou de le conquérir: mais de l'habiter. C'est cet imaginaire qui nous permettra de mieux lutter contre les racismes, les ethnicismes purificateurs ou les nationalismes barbares',[2] which highlights once again the potential power of literature to counter the domination of both humans and nature and, in setting out a vision for living in harmony with the earth, suggests the importance of postcolonial ecocriticism. This section also appears to be an acknowledgement of Karl Marx's final point in 'Theses on Feuerbach', in which he wrote 'The philosophers have only

[1] Referred to hereafter as *Chronique,* with references given using paratheses in the main body of chapter, for example as (*C*: 1).
[2] Chamoiseau, *Émerveilles* (Paris: Gallimard Jeune, 1998), p. 126.

interpreted the world in various ways, the point however is to change it.'[3] Chamoiseau could be furthering Marx's ideas here by suggesting that to move beyond a hierarchical world we must find a way to *become* the world in order to change it.

Through analysis of both Chamoiseau's novel *Chronique,* and Condé's semi-autobiographical short story collection *Le Cœur à rire et à pleurer*,[4] this chapter demonstrates how the conquering of the land can be inextricably linked to the conquering of identity by European colonialism in the Americas, and to the subsequent postcolonial exploitation of the French Caribbean islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe by metropolitan France.[5] This chapter focuses on the entwining of representations of the environment and identity in these works, as well as on food production and consumption, paying attention to what these aspects might reveal about French (post-)colonial assimilation. It also explores the wider political and cultural implications of the consumption of the islands by European powers, both literally and metaphorically, to demonstrate the effect that this consumption continues to have on the land and people of the Francophone Antilles. Through the lens of postcolonial ecocriticism, this chapter argues that both Condé's *Le Cœur* and Chamoiseau's *Chronique* claim that psychological alienation can be linked to a disconnect between Antilleans and the Antillean land. These novels, particularly *Chronique*, explore the relationship between identity and the environment in a way that moves away from an othering anthropocentrism.

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[3] Karl Marx, 'Theses on Feuerbach', in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), p. 30.

[4] Referred to hereafter as *Le Cœur*, with references given using paratheses in the main body of chapter, for example as (*LC*: 1).

[5] An earlier version of this chapter was published in the journal *Alternative Francophone* in 2019: Bethany Mason, 'An Ecocritical Approach to Identity Representation in Patrick Chamoiseau's *Chronique des sept miseres*', *Alternative Francophone*, 2(4) (2019), 25-41.

This chapter addresses existing gaps in scholarship on *Chronique* and *Le Cœur* by undertaking close textual analysis. Despite Chamoiseau's involvement in ecological issues,[6] and numerous ecological references in many of his novels and articles, his wider body of work (except for *Les neuf consciences,* which forms the subject of chapter four) has received a surprising lack of ecocritical attention, particularly in relation to how his use of environmental themes relates to his interrogation of a specific French Caribbean identity. Here, I build on two previous analyses of *Chronique*, Gosson's article 'For What the Land Tells',[7] and Milne's chapter 'Echanges et ouvertures: le marché' in her 2006 monograph on Chamoiseau.[8] Condé's work has received scant ecocritical attention, particularly her semi-autobiographical texts, *Le Cœur, Victoire* and *Mets*, which can be read as a trilogy in which Condé processes her childhood and examines her relationship with her mother and grandmother. Here, *Le Cœur* will be analysed alongside *Chronique* in the context of assimilation and the formation of identity; chapter five returns to the other two texts in Condé's trilogy to explore Condé's fictional relationship to her grandmother and the produce coming from the Guadeloupean land and its culinary traditions.

Significantly, in *Éloge de la Créolité,* co-authored by Chamoiseau, metaphors of food and the environment are used to highlight the mixing of cultures that is necessary for Creole identity: 'La Créolité est notre soupe primitive et notre prolongement, notre chaos originel et notre mangrove de virtualités'.[9] The notion of the rhizome can be seen here as the créolistes use the mangrove, with its tangled roots, as a metaphor for the crossing over of

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[6] Chamoiseau was vice president of MODEMAS (Mouvement des démocrates et écologistes pour une Martinique souveraine) in the 1990s, and he is active on social media promoting ecological causes; see: Patrick Chamoiseau, (@PCHAMOISEAU) <https://twitter.com/PCHAMOISEAU>[accessed 2 February 2022].
[7] Gosson, 'For What the Land Tells'
[8] Milne, *Patrick Chamoiseau.*
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

multiple identities. This concept can be seen in the work of Chamoiseau through the intertwining of Creole and French language and culture, and he extends it to include nature as a conscious being through personification and magical realism. The idea that all beings have consciousness is key to many of Chamoiseau's novels as he has explained in a 2015 interview: 'C'est une esthétique, c'est une poétique, mais c'est aussi une éthique qui constitue le soubassement de mes livres…'.[10] A close reading of *Chronique* reveals how the representation of this consciousness, which works to unite humanity and nature, is in evidence from his earliest published novel through both the relationships between characters and the Earth and the personification of the natural environment. Moreover, as explored in chapter four, this philosophy can be traced throughout his work and finds its most potent expression in his later novel *Les neuf consciences*. In a comparative reading, this chapter demonstrates how Chamoiseau tends towards the personification of the environment, while Condé employs metaphors of the natural world and the consumption of food to resist the humanity/nature dualism at the centre of an estrangement between Antilleans and the land. It then considers (post)colonial intervention and exploitation of both humanity and nature, and how this relates to current food production problems in the region, before exploring the roles that capitalism and consumerism have played in the perpetuation of this dualism.

Alienation and Assimilation

[10] Chamoiseau and De Vriese, 'L'écriture de la nature', 128.

Chamoiseau's novels exploit the metonymic gap to provide juxtapositions between the French and Creole languages and cultures, and often show Creole to be a tool against the way in which French language has worked to dominate Creole culture as part of the *mission civilisatrice*. The mastering of culture and language mirrors the way in which nature has been mastered, and there is an interesting connection between Chamoiseau's use of Creole to highlight the richness of both Creole language and what he figures as the Creole natural environment. In Chamoiseau's 2022 article in *Francosphères*, he calls Creole a 'langue matricelle',[11] and in *Éloge de la Créolité,* the créolistes describe *Créolité* as a 'mosaïque', 'le monde diffracté mais recomposé',[12] and as 'une totalité kaléidoscopique',[13] linking to the idea of a matrix, or mosaic, of ecosystems and mirroring the layered structure of *Chronique* itself. This discussion of Creole and the novel as mosaic, made up of different parts, links to the concept of Creole as rhizomatic, mirroring the structures found in mangrove roots, and the novel has a rhizomatic composition, woven from overlapping voices and stories.

At the novel's opening, Chamoiseau positions himself as the master storyteller as well as a 'Marqueur de paroles', addressing his audience as 'messieurs et dames' (*C:* 15; 121; 133; 195), which Kullberg translates as 'My Friends!', both calling the reader's attention and setting a storytelling scene allowing for orality,[14] and using the formula 'manmaye ho!' (*C:* 17). Linda Coverdale leaves this formulation in the original French in her translation,[15] but glosses it as an invitation to listen up, mentioning that 'manmaye' is from the French

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[11] Patrick Chamoiseau, 'Toute la beauté relationnelle du monde, Pour une poétique de la Relation', *Francosphères*, 11(1) (2022), 123-128 (p. 124).
[12] Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité* p. 27.
[13] *Ibid.,* p. 28.
[14] Kullberg, *The Poetics of Ethnography in Martinican Narratives: Exploring the Self and the Environment* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), p. 103.
[15] Chamoiseau, *Chronicle of the Seven Sorrows,* trans. by Linda Coverdale (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), p. 8.

'marmaille' which means children,[16] so one possible English translation could be 'little-ones, listen up!'. The phrase 'ho' is used regularly in Creole storytelling, and these techniques position Chamoiseau as aiming to engage with and inform his reader. Furthermore, by adapting the stories told by the character of zombie-slave Afoukal, and through the protagonist Pipi, Chamoiseau's novel proclaims its desire to teach history in a more immediate and relatable way than is found in official historical accounts: 'Cette façon de dire une époque se révélait plus efficace que les sombres exactitudes historiques dévoilées auparavant' (*C:* 194). Here, a history which is focused on 'des noms et des lieux' (*C:* 193) is juxtaposed with a version that is crafted by '[e]nrichissant de mythes la réalité' (*C:* 194-195), allowing for the personification of the land which links humanity to nature.

Significant differences emerge between the approaches of Chamoiseau and Condé towards *Créolité* and Creole identity. While Chamoiseau has often argued that Creole language is a key part of Creole identity, Condé's semi-autobiographical works reveal that this is not true for a large section of the populations of both Martinique and Guadeloupe. In her 1993 article,[17] Condé appears to agree with Bhabha's claims that a hybridised identity, which is located in the in-between space where 'collective experiences of *nationness,* community interest, or cultural value are negotiated', is possible.[18] Condé argues that '[w]e live in a world where, already, frontiers have ceased to exist' and thus globalisation leads to inevitable hybridised identities.[19] Condé also responds to *Éloge de la Créolité*, claiming that it is reductive to equate certain images and symbols with an Antillean identity, highlighting

[16] Chamoiseau, *Chronicle*, p. 219.
[17] Condé, 'Order, Disorder'.
[18] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 2.
[19] Condé, 'Order, Disorder', 130.

that an Antillean identity can have French influences, and that for some, like herself, this is inescapable as she experienced life growing up in both France and Guadeloupe. Chamoiseau responds directly to this criticism in his review of Condé's *Traversée de la Mangrove*, writing that *Créolité* is 'less theory than statement. [...] it has never been our goal to guide artistic expression'.[20]

In his 1990 essay 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', Stuart Hall posited that there are two positions from which Caribbean identity can be understood. He argued that the first position is a collective identity 'in terms of one, shared culture' that the 'black diaspora must discover, excavate, bring to light and express' through artistic representation,[21] and he cites the discourses of the *Négritude* movement and of Frantz Fanon's *Les Damnés de la terre*[22] as significant in this respect. The second position that Hall puts forward is that of identities that emerge from critical points of difference, as Glissant has argued in his concept of *Relation*, and he argues that 'we should think […] of identity as a "production" which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation'.[23] Condé agrees with this analysis as she argues that 'West Indians should be as changing and evolving as the islands themselves',[24] highlighting a link between the changing landscape and changing identities which co-exist in Francophone Caribbean literature. Chamoiseau and the

[20] Chamoiseau, 'Reflections on Maryse Condé's *Traversée'*, 390.
[21] Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990) pp. 222-237 (p. 22).
[22] Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre* (Paris: François Maspero, 1961).
[23] Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', p. 222.
[24] Condé, 'Order, Disorder', 130.

other créolistes have, in contrast, been criticised by Condé in her article,[25] and by others for creating a proscriptive, fetishised, fixed version of Creole identity in *Éloge de la Créolité.*

Condé's *Le Cœur* explores the alienation and hybridity that she, Maryse, experienced growing up in both Guadeloupe and Paris and focuses on her familial relationships as well as her relationship to the locations she experienced growing up and their contrasting environments. Dawn Fulton argues that Condé's works 'uncover the mechanisms through which the marginal subject becomes consumed by generalized notions of identity'.[26] This act of being 'consumed' by a generalising notion of identity can be compared to the act of consuming food, a key theme in Condé's semi-autobiographical texts. Thomas points out that it is food that has allowed the upward progressive mobility of Condé's mother, Jeanne, through her own mother Victoire's cooking.[27] Victoire's position as a cook for a white Creole family — the Walbergs — allows her daughter Jeanne to access education and to attend a boarding school in Versailles,[28] (explored in more detail in chapter five). Although education and upward mobility are ultimately responsible for Jeanne's estrangement from her mother, they allow Jeanne to access a higher place in Guadeloupean social hierarchy, and in turn this allows her daughter Maryse to do the same.

'Paradis Perdu', positioned as the 8th 'conte' in the collection, describes the childhood that she wishes she had had as a 'lost paradise' (the concept of paradise relating to a sense of home and belonging is explored below). The author uses a French dessert to

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[25] Condé, 'Order, Disorder'.

[26] Dawn Fulton, *Signs of Dissent: Maryse Condé and Postcolonial Criticism* (London: University of Virginia Press, 2008), p. 8**.**

[27] Bonnie Thomas, 'The Cook and the Writer: Maryse Condé's Journey of Self-Discovery', *Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies*, 10(2) (2013), 1-12.

[28] Condé*, Victoire*, p. 98.

symbolise what she has always wanted, but never obtained: 'Pourquoi, à plus de cinquante ans de distance, l'image de ce ramequin bleu lisère d'or empli d'un délice onctueux auquel je n'ai pas pu goûter passe et repasse devant mes yeux, symbole de tout ce que j'ai désiré et n'ai pas obtenu?' (*LC:* 63). The dessert rounds off the meal Maryse is given by the Léro family, who look after her when own parents forget to collect her from a *jeannettes* camping trip. This representation of something she wants but cannot have using a specific dish, embroiled as it is in a wider complex web of tension, love and rejection between Maryse and her mother Jeanne, can be compared to the use of culinary metaphors to represent the distance between Jeanne and her own mother Victoire. Symbolism related to consuming food can also be seen later in *Le Cœur* when Maryse is studying in Paris and she loses her appetite due to the long separation from her mother (*LC:* 121). This is comparable to a section in *Victoire* when Jeanne loses her appetite when faced with the emotional distance from her mother Victoire who has been in Martinique, which the narrator suggests was interpreted by Victoire as a form of punishment for her leaving: 'elle entendait signifier que les nourritures terrestres n'étaient pas son affaire afin de punir sa mère qui y apportait tant de soins'.[29] The narrator explains that this develops into what could be interpreted by the reader as an eating disorder as Jeanne deliberately stops eating and 'elle perdit d'un coup dix kilos'.[30] As explored further in chapter five, food also serves as a form of connection and reconciliation between the three generations of women as, in Thomas' words, 'the cook (Victoire) gradually becomes the writer (Condé)'.[31]

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[29] Condé, *Victoire*, pp. 163-164.
[30] *Ibid.,* p. 163.
[31] Thomas, 'The Cook and the Writer', 9.

Maryse's life in the urban centre of Pointe-à-Pitre, referred to throughout the text as 'La Pointe', is depicted as restrictive, oppressively bourgeois, and sterile. In contrast, the narrator describes the freedom she experiences when visiting a new family holiday destination, Gourbeyre. She describes a forest where she enjoyed walking 'sous l'ombrage des piébwa rongés d'épiphytes',[32] and lying 'sur le tapis de mousse et de lichens' (*LC:* 109), and where 'enfin, j'étais anonyme' (*LC:* 108). Here, location is strongly linked to identity, and Hardwick points out that this desire to be anonymous is a reversal of the 'Freudian Family Romance', because rather than wishing for a higher social status, Maryse longs to be lower-class and therefore free of her parents' repressive bourgeois attitudes.[33] This 'wilder' location in the forest makes Maryse feel happier than their usual home in Pointe-à-Pitre. The environment is also used by Condé to represent the sense of fear this rigid, constructed bouregois identity evokes in *Le Cœur*: 'J'avais l'impression que les membres de ma famille étaient menacés, exposés au cratère d'un volcan dont la lave en feu risquait à tout instant de les consumer' (*LC:* 41). Volcanic imagery has a particular resonance in the Caribbean islands, as they are subject to violent volcanic eruptions, such as the devastating eruption of 1902 which destroyed the town of Saint-Pierre (discussed further in chapter three).

In *Le Cœur*, Maryse is also pictured independently exploring the landscape of the island beyond La Pointe after receiving the present of a push bike, a Motobécane, in a *conte* called 'À nous la liberté?'. She describes visiting 'les côtes bases et vaseuses du Vieux-Borg de Morne-à-l'Eau' where she saw 'la mangrove peuplée d'échassiers tout de blanc vêtus'

[32] 'Piébwa' is a Creole word for tree. See: Anand Syea, *French Creoles, A Comprehensive and Comparative Grammar* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2017), p. 27.
[33] Louise Hardwick, *Childhood, Autobiography and the Francophone Caribbean* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), p. 117.

(*LC:* 116). She also visits Bas-du-Fort, at which she exclaims: 'Emerveillement!' and where she saw for the first time 'les hautes falaises calcaires ciselées de lapiés littoraux et le sable d'or' (*LC:* 116). Here, she contrasts this golden sand with the familiar volcanic sand she has always known at Viard, sand which she describes in a comedic and repulsive bodily metaphor as 'endeuillé comme les ongles d'un pied mal lavé' (*LC:* 116). This contrasts with the description Chamoiseau gives to volcanic sand at the edge of rivers in the *mornes* as 'bon sable' in *Texaco*, in contrast to the sand at the coast which he describes as heavy from salt and iron,[34] reminding the reader of the role of the sea in the transatlantic slave trade. In addition, in a *conte* named 'Chemin d'école', a nod to Chamoiseau's 1996 novel, in *Le Cœur,* the location of Maryse's family holidays at their 'maison de changement de air' in Sarcelles is, she writes, the only time that she knew 'le monde rural' of the plantations and fields, and was where she felt closer to nature — and by extension here, Creole culture — as she and her siblings went out to look for 'd'icaques noires et de goyaves roses' (*LC:* 102). Icaques are known as coco plums in English and are native to the Americas, as are pink guava. The narrator also writes that during these holidays, '[l]e vert champs de canne semblait nous inviter' (*LC:* 102), suggesting that she was in a location that was both unfamiliar and yet inviting. These descriptions of the landscape re-appear alongside her discussion of her sense of alienation during a school project in which she has to write about an Antillean author, leading to her 'discovery' of Martinican author Zobel. As Maryse transforms into 'Josélita' for her presentation, she confesses to the reader that she remained all too aware that her only direct experience of this part of Caribbean culture — the world of Creole and canefields — was as a tourist, and her own upbringing was far removed from that of Zobel. Yet as

[34] Chamoiseau, *Texaco*, p. 56.

Hardwick comments, she (re)packages herself for her teacher and classmates and delivers the stereotypes they ultimately expect to hear.[35]

Childhood analysis is also significant for identity construction in what Hardwick theorises as 'the scene of recognition', a scene which recurs in Francophone Caribbean childhood memoirs, in which a child asks their parents a question which demands a response explaining their slave history: a response which, crucially, is always withheld.[36] The scene of recognition emphasises 'the importance of open discussion about the colonial past',[37] as well as highlighting a gap in a collective historical memory. In *Le Cœur*, this scene occurs when Maryse is role-playing with a white child, Anne-Marie, who abruptly declares: '"Je dois te donner des coups parce que tu es une Nègresse"' (*LC:* 42), which leads Maryse to question this part of her identity and its silenced history. The author retrospectively asks: 'Je me demande si Anne-Marie et moi, nous n'avons pas été, l'espace de nos prétendus jeux, les réincarnations miniatures d'une maîtresse et de son esclave souffre-douleur' (*LC:* 44). Read against the wider trilogy of semi-autobiographical texts, the name Anne-Marie recurs in *Victoire*, in the name of Victoire's mistress Anne-Marie Walberg. Given the intricacies of Condé's literature, this recurring name does not appear to be a coincidence, and viewed in this context, this painful, repressed part of her history through her grandmother's role as a servant of the white Creole family the Walbergs, could be understood to be being acted out during this scene of recognition in *Le Cœur*.

[35] Hardwick, *Childhood*, p. 128.
[36] *Ibid*. pp. 17-18.
[37] *Ibid*. p. 120.

Personification of the Environment

In *Chronique*, overt examples are to be found of Chamoiseau's use of personification of the land to resist a nature/culture dualism — which also entails the French metropolitan domination of the Martinican land; for example, the character of Afoukal serves as a symbol for the need for Antilleans to resist their estrangement from the environment. In her afterword to the English translation, Linda Coverdale points out that the role of Afoukal is the 'master storyteller, [who] must literally raise a concealed world to the level of consciousness, for who else will break the silence and tell the people of Martinique *who they are*?' [original emphasis].[38] Afoukal himself is concealed in the land after being murdered by his master who, upon hearing of the abolition of slavery, buries all his valuable goods. Milne argues that Pipi's reliance on the discovery of Afoukal's jar of gold as a solution to the economic problems faced by the market 'est bien sûr inappropriée, car le déclin du marché représente un drame non seulement économique mais aussi culturel'.[39] The reader later discovers that there is no physical gold buried there and through the character of the zombie-slave Afoukal, this lack of physical gold is used by Chamoiseau to remind the reader that 'toutes les richesses ne sont pas d'or: il y a le souvenir…' (*C:* 238). The true quest here for Pipi was not for gold, but for a forgotten culture, or identity. Here, the forgotten culture is a creolised one incorporating both an African identity and an Antillean identity, and this search is representative of a forged connection which developed as those enslaved on plantations were made to work the unfamiliar land. Afoukal is therefore a symbol of the

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[38] Chamoiseau, *Chronicle*, p. 214.
[39] Milne, *Patrick Chamoiseau*, p. 80.

bridge between the Antillean environment and the memory of slavery, encapsulating the link between nature and humanity.

Furthermore, Chamoiseau could be suggesting that Antillean history needs to be awakened and the gold (memory) released for a Creole identity to develop. Glissant points to the land as a storyteller and thus as an important character in the re-appropriation of history: 'The storyteller's cry comes from the rock itself. He is grounded in the depths of the land; therein lies his power'.[40] The character of Afoukal can therefore be seen as a personification of the land as, interred within the soil itself, he tells the history of slavery on the island. Moreover, discussing the poetics of Caribbean ecocriticism, Gosson has argued that any act against the land is seen as 'an act of violence against the collective memory of the past',[41] therefore as an act against a collective Caribbean identity. Pipi's deterioration following his attempt to take gold from Afoukal, as the personification of the land, can be read as Chamoiseau's argument that humans must show respect for nature in their attempts to develop and move forward, but that consumer capitalism, which has followed colonialism, does not promote such a mode of respect and therefore works to reinforce boundaries between nature and humanity. There are examples of humanity working with nature to remember the devastating colonial history of enslavement in the Caribbean. Projects such as the Slave Wrecks Project,[42] work to uncover history from within the natural environment, and historical monuments that stand out in the landscape of Guadeloupe and

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[40] Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse,* p. 237.
[41] Gosson, 'For What the Land Tells', 219.
[42] For more information, see: National Museum of African American History & Culture, *Slave Wrecks Project* (n.d), <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/initiatives/slave-wrecks-project> [accessed 15 July 2022].

Martinique, such as Mémorial ACTe[43] and Fort Delgrès[44] in Guadeloupe, and Mémorial Cap 110 at L'Anse Caffard[45] and La Savane des Esclaves[46] in Martinique, can serve as powerful reminders of the lives involved in the slave trade and the way in which written history has conspired to forget them, and, through their specific situations in natural 'beauty' spots, they also provide examples of the breaking down of boundaries between humanity, memory, and nature.

Afoukal speaks to the reader through Pipi, who becomes a conduit for his supernatural words: '*Les dix-huit paroles rêvées qu'Afoukal lui offrit*' (*C:* 151). These '*paroles rêvées*', or Dream-Words, allow Pipi to 'remont[er] sa proper mémoire' (*C:* 151) and this involves the (re)discovery of the history of enslavement in the French Caribbean through the personification of the land. The *paroles rêvées* are presented as an indented, numbered list which is set apart from the main narrative using parentheses, much like many characters' individual stories. The parentheses suggest both that the reader should pay close attention to this piece of explanatory text, and that these incursions are tangential, and somehow of a different, and indeed inferior status, to the main narrative, which would still function without this information. The use of parentheses here shows Chamoiseau's criticism of the way in which these stories have been omitted from European History, which is taught in schools in the French Caribbean, and the use of lists mimics the enumerated and methodical way in which facts are often presented in European textbooks. This is comparable to the way

[43] Mémorial ACTe, *Centre Caribéen d'expressions et de mémoire de la traite et de l'esclavage* (n.d), <https://memorial-acte.fr/?fbclid=IwAR2Zc9V-jSnlZqJu7C3syXUuk6HfLacVUk97z5DhyDTqAMMugbqbofUTU2M> [accessed 24 March 2023].

[44] Guadeloupe Tourisme, *Fort Delgrès* (n.d), <https://fr.guadeloupe-tourisme.com/538/fort-delgres-basseterre/> [accessed 7 September 2022].

[45] Réseau Canopé, *Cap 110* (n.d), <https://www.reseau-canope.fr/art-des-caraibes-ameriques/oeuvres/cap-110.html> [accessed 7 September 2022].

[46] La Savane des Esclaves, *Accueil* (n.d), <https://www.lasavanedesesclaves.fr/> [accessed 7 September 2022].

in which the author criticises a Eurocentric version of the History of the Americas in his novel *Chemin-d'école*: 'les Européens étaient les fondateurs de l'Histoire [...] Et, avec l'arrivée des colons, la lumière fut. La Civilisation. L'Histoire. L'humanisation du grouillement de la Terre'.[47] In this semi-autobiographical text, the order of learning history from European books is broken up by, and contrasted with, the magical realism of Gros-Lombric's Creole stories and the protagonist's suggestion that they can 'amarrer' or strike down the teacher using magic, much as Afoukal relates in his stories of *papa-feuilles* who poisons the master during enslavement (*C:* 161-162). Here, Chamoiseau is demonstrating how nature can be used to resist colonial and postcolonial domination by using the name *papa-feuilles* for this character who is strongly connected to the natural environment. Through this use of ecopomorphism, by which he both associates *papa-feuilles* with herbal remedies and gives this human character plant-like qualities, Chamoiseau issues a challenge to nature/humanity dualism, in the form of a human attuned to nature who also personifies resistance to oppression.

Afoukal's first *parole rêvée* points to the initial crossing of the Atlantic made by enslaved people: 'les mares mauvaises rapportaient ces milliers de méduses qui devaient brutalement réinventer la vie, sans une eau si ce n'est souvenir' (*C:* 151). In this poetic and surprising image, 'evil tides' represent French colonialism and jellyfish symbolise the thousands of enslaved people left without an identity. The comparison of enslaved people to jellyfish is suggestive of Chamoiseau re-appropriating power to them as jellyfish can sting if they feel threatened. Metaphors linking the sea and identity can be seen in other parts of the novel, and Chamoiseau's use of waves and water can be situated in the wider Caribbean

[47] Patrick Chamoiseau, *Chemin-d'école* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), pp. 170-171.

literary context of Glissant's *Le Discours antillais*, as well as in the work of Derek Walcott,[48] and, as mentioned by Dash, in imagery by Benítez-Rojo.[49] All those authors connect identity to the sea, in ways often deliberately designed to perplex and disorient the reader. In *Chronique*, Afoukal describes the way in which enslaved people in the cane fields were metaphorically drowning: 'Pense à […] la mort de chaque heure dans l'acceptation comme fatale de cette lente noyade' (*C:* 153).

Afoukal informs Pipi, and the reader, about the back-breaking work carried out in the fields during enslavement through anthropomorphism of the earth: 'Et le champ nous avalait jusqu'à l'anus nocturne' (*C:* 153). Here, extreme suffering is conveyed through the vulgar imagery of the land defecating at night, representing the relief experienced by enslaved people at the end of a working day. In the same Dream-Word, he also describes working the cane fields as combing out 'de longs cheveux brûlants' (*C:* 152). In the sixth Dream-Word, Afoukal describes the close relationship between enslaved people and the earth: 'La terre était belle et nous touchait l'épaule. Certains pouvaient lui parler' (*C:* 155). This enticing imagery contrasts with the estranged representation of the earth given by *papa-feuilles* whilst he and Pipi are discussing their identities, as he remarks: '"Je sais que la terre d'ici nous est étrangère, elle me le dit tout le temps"' (*C:* 185). He then goes on to ask, '"sais-tu d'où nous venons?"' and Pipi replies, '"D'Afrique…"' (*C:* 185). The use of ellipsis signifies a dramatic scene of recognition, as mentioned in relation to *Le Cœur*, although here an answer, however brief and freighted with the burden of its own inadequacy, is offered.

[48] For example his poem 'The Sea is History', in which the transatlantic slave trade and emancipation are referenced. Derek Walcott, 'The Sea is History', in *Collected Poems 1948–1984* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1986) pp. 364-67.
[49] For example in *La isla que se repite.*

Despite *papa-feuilles'* insistence that the land is a stranger to him, his close relationship to the environment is clear in his identity and suggested by his name. This merging of land and identity can be seen to transfer to Pipi through this exchange of words, silences, and the examination of Pipi's skin as *papa-feuilles* tells him: '"Tu es paré"' (*C:* 185). This scene suggests that now Pipi is more aware of a sense of collective belonging through ancestral history, he is ready to become closer to the earth, and following this lesson from *papa-feuilles* his connection to the land intensifies.

In *The Poetics of Ethnography*, Kullburg discusses a fictionalised element of the writing of *Chronique* that appears in Chamoiseau's 1988 novel *Solibo Magnifique*.[50] Now, the narrative persona bemoans his self-described 'failed' attempt at integrating into the market *djobbeurs* (the wheelbarrow carrying odd-job men of the market) as fieldwork for the writing of *Chronique*. She writes that the result of this 'is a tragic caricature of an ethnographer who is desperately hanging on to documentation while he is losing his mind, forgetting his heritage and losing his initial position'.[51] This forgetting or heritage and 'losing his mind' recalls Pipi's demise, which is described in a similar way, thus allowing a comparison between Pipi and Chamoiseau himself. Kullberg points out that the epigraph for *Texaco* appears to be Glissant's reminder to Chamoiseau to remember who he is — 'un nèg-bouk'[52] — and this is where he urges Chamoiseau to write, or speak, from. She argues that he failed at this in *Chronique* but partly achieved it in his later novel *Texaco*.[53] This 'mask', or pretending in order to be part of a collective, is comparable to Condé's discussions of masks

[50] Patrick Chamoiseau, *Solibo Magnifique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988).
[51] Kullberg, *The Poetics of Ethnography*, p. 106.
[52] Chamoiseau, *Texaco*, p. 11.
[53] Kullberg, *The Poetics of Ethnography*, pp. 104-105.

and how to formulate a sense of belonging, and as demonstrated in chapter four, is an aspect that evolves through Chamoiseau's later engagement with Glissant's *Relation* in *Les neuf consciences*.

The search for identity through a close relationship to the environment is highlighted by both *papa-feuilles* and Afoukal. *Papa-feuilles* describes himself as '"un ti-compère des feuilles, un ami des arbres…"' (*C:* 184) and he heals Pipi 'comme une plante' following his deterioration in the field in search of Afoukal's gold (*C:* 182-183). The potential healing power of the land is shown here as an alternative system of knowledge to Western scientific medicine and thus a Creole identity is juxtaposed with a European identity through the environment once more. The healing power of plants has also been explored in Zobel's novel *La Rue Cases-Nègres,* in which the grandmother, M'man Tine, uses roots and leaves to heal protagonist José and which is rich in descriptions of the environment, for example the comparison of M'man Tine's hands to that of the cracked earth due to her back-breaking work in the field: '[s]es mains noires [...] chaque craquelure incrustée d'une boue indélébile'.[54] However, it could be argued that in *Chronique* both *papa-feuilles* and Afoukal seem to represent the Europeanised vision of the tree as lineage, analysed by Bojsen as signifying 'centralized hierarchies and subjections of meaning' in contrast to the mangrove's rhizomatic roots which spread out to 'make alliances with its surroundings' and to which Glissant refers in his concept of *Relation*.[55] Kullberg has also analysed the symbolism of the mangrove as a form of resistance to argue that it complicates European notions of the tree

[54] Joseph Zobel, *La Rue Cases-Nègres* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1974[1950]), p. 310.
[55] Bojsen, 'Flashbacks of an Orchid', p. 215.

and genealogy.[56] This can be seen in the questioning of *papa-feuilles*: '"Les racines sortent de la graine? Mais la question est: d'où vient la graine, et la graine de la graine?"' (*C:* 185). The *djobbeurs* are also compared to a tree in the novel — a mango tree — from which Pipi has grown and which Pipi represents (*C:* 17). After Pipi learns of Afoukal, he becomes 'plus bizarre qu'un mangot[57] hors saison' and '[i]l n'avait plus le goût des djobs' (*C:* 150). It is interesting that the tree chosen to represent these characters is a mango tree as the mango is native to India and had been brought to the Americas during colonisation,[58] again showing the varied influences on the Caribbean environment and identity. Although the mango, as representative of indentured labourers from India who were brought over at the end of the nineteenth century into the twentieth century, following the legal abolition of slavery, is not native to the Antillean land, it is central to a Caribbean identity. This is comparable to the centrality of an African identity to the Caribbean despite the links forged between enslaved people brought over from Africa and the Antillean land, something which can be seen in Pipi's search for identity.

In this search for identity, *papa-feuilles* engages with the *Négritude* movement by asking about his links to Africa. This is also explored by Afoukal, who seems to highlight the limitations of Aimé Césaire's *Cahier* which alludes to a return to Africa.[59] Afoukal points out Pipi's roots to him, leading Pipi to repeat this to the market sellers: '"Kongos, Bambaras, Mandingues, tous fils d'Afrique…"' (*C:* 169), yet he also argues that '"Y'a plus d'Afrique fout! Où c'est d'abord, l'Afrique? Où sont les sentiers, les tracées du retour? Y'a des souvenirs du

[56] Kullberg, 'L'écriture arborescente de la caraïbe', 11.
[57] The name for a small mango in Martinique.
[58] For more information about the migration of flora and fauna from India to the Caribbean, see: Brinsley Samaroo, 'Changing Caribbean geographies: Connections in flora, fauna, and patterns of settlement from Indian inheritances', *Journal of Indentureship and Its Legacies*, 1(1) (2021), 16-35.
[59] Césaire, *Cahier.*

chemin sur les vagues?"' (*C:* 213). Afoukal articulates the essence of identity questions at the heart of the *Créolité* movement: '"Qu'allez-vous faire de toutes ces races qui vous habitent, de ces deux langues[60] qui vous écartèlent, de ce lot de sangs qui vous travaille?"' (*C:* 213). The créolistes suggest a solution to having 'two tongues' in *Éloge de la Créolité*: 'Il s'agit maintenant d'accepter ce bilinguisme potentiel et de sortir des usages contraints que nous en avons. De ce terreau, faire lever sa parole',[61] also linking language to nature by comparing the growing of a new language identity based on many others, to the development of new life.

(Post)colonial Intervention and Exploitation

Anthropomorphism of the earth and the environment can also be seen in Pipi's garden, which represents changing food production methods following the departmentalisation of Martinique in 1946 under the leadership of Député Césaire. Through Pipi's garden, the close relationship between enslaved people, their descendants, and the earth is contrasted with the disengagement between the colonial urbanisation and industrialisation of the environment. It seems that for Chamoiseau, food is inextricably linked to a Creole identity as a method of resistance to European hegemony, something that can be seen in the development of Pipi's garden. Pipi goes to the 'Rastas' in the woods to ask them for the 'secrets que la terre leur confiait' (*C:* 195). The response he receives, that one should 'accompagner l'energie du monde' rather than conquering it (*C*: 140), epitomises the message of the entire novel, and echoes Bojsen's analysis that '[i]n Chamoiseau's texts there

[60] Translated into English as "two tongues" in Chamoiseau, *Chronicle*, p. 153.
[61] Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité,* p. 43.

is no question of "mastering the land"; rather, one lives with it'.[62] The response he receives highlights the message Chamoiseau is giving to the reader regarding the way in which the environment is treated.

By using a Creole garden to successfully grow produce, and in turn enabling market vendors to lower their prices, and therefore compete with the supermarkets, Pipi shows 'que l'indépendance était viable' (*C:* 200). Food production is central to the question of independence and its inclusion highlights Chamoiseau's pro-independence political position, which has been indicated in the author's contributions to political essays: *Éloge de la Créolité, Manifeste pour refonder les DOM*,[63] *Manifeste pour les 'produits',* and in his very recent 2023 open letter 'Faire-pays'.[64] De Vriese has argued that in *Texaco* and *Biblique:*

> Le jardin n'est pas hermétique à l'histoire, mais se constitue en écho du politique, soit en tant que reproduction en miniature d'une organisation de la société, soit en tant que lieu de négation du système politique existant. Dans l'un et l'autre cas, le jardin constitue la métaphore spatiale et naturelle d'une présence au monde.[65]

This can also be seen here in *Chronique* as the narrator points out that through his garden, Pipi had again become 'la référence majeure des organisations anticolonialistes du pays' (*C*: 200), highlighting the links between food production, the environment, and identity. In his

[62] Bojsen 'Flashbacks of an Orchid', p. 220.

[63] Patrick Chamoiseau, Gérard Delver, Édouard Glissant, and Bertène Juminer, 'Manifeste pour refonder les DOM', *Le Monde* (21 January 2000) <https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2000/01/21/manifeste-pour-refonder-les-dom_3585463_1819218.html> [accessed 24 March 2023].

[64] A 2023 open letter in *Le Monde* by Chamoiseau, signed by over 200 artists and academics from the Antilles, Mayotte, French Guiana, and Reunion. This text calls for a new relationship between France and its overseas departments and regions, with a particular focus on the use of language. In the letter, Chamoiseau references the 'horizontale plénitude du vivant' as key to the formation of a new relationship. See: 'L'appel de 200 personnalités des Antilles, de Mayotte de Guyane, de La Réunion à "faire-pays"' *Le Monde* (18 March 2023), <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2023/03/18/l-appel-de-200-personnalites-des-antilles-de-mayotte-de-guyane-de-la-reunion-a-faire-pays_6166061_3232.html> [accessed 5 April 2023].

[65] De Vriese, 'Le jardin, lieu esthétique d'un (des)ordre humain: la naturalisation du politique et du littéraire chez Claude Simon et Patrick Chamoiseau', *Projets de paysage,* 14 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.4000/paysage.8033>, 2.

analysis of *Chronique*, De Vriese points out how the decline of the market coincides with the appearance of French supermarkets, and that '[l']uniformité l'emporte ainsi sur "l'infinie variété végétale" disposée sur les étals du marché'.[66] This mixing of infinite varieties echoes the discourse of the créolistes regarding the mix of cultures that have been brought together to create a Creole identity (the market) juxtaposed with a homogenising discourse of a supposed superior European identity (the supermarket): 'La Créolité est l'agrégat interactionnel ou transactionnel, des éléments culturels caraïbes, européens, africains, asiatiques, et levantins, que le joug de l'Histoire a réunis sue le même sol.'[67] Furthermore, a criticism of globalisation and the increasing replacement of markets by supermarkets, as well as an echo of the suggestions contained in the above essays that work should be for self-fulfilment, can be seen when Marguerite tells Pipi that '"Pièce nègre ne travaillerait sur cette terre si toutes les ignames couraient-venir tout les temps…"' (*C:* 197). Marguerite's comment is a critique by the author regarding consumerism and the role of supermarkets in the relationship between Antilleans and food. As explored in more detail in the introduction to this thesis, in analysing the role of the 2009 strikes, Hardwick has noted how '[f]rom their creation the early colonies existed in order to benefit the mère-patrie', thus the islands had to produce food that was not available in metropolitan France, which led to France's 'monopoly rights over all colonial production'.[68] This development of Martinique and Guadeloupe as 'transfer economies or consumer colonies'[69] has positioned these islands as a place of production to benefit the French metropole, demonstrating how humanity and nature continue to be mastered by the same (post)colonial force.

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[66] De Vriese, 'Écritures antillaises entre géopoétique et écopoétique', 20.
[67] Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité,* p. 26.
[68] Hardwick, 'Depicting Social Dispossession', 290.
[69] Aldrich and Connell, *France's Overseas Frontier,* p. 7.

Highlighting the disconnect between the Antillean environment and colonialism, Pipi's garden becomes subjected to 'modern methods' of gardening. In 1637, Descartes argued that it was necessary for man to become master and possessor of nature in order to enjoy 'sans aucune peine des fruits de la terre et de toutes les commodités qui s'y trouvent',[70] and this approach can be seen here in the replacing of a unity with nature with a dualistic approach focused on domination and extraction. Showing a link between linguistic identity and this approach, Pipi learns French so that he can 'rationaliser' in collaboration with the scientists. However, he 'se laissa influencer par les hommes de science' who use pesticides, and eventually 'quelque chose se dérégla dans le jardin' (*C:* 203), ending in the total destruction of Pipi's garden. The mention of pesticides here by Chamoiseau is significant as he seems to be prefiguring the *chlordécone* (kepone) scandal, which came to light in 2007, and which has rendered a large portion of the island's land nonarable.[71]

Numerous studies have linked *chlordécone*, which was first commercially produced in 1966, to cancer and poor health in humans. A study in 2009 linked pesticides to increased rates of cancer in men in Martinique and Guadeloupe, hypothesising that intensive and prolonged exposure to 'some pesticides, such as […] Chlordecone […] may have been implicated in the growing incidence of prostate cancer in Martinique and Guadeloupe', adding that growth 'cannot be related either to a modification of ethnographic factors nor to

[70] Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode*, p. 70.

[71] It is important to note here another key incidence of agricultural pollution which has been caused by both run-off from melon farming and by metal remnants from World War Two, at the Ramsar wetlands salt-water site of L'Étang des Salines on the southern coast of Martinique. For more information, see: Cupit, Christine, 'L'Étang des Salines pollué par les métaux lourds et les pesticides', *Martinique la 1ère* (2 February 2021), <https://la1ere.francetvinfo.fr/martinique/sainte-anne-martinique/l-etang-des-salines-pollue-par-les-metaux-lourds-et-les-pesticides-923422.html> [accessed 15 March 2023].

a change in lifestyle.'[72] However, highlighting a lack of knowledge about the pesticide at government level, on 1 February 2019 French President Emmanuel Macron declared that *chlordécone* was not carcinogenic,[73] a claim that he had also made previously, in September 2018.[74] Multinger and Pascal Blanchet, Professor at the Université des Antilles, (both of whom have written extensively on the subject) issued a statement against Macron a couple of days later, stressing that the pesticide has been linked to cancer in many scientific studies,[75] such as the one carried out by the International Agency for Research on Cancer in 1979,[76] and in their own study published with other scientists in 2010.[77] Multigner has pointed out that *chlordécone* is also linked to an 'increased risk of premature births and increased risk of adverse brain development in children.'[78] In a report by the BBC in 2020, Ambroise Bertin, who believes his prostate cancer and thyroid disease are linked to *chlordécone*, says '"They used to tell us: don't eat or drink anything while you're putting it down."'[79] Furthermore, a report by *Santé publique France* called 'L'étude Kannari' points out

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[72] Dominique Belpomme et al., 'Prostate cancer as an environmental disease: An ecological study in the French Caribbean islands, Martinique and Guadeloupe', *International Journal of Oncology*, 34(4) (2009), 1037-1044 (p. 1043) <https://doi.org/10.3892/ijo_00000229>.
[73] Faustine Vincent, 'Chlordécone: l'Elysée plaide le "malentendu" après la déclaration polémique de Macron, *Le Monde* (4 February 2019), <https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2019/02/04/chlordecone-l-elysee-plaide-le-malentendu-apres-la-declaration-polemique-de-macron_5419206_823448.html> [accessed 14 July 2022].
[74] Multinger and Ferdinand, 'Chlordécone et cancer'.
[75] Boscher, Marie, '"Il ne faut pas dire que le chlordécone est cancérigène": les scientifiques répondent à Emmanuel Macron', *Martinique la 1ère* (3 February 2019), <https://la1ere.francetvinfo.fr/il-ne-faut-pas-dire-que-chlordecone-est-cancerigene-scientifiques-repondent-emmanuel-macron-676195.html> [accessed 12 July 2022].
[76] World Health Organisation, *IARC Monographs on the Evaluation of the Carciogenic Risk of Chemicals to Humans* (Lyon: IARC, 1979).
[77] Luc Multinger et al., 'Chlordecone exposure and risk of prostate cancer', *J Clin Oncol*, 28(21) (2010), 3457-3462.
[78] *Ibid.*
[79] Tim Whewell, *Link between chlordecone and cancer* (20 November 2020), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-54992051> [accessed 12 July 2022].

that over 90% of Martinicans have traces of *chlordécone* in their blood,[80] a shocking statistic considering the pesticide has not been used for many years and which demonstrates the effects that *chlordécone* continues to have on the population.

Multinger also wrote the preface to Oublié's *Tropiques toxiques*.[81] An interview he gave in 2018[82] is included and referenced as the inspiration behind the book,[83] in which he explains that the pesticide is having a negative impact on health.[84] *Tropiques toxiques* traces the discussion about *chlordécone*, using first-hand accounts of people who have been affected by it, identifying its first use in the Francophone Antilles in 1973 to remove weevils, and pointing out that this arose as a result of reliance on the metropole for banana exports which became the region's new primary economic resource following the collapse of the sugar cane plantations.[85] Ifeanyi Ezeonu has written about the economic origins of the increase in banana plantations in Guadeloupe in the late 1920s.[86] He writes that bananas became the crop of choice for farmers seeking to export produce, overtaking coffee, cacao, and other cash crops due to their faster rate of maturation, ease of re-cultivation following natural disasters, and a favourable international market.[87] In the 1930s, France enacted laws which 'effectively eliminated the importation of this crop from non-French territories', and the metropole began to rely on importation of fruits following negative effects on

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[80] Clémentine Dereumeaux and Abdessattar Saoudi, *Imprégnation de la population Antillaise pas la chlordécone et certains composes organochlorés en 2013-2014: Étude Kannari* (Saint-Maurice: Santé publique France, 2018) <https://www.santepubliquefrance.fr/regions/antilles/documents/rapport-synthese/2018/impregnation-de-la-population-antillaise-par-la-chlordecone-et-certains-composes-organochlores-en-2013-2014-etude-kannari> [accessed 12 July 2022].
[81] Oublié, *Tropiques toxiques*, p. 5.
[82] Martinique la 1ère, *Chlordécone: le scandale est-il devant nous?*.
[83] Oublié, *Tropiques toxiques,* p. 6.
[84] *Ibid*., pp. 33-35.
[85] *Ibid*., p.12.
[86] Ifeanyi Ezeonu, 'Capital and Chlordecone Poisoning in the French Caribbean Islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique: A Thesis on Crimes of the Market', *International Critical Thought*, 11(2) (2021), 271-286.
[87] *Ibid*., 276.

agriculture post–World War I, both factors which cemented the industry in Guadeloupe and Martinique.[88] *Tropiques toxiques* discusses *chlordécone*'s increased use, which Multinger points out was due to increased panic following cyclones that destroyed crops in the region in 1979 and 1980 and it being marketed as a 'produit miracle',[89] It also references Macron's denial of the pesticide's carcinogenic links,[90] numerous conversations that Oublié had with residents of Guadeloupe between 2018-2020, and various court cases that have taken place concerning the pesticide's use. The conclusion is a graphic portrayal of a conversation on the issue between philosophers Dominique Bourg, Cynthia Fleury, Tanella Boni, and also Ferdinand, whose book, *Une écologie décoloniale*, is referenced, and who points out that the colonial plantation epitomises the exploitation of nature, citing the *chlordécone* scandal as a perfect example of this.[91] Bourg suggests that a possible way to move forward is to ensure higher prices are charged for products relative to their negative consequences for the environment; for example, bananas grown using pesticides would cost much more than those that are organically grown.[92]

Following the findings of a 2007 report into the pesticides' continued use, residents in Martinique and Guadeloupe were discouraged by the French Minister of Health from consuming produce from their own vegetable gardens.[93] The use of pesticides in *Chronique* is symbolic as it destroys not only the physical land in Pipi's garden, but also the possibility of agricultural (and political) independence which has resonance in the possibilities of brief liberation for enslaved people who were allowed to grow and sell produce during their

[88] *Ibid*., 276-277.
[89] Oublié, *Tropiques toxiques*, pp. 34-35.
[90] *Ibid*., pp. 96-97.
[91] Oublié, *Tropiques toxiques*, p. 223.
[92] *Ibid*., p. 222.
[93] Torny, 'Managing an Everlastingly Polluted World', pp. 14-15.

enslavement.[94] It is estimated that 25% of arable farmland in Martinique is contaminated,[95] rendering that soil unusable for agriculture and this is predicted to last centuries, demonstrating another form of ongoing domination of the land and food production by the *metropole* and highlighting again the dependency of the islands on imported produce.

In terms of action being taken to improve the situation, a group was set up in July 2012 called 'Zéro chlordécone zéro poison',[96] which works to organise protests against businesses that have profited from the pesticide and has launched campaigns, such as 'Chlordétox', against the use of various pesticides. Guilaine Sabine, an activist for the group, points out that békés who owned plantations on the islands '"are still the same group of people who have uncontested domination of the land,"' and thus he holds these groups of people responsible for the contamination,[97] an argument that emerged during the 2009 strikes and again during protests in 2021 and 2022,[98] and which is central to Jean-Claude Flamand Barny's 2004 film (released in metropolitan France in 2005) *Nèg maron*.[99] Another film, which was shown as a special report on Canal+ in February 2009 during the strikes, *Les derniers maîtres de la Martinique*,[100] highlighted that while békés, who are linked to plantation owners, make up less than one percent of the population, they own twenty

[94] This can be seen in *Le Code noir et autres textes de lois sur l'esclavage* (Saint-Maur-des-Fossés: Éditions Sépia, 2006[1685]), in articles 18-20, in which the rights and responsibilities of enslaved people regarding the selling of produce at markets are set out.
[95] Brut Media, *What is kepone?* (2020), <https://www.brut.media/uk/nature/kepone-a-major-scandal-still-25-years-later--24ca3402-e707-48eb-8dd2-b8cd1f6447f1> [accessed 14 July 2022].
[96] ZÉRO Chlordécone Objectif ZÉRO Poison (@LyannajKontAmpwazonnman) <https://www.facebook.com/LyannajKontAmpwazonnman/> [accessed 14 July 2022].
[97] Tim Whewell, *Link between chlordecone and cancer*.
[98] Cruse, 'Frustration in the French Antilles'.
[99] *Nèg maron*, dir. by Jean-Claude Flamand-Barny, (Mat Films, Kasso Inc. Productions and France 2 cinéma, 2004). For more on the links between the strikes and the film, see Hardwick, 'Depicting Social Dispossession'.
[100] *Les derniers maîtres de la Martinique*, dir. by Romain Bolzinger (Canal+, 2009).

percent of the island's wealth and have control over the majority of local food production imports and exports.

There is also an initiative launched by the Parc Naturel Régional de la Martinique (PNRM) called Label Zéro Chlordécone,[101] which is discussed in more detail in chapter 6. In 2007, Louis Boutrin, who was president of the park from 2016 to 2020, has also written about the scandal with co-author of *Éloge de la Créolité*, Confiant.[102] Furthermore, a demonstration of over 10,000 people took place in Fort-de-France in February 2021 in response to the possibility of a dismissal of a court case investigating the poisoning of the French Antilles by the pesticide due to a 'limitation of facts'. [103] In this case it was claimed that Louis Mermaz, a former French Minister for Agriculture, signed a waiver in 1992 allowing the continued use of the pesticide in Martinique and Guadeloupe.[104] In a similar case, the state was found guilty on 27 June 2022 of '*négligences fautives*' by the Tribunal administrative de Paris, evidence that lawyers are planning to use in a criminal trial.[105] Furthermore, there have been recent studies working on developing a way to degrade the *chlordécone* in the soil and water. However, Jennifer Hellal et al. have pointed out that as of

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[101] Parc Naturel Régional de la Martinique, *Label zéro chlordécone* (n.d) <http://pnr-martinique.com/habiter/label-zero-chlordecone/> [accessed 20 June 2022].

[102] Louis Boutrin and Raphaël Confiant, *Chronique d'un empoisonnement annoncé: Le scandale du Chlordécone aux Antilles françaises 1972-2002* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007).

[103] 'Scandale du chlordécone: on vous explique pourquoi la Martinique et la Guadeloupe se mobilisent contre "l'impunité"', *Franceinfo* (1 March 2021) <https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/environnement/pesticides/scandale-du-chlordecone-on-vous-explique-pourquoi-la-martinique-et-la-guadeloupe-se-mobilisent-contre-l-impunite_4315511.html> [accessed 12 July 2022].

[104] Stéphane Pair, 'Chlordécone: Louis Mermaz, ex-ministre de François Mitterrand, étendu par les juges en juillet 2021', *Franceinfo* (1 February 2022), <https://www.francetvinfo.fr/economie/emploi/metiers/info-franceinfo-chlordecone-un-ex-ministre-de-francois-mitterrandentendu-en-juillet2021-par-les-juges_4936911.html> [accessed 12 July 2022].

[105] 'Chlordécone: l'Etat jugé coupable de "négligences fautives"', *Martinique la 1ère* (27 June 2022) <https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/environnement/pesticides/chlordecone-l-etat-juge-coupable-de-negligences-fautives_5224168.html> [accessed 12 July 2022].

yet there have been no successful experiments biodegrading the pesticide in natural soil conditions, as results have only been obtained under 'artificial anaerobic conditions', but that they believe it is possible.[106] In 2021, 'Le plan chlordécone IV (2021-2027)' was launched by Santé Publique France, which is a programme focusing on communication, research, education, health, environment, food, occupational health and socioeconomics. The programme has a budget of 92 million euros and aims to operate at both national and local level.[107]

Pipi's garden demonstrates Chamoiseau's criticism of (neo)colonial capitalist intervention on both environmental and scientific levels, but it can also be read as a criticism of the continued destructive imperialism and domination by France, and French, of Martinique and Guadeloupe and of their respective identities. Through Pipi, Chamoiseau links the creativity of gardening and producing food to the poetics of his own writing. This is particularly evident in his defiance of the French language through his use of Creole and exploitation of the metonymic gap — something which is hidden to the colonial power much as Pipi's garden contains inaccessible 'secrets'. In an interview, Chamoiseau himself points out how '[l]es jardins qui sont dans mes livres ne sont jamais seulement des jardins…'.[108] He explains that there used to be 'une intuition écologique formidable', shown here through Pipi, and that gardens allowed Antillean slaves to survive, but that now this balance has been disrupted by scientific intervention and urban spaces,[109] much like in Pipi's garden. This

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[106] Jennifer Hellal et al., 'Microbial Transformation of Chlordecone and Two Transformation Products Formed During in situ Chemical Reduction', *Frontiers in Microbiology*, 12 (2021), 257-270.
[107] Ministère de la santé et de la prévention, *Le plan chlordecone IV (2021-2027)* (2021) <https://solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/sante-et-environnement/les-plans-nationaux-sante-environnement/article/le-plan-chlordecone-iv-2021-2027> [accessed 15 July 2022].
[108] Chamoiseau and De Vriese, 'L'écriture de la nature', 131.
[109] *Ibid*.

disruption of the environment is representative of the ways in which science, urbanisation, and imperialism have also disrupted a sense of identity in the French Caribbean, especially when considered alongside Chamoiseau's critique of the dominance of the French language. The comparison of gardening to a form of language is also comparable to the way in which cooking becomes a form of language for Victoire, and a tool for autonomy and climbing the social hierarchy, as suggested by Thomas with reference both to *Le Cœur* and to *Victoire*.[110]

The structure of *Chronique* and the way in which the narratives and relationships of different characters are interwoven echoes the interdependent ecosystems that can be found in nature. Chamoiseau points to this in an interview, and highlights the links between what he terms as the biosphere and human relations:

> La biosphère est un ensemble de relations subtiles, d'équilibres mouvants, imprévisibles, avec des degrés d'alchimie qui dépassent notre entendement. Transposez cela sur les relations entre les cultures, les civilisations, et surtout sur les alchimies entre les individus qui sont aujourd'hui les trajectoires les plus déterminantes, vous toucherez alors au champ de conscience le plus pertinent.[111]

Chamoiseau transposes the notions of a biosphere onto his narratives and the relationships between the characters to show the links he perceives between nature and humanity. Viewing his multiple narratives in *Chronique* as a biosphere shows the connection between the ever-changing ecosystems of the natural world which, in turn, incorporates ever-changing human relations. Moreover, echoing the messages of *Antillanité* and *Créolité* regarding fluidity in identity, Chamoiseau points out the constantly-evolving relationships in the environment which mirror those in society: 'Nous devons vivre en pleine conscience dans un écosystème relationnel où toutes les cultures du monde, toutes les trajectoires

[110] Thomas, 'The Cook and the Writer'.
[111] Chamoiseau and De Vriese, 'L'écriture de la nature', 130.

individuelles, toutes les perceptions sont liées entre elles, se nourrissent, s'échangent, s'opposent, se combattent, s'affectent et se désaffectent, et finalement se changent'.[112] The dynamic and interdependent relationships both between different characters, and between characters and the environment can be seen throughout *Chronique*. Pipi's fluctuating relationship to the land and the market, and the numerous connections that he makes with other characters, are examples of this. Moreover, the way in which the main narrative is interwoven with character biographies, presented separately using parentheses, is suggestive of the complexity of memory which, Chamoiseau claims in an appendix, is 'tout en ruptures de temps, de lieux, de tons et de manières' (*C:* 247). Maeve McCusker argues that 'the instability of narrative form can be seen to reflect both the characters' fractured sense of selfhood, and their contemporary social and economic reality',[113] highlighting how the interwoven and fractured connections of nature can mirror those of memory, identity, and day-to-day life.

The overall structure is typical of Chamoiseau's novels as there are two chapters in which the first is optimistic (*inspiration*), and the second evokes despair (*expiration*), a structure similar to those found in *Chemin-d'école* and *Les neuf consciences*. This negative term *expiration* can also be linked to the consumption of food through imagery of rotting food, and the second chapter depicts a negative change to the islands as a result of the increase in imperialism and dependency. Martinique's dependence on the *métropole* is highlighted in *Chronique* through the population's relationship with the environment, especially food production. The way in which the Second World War in Europe affects food

[112] *Ibid*.
[113] Maeve McCusker, *Patrick Chamoiseau: Recovering Memory* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), p. 22.

in Martinique is a clear example. The narrator uses animalistic imagery to describe the markets as being the busy centre of food once again following the end of the war: 'Les marchés se réveillèrent comme des chiens sous une eau chaude' (*C:* 75). However, this is short-lived and soon 'les avions et bateaux de France augmentaient. Ils amenaient des caisses de marchandises à bon marché, des pommes et raisins exotiques à nous chavirer le cœur, des produits inconnus et conservés' (*C:* 133). This description of apples as 'exotic' and a symbol of imperialism is a key feature in Chamoiseau's novels. As Hardwick points out in her comparative reading which brings Chamoiseau into contact with concepts first explored by V.S Naipaul in *The Mimic Men*,[114] Chamoiseau uses the image of an apple to hold up to ridicule the Antillean mimic-man, for example in *Chemin d'école*.[115] The symbolism of the apple, native to Europe, highlights that the natural environment has been altered and dominated by colonialism in the same way as humans. Mimicry has been theorised by Bhabha as 'one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge',[116] that as a deliberate strategy of the British and French civilising missions is a way of creating a 'reformed, recognizable other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*' [original emphasis].[117] For Bhabha, as this difference can highlight humanity it undermines a supposed European superiority and can therefore be seen as a tool for upward mobility. Therefore, although the apple can be seen in *Chronique* as a symbol of French hegemony, it can also be seen to represent the power to mobilise through its consumption. The apple thus shows how nature and humanity have been dominated by the same colonial force, but once the apple is consumed, and therefore a nature/humanity

[114] V.S. Naipaul, *The Mimic Men* (London: Penguin, 1973[1967]).
[115] Hardwick, *Childhood*, p. 76.
[116] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture,* p. 85.
[117] *Ibid.,* p. 86.

dualism is broken down, it may serve not only as a weapon of assimilation, but as a disruptive mechanism with which to challenge the dominant hegemony.

In *Chronique*, Chamoiseau links a lack of awareness of history to globalisation, imperialism, and the modernisation of the island which can be seen in his descriptions of the changing food sources: 'Bientôt, ils quadrillèrent le pays de libres-services, supermarchés hypermarchés, auprès desquels les nôtres faisaient triste figure' (*C:* 133), which leads to the new market vendors preferring 'les poulets-frites des fast-food ou les hamburgers des snacks de cinéma' (*C:* 170). It is significant that the infestation of rats which shortly follows soon becomes a '[s]igne de notre décadence' (*C:* 210) and science cannot eliminate them (*C:* 207-209). Chamoiseau imagines modernisation as an infestation, and by extension that those who have enforced modernisation as vermin. In *Manifeste pour les 'produits'*, written against the backdrop of the 2009 strikes, Chamoiseau and other authors discuss a challenge to consumerism and capitalism which they claim are exploiting the islands. The authors suggest that as a result there is a need for 'notre autosuffisance énergétique et alimentaire'.[118] This sentiment is seen in the novel through Pipi's garden and his success as the markets are briefly restored before interference from 'Western' agricultural methods cause its decline. The dangers of capitalism can also be seen in Pipi's death at the end of the novel. Gosson argues that 'Chamoiseau, like Glissant before him, warns Martinicans against the dangers of appropriating the capitalist values of French culture instead of preserving the land as a receptacle of cultural past'.[119] Gosson points out that Pipi's death 'indicates that

[118] Breleur et al., *Manifeste pour les 'produits',* p. 5.
[119] Gosson, 'For What the Land Tells', 224.

eventual infection of foreign values which invade even the most resistant of minds'.[120] This can be seen in the way in which Pipi's father, the *dorlis* Anatole-Anatole, predicts Pipi's future early in the novel: '"Tu sauras parler à la jarre, mais la Belle te mangera…"' (*C:* 53). Knepper argues that Pipi's demise is a result of his engagement 'in a regressive and deluded quest for instant wealth' rather than using his new knowledge of the past to confront present challenges.[121] The *dorlis'* prediction, therefore, could indicate a message from Chamoiseau to his Antillean readers that you can learn about your history, and domination, but consumerism will 'eat you up' if nothing is done to challenge or change it.

Applying the Hegelian master-slave dialectic[122] to the way in which nature has been constructed and dominated both physically and metaphorically in the (post)colonial world would seem to elucidate the links between identity and nature, as by extension, the master (human) cannot realise fully their identity without realising the consciousness of the 'Other' (nature). Hardwick points out that in *Peau noire, masques blancs*, Fanon interpreted the dialectic to conceptualise an alienation which he links to abolition of slavery being 'bestowed rather than gained',[123] writing that man's value and 'réalité' as human depends on recognition by the Other. Hardwick points out that Fanon's argument fails to acknowledge the reality of Antillean resistance and she argues that he uses this to push for a contemporary revolution which he believes is the only way to access an independent self-consciousness and to restore 'the colonial subject's agency'.[124] The dialectic is interpreted here to mean that all forms of consciousness are inextricably interwoven, and the 'master'

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[120] *Ibid*., 223.
[121] Wendy Knepper, *Patrick Chamoiseau: A Critical Introduction* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), p. 73.
[122] Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*.
[123] Hardwick, *Childhood*, p. 19.
[124] *Ibid*.

cannot realise self-consciousness without identifying with the ‘Other’ and realising the latter’s own consciousness. In *Chronique*, Pipi’s diminishing respect for the consciousness of the Earth, which Chamoiseau attributes to post-colonial consumerism and a lack of collective memory, leads to his deterioration. In the end, Pipi could not be free as he did not fully recognise the potential of nature after his own consciousness had been altered by colonial intervention. Adding another layer of nature’s consciousness to the narrative, master storyteller Afoukal warns Pipi of this from his position within the land, providing a metaphor for the memory of enslavement and linking nature and humanity. This concept of awareness of the natural environment, which could be described as eco-consciousness, and Chamoiseau’s linked concept of *une haute conscience*, develops in his later work, as explored in later chapters on *Les neuf consciences* and ‘Le Diamant’.

To round off this section of analysis, the focus now returns to *Le Cœur*. Food is used by Condé in *Le Cœur* to represent the white French identity that her mother Jeanne desires, because she craved ‘[d]es pommes de France surtout’ whilst pregnant with Maryse (*LC:* 22). This can be seen as a reversal of Maryse’s longing to be a Creole child, as here Jeanne longs for an archetypal symbol of Frenchness, the apple, which, as discussed above, can be analysed as a symbol of French Caribbean mimicry. Moreover, Jeanne’s clothing, notably some stockings which are ‘trop clairs’ (*LC:* 66) is reminiscent of Fanon’s theory in *Peau noire, masques blancs* in which ‘l’individu qui monte vers la société — la Blanche, la civilisée — tend à rejeter la famille — la Noire, la sauvage — sur la plan de l’imaginaire’.[125] Robyn Cope points out that despite the narrator’s connection of her parents’ attitudes to Fanon’s concept, which also appears in *Victoire*, ‘[l]ike Fanon, Condé refuses to be defined by

[125] Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Seuil, 1952), p. 123.

colonialism's legacy’ and she argues that Condé expands Fanon’s thinking to add a ‘dimension of gender awareness to his foundational ideas’ of individualism.[126] In terms of inter-generational differences, as Thomas has highlighted, Victoire, who rejects assimilation and the French language, is positioned in contrast to Jeanne who uses the French language to assimilate in both *Victoire* and *Le Cœur*. For Thomas, in *Victoire* ‘[f]ood becomes a metaphor for creativity, acceptance and recovery in a female space; but it is also a symbol of alienation and acculturation to French way of life’.[127] This demonstrates how food has the potential both to unite different cultures and to highlight the clashes that exist between them, in a way that echoes Hall’s theory of postcolonial identity emerging from critical points of difference, as it can also be seen in Glissant’s *Relation* and in Chamoiseau’s texts. Clashes between different parts of Condé’s identity are visible in geographical location, as Erica Johnson has pointed out: ‘Condé dispels the notion of home as something fixed in either the past or in geography’,[128] which is reminiscent of Glissant’s concept of *Tout-Monde*. In an interview with Paola Ghinelli, Condé argues that home follows us and that our origins come with us and as such she does not believe in exile; for her it is not possible.[129] Chamoiseau has also argued that exile is no longer a relevant concept as for him; the feeling of rupture in literature is no longer there and we now live in ‘the whole totality of the world’ in which someone’s ‘place’ can be chosen, it is not fixed.[130] This can be seen in *Le Cœur* as

[126] Robyn Cope, *The Pen and the Pan: Food, Fiction and Homegrown Caribbean Feminism(s)* (Kingston, Jamaica: The University of the West Indies Press, 2021), p. 171.
[127] Thomas, ‘The Cook and the Writer’, 11.
[128] Erica Johnson, ‘Departures and Arrivals: Home in Maryse Condé’s *Le Cœur à rire et à pleurer*’, in *Gender and Displacement: 'Home' in Contemporary Francophone Women's Autobiography,* ed. by Natalie Edwards and Christopher Hogarth (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008) pp. 15-33 (p. 16).
[129] Paola Ghinelli, *Archipels littéraires: Chamoiseau, Condé, Confiant, Brival, Maximin, Laferrière, Pineau, Dalembert, Agant* (Montreal; Quebec: Mémoire d’encrier, 2005) pp. 34-35.
[130] Morgan, ‘Re-Imagining Diversity and Connection in the Chaos World’, 449.

Condé equates her fluid identity with ever-changing descriptions of ‘home’, a theme that is visited once more in *Victoire* and *Mets*, as explored in chapter five.

In *Le Cœur*, the narrator reminisces about the freedom she felt in Paris as her parents worried less about who she may be friends with there, in contrast to their worry about the potential for Maryse to discover Creole language from children in Guadeloupe. However, the narrator then comments retrospectively on her admiration for Guadeloupe and as she grew older, she became ‘moins en moins persuadée que Paris est la capitale de l’univers’ and during a trip there at the age of thirteen, ‘La Pointe, ouverte sur le bleu de la darse et du ciel, me manquait’ (*LC:* 97). In a later chapter, she ‘discovers’ the forest area of Gourbeyre on a family holiday and describes with amazement the changing scenery: ‘le paysage se mit à changer. Des mornes arrondirent leurs ventres. Des bananeries aux longues feuilles vernisses prirent la place des champs a canne à sucre et s’étagèrent sur les hauteurs’, and she writes that ‘j’étais née, sans le savoir dans un coin du paradis terrestre’ (*LC:* 106). This comment about Guadeloupe being ‘paradise’ is evocative of the way in which the doudouists wrote about the region, something that this thesis returns to in chapter six through Chamoiseau’s discussion of how writers from the region can write about its ‘beauté’ without falling into the doudouist ‘trap’. Yet the reference to Maryse not ‘realising it’ demonstrates that the landscape and its beauty were not something that was discussed during the protagonist’s childhood, and that her parents did not outwardly share this observation. Therefore, this reference to Guadeloupe as a paradise, marks a major moment of rapprochement between Maryse and her *pays natal*, and a moment of genuine connection and insight, rather than a doudouist reappropriation.

Conclusion

Through *Chronique*, Chamoiseau demonstrates that postcolonial concepts that explore domination and hierarchy in a human sense can be applied to the relationship between humans and the natural world. Both authors studied in this chapter demonstrate that despite an Antillean estrangement from the natural world, which is shown in their writing, the environment is inextricably linked to identity representation in their work. At some moments these links are clear, such as Chamoiseau's choice of a zombie-slave revealing a forgotten Martinican identity from within the soil, inspired by Glissantian analysis of the land as the master storyteller. At other moments they are hidden and can be interpreted in different ways by the reader, such as the changing sense of belonging being dependant on Maryse's location, for example in the forest. Comparisons between human and physical geography, which can be seen in the work of both authors, also highlight the link, and often the disconnect, between the French Caribbean environment and identity. Moreover, both authors show the fluidity of identity through the changing environment. The way in which food production and consumption is presented through rebellion in both authors' work gives a critique of the ongoing food dependency felt in the French Caribbean islands and echoes a critique of the domination by a French identity which can be seen in both texts.

The analysis of important literary scenes in which the link between the environment and identity is foregrounded highlights the urgency of addressing the Francophone Caribbean relationship between humanity and nature for the revelations it holds regarding both identity and economic issues. The linking of nature and humanity is clear throughout

Chronique. The deterioration of characters such as Pipi and the *djobbeurs* is directly linked to the changing environment as a result of continued imperialism in Martinique. This can be read as a direct critique of colonialism and globalisation, and as a warning of what could happen if it continues, as seen during the 2009 strikes across the French Caribbean. Bonilla points out that 'the general strike took hold of the public imagination and transformed quotidian life' and Guadeloupeans used local markets and their own gardens for food.[131] This approach could be seen in the reaction Pipi takes to resist French imperialism in the novel by creating a Creole garden for self-sufficiency after learning about the history of the islands and the role of the garden during enslavement. For Condé, the link between a sense of belonging and her surrounding environment is never fixed and is constantly changing, demonstrating a connection between her sense of self and the work of Glissant. For example, she expresses links between the forest and a sense of freedom and affiliation with Creole culture. Furthermore, Condé uses both food and writing as an artistic link between the female generations of her family and between the land and sense of self. These themes emerge even more strongly in her later works *Victoire* and *Mets*, explored in chapter five, along with a focus on the origins of food. The way in which food is sourced in Martinique and Guadeloupe emerges as an increasingly urgent theme, as underscored by the 2009 strikes. By working through a series of crucial moments that reveal the tensions between the representation of the environment and identity in Francophone Caribbean literature, it emerges that the representation of the environment uncovers an urgent need for a discussion concerning conservation and food production in the region in a way that moves beyond a nature/human dualism.

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[131] Bonilla, 'Guadeloupe Is Ours', 126.

Another key question arising from this chapter is how to progress beyond the master/slave relationship that has been constructed between humans and nature, and how to reconnect, using *Relation* to both other humans and to the land, to create a sense of belonging. This needs to be considered alongside the continued estrangement forged between Antilleans and the land which has been exacerbated by pesticide pollution rendering a large portion of the islands unworkable as farmland. Problems that have emerged in the region (as well as world-wide) as a result of capitalism and globalisation also need to be addressed in order to limit the devastating effects that humans are having on the Earth. Chamoiseau's suggestion of viewing the natural environment, as well as identities, as a series of ecosystems which need to be respected and protected in their own right provides a starting point to address this urgent question facing all living beings. These are themes that emerge further in the analysis in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER THREE

ENVIRONMENTAL ESTRANGEMENT AND PATRICK CHAMOISEAU'S *TEXACO*

Chamoiseau's 1992 novel *Texaco* was published at the height of the *Créolité* movement, winning the prestigious Prix Goncourt, thus cementing the author's international reputation.[1] An English-language translation followed in 1997,[2] positioning the novel as one of Chamoiseau's most influential at a global level. *Texaco* is a sprawling work of almost 500 pages which recounts the founding of a Martinican shanty-town that takes its name from the global oil company, United States based Texaco Inc., founded in 1901, which was one of the world's largest oil companies in the late twentieth century.[3] Chamoiseau's novel considers the interplay between nature and human-driven environmental exploitation — with an emphasis on pollution and contamination — and how these have shaped the geography and culture of Martinique. The novel serves as an anthropological, geographical, and historical tour of the island, and Chamoiseau demonstrates how the different characteristics and locations of the island work together in what can be understood as a relational ecosystem*,* which now stands as an early example of Chamoiseau developing Glissant's concept of *Relation* in a particularly environmental direction. Examining the

[1] References will be given using paratheses in the main body of chapter, for example as (1).

[2] Patrick Chamoiseau, *Texaco*, trans. by Rose-Myriam Réjouis (London: Granta, 1997).

[3] Texaco was acquired by Chevron Corporation in 2001, who currently own and run Texaco as a brand. See: Britannica, *Texaco Inc*. (n.d), <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Texaco-Inc> [accessed 7 November 2022].

environmental aspects of creoleness and *Relation* in Chamoiseau's work is important; as Woolward points out, there have been multiple interactions between many different elements of the islands (land, sea, flora, fauna, and humans); therefore, French Caribbean creoleness is about much more than just language, as it is often wrongly perceived.[4] While it can be argued that the novel's principal intention is to provide an alternative history of the island with which to oppose the European version taught in schools for both Martinican and metropolitan audiences, the novel also serves as a starting point for a discussion of how to identify, move away from, and resist, the human-driven exploitation of people and the environment in the region, and the environmental estrangement that has arisen as a result.

Texaco's potential to ignite debate at both an environmental and cultural level is explored in this chapter, and I propose an ecocritical approach as a way of responding to a current gap in academic discourse. *Texaco* has been the subject of a huge volume of academic work, the majority of which has explored the theme of identity in detail, including, for example, in major monographs by McCusker,[5] Milne,[6] and Knepper.[7] These monographs all probe the relationship between identity and the environment in significant ways, although the focus tends to be on how the environment informs the construction of identity, rendering the environmental theme subservient. Milne explored the demographic of Texaco and the concept of conquering L'En-ville in relation to a Creole identity.[8] More recently, in a 2016 article, Woolward explored what he terms the 'ecology of Caribbean identity' in *Texaco*, exploring the connections between identity and place as part of the Caribbean

[4] Woolward, 'Patrick Chamoiseau's *Texaco'*, 64.
[5] McCusker, *Patrick Chamoiseau: Recovering Memory.*
[6] Lorna Milne, *Patrick Chamoiseau.*
[7] Knepper, *Patrick Chamoiseau: A Critical Introduction.*
[8] Milne, *Patrick Chamoiseau.*

'"eco-system"', focusing on the relationship between *Éloge de la Créolité* and *Texaco*; here again, though, identity is the prominent theme which the environment serves to illustrate.[9]

This chapter seeks to explicitly harness the theme of the environment to move the debate beyond one of identity, into more 'ecocritical' territory by undertaking a reading which focuses on the environment as a postcolonial trope, particularly the interplay between nature and human-driven environmental exploitation. I also discuss *Texaco* in the light of the author's more recent publications and interventions regarding contemporary environmental, political, and economic concerns. The impact of man-made and natural destruction of the Martinican and Guadeloupean environment remains an understudied area, particularly in comparison with the ways in which non-metropolitan identities have been dominated and exploited in the region. Close textual analysis of *Texaco* provides a new perspective on how these issues are addressed in French Caribbean literature and how literature can provide a starting point for resistance to the ongoing exploitation and destruction of humans and nature in the Antilles.

The principal aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how *Texaco* reveals the effects of human-driven exploitation, specifically pollution and contamination, and which I interpret as a form of consumption, of the environment and culture of Martinique. While scholars such as Woolward have briefly explored the ways in which pollution is represented in the novel, the aim here is to also explore the discussion of pollution as a form of resistance: my analysis links the pollution of the environment, which can be seen in the location of Texaco next to an oil tank reservoir and the sea, to the structure of the novel, borrowing from Watts' 2007 analysis. Watts argues that *Biblique* contains a 'pollution of form', adapted from Buell's

[9] Woolward, 'Patrick Chamoiseau's *Texaco*', 72.

concept of 'toxic discourse',[10] to express postcolonial narratives focusing on the pollution of, or conflicts over, water and land. Although Watts argues in 2011 that *Texaco* does not push the boundaries of narrative form enough due to its anthropocentrism,[11] this chapter develops his hypothesis to argue that a pollution of narrative form is used by Chamoiseau in *Texaco* as a critique of several types of European hegemony over identity and the environment. This chapter analyses the novel's metaphorical representation of the construction and consumption of culture, identity, and environment in the French Caribbean through the relationship between L'En-ville and le Quartier. This analysis develops chapter two's discussion of a resistance to assimilation as a construction using comparisons between the environment and humans and contributes to the thesis' overarching argument that both the identities and environments of Guadeloupe and Martinique have been constructed and consumed by the same (post)colonial force.

Texaco begins with an urban planner, referred to as Christ, who is sent by the French government as part of the process to demolish Texaco, a shanty-town on the outskirts of Fort-de-France, which is illegally built on land owned by the oil company Texaco. The narrative develops into the story of Marie-Sophie Laborieux, who lives in Texaco and who tells the planner the history of their community's foundations, in the hope that he will listen and stop the 'modern' redevelopment of the area. At the beginning, protagonist Marie-Sophie declares to both the author and, through him, the reader, that the story she is about to tell is about how le Quartier came to 'conquer' l'En-ville: 'C'est sans doute ainsi, Oiseau de Cham, que je commençai à lui raconter l'histoire de notre Quartier et de notre conquête de

[10] Lawrence Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 56.
[11] Watts, 'Poisoned Animal, Polluted Form'.

l'En-ville' (41). The address to Chamoiseau's alter-ego Oiseau de Cham here shows that Marie-Sophie is speaking directly to him, and it allows the novel to seem like an interview, rather than being understood as a narrative that Chamoiseau has invented. This alter-ego appears often in Chamoiseau's narratives and as Hardwick explains, has links to the Christian Bible and to slave ancestry through the figure of Ham, known as Cham in French, who is condemned to enslavement along with his descendants, a link which is made by Chamoiseau himself in *Solibo Magnifique*.[12] The inclusion of his alter-egos is also an example of a pollution of narrative form as it demonstrates the multiple listeners and layers to the story's telling and re-telling that Chamoiseau is inventing.

As another example of pollution of form, *Texaco*'s narrative itself follows a non-linear and disruptive progression, with multiple points of digression, as McCusker has pointed out.[13] The narrative jumps in time, and there are interjections of other characters' narratives and sections of Marie-Sophie's own *cahiers;* the notes beneath each *cahier* entry suggest that these notebooks are not fictional and are held in Fort-de-France in the Bibliothèque Schœlcher, although this is not the case. Marie-Jose Jolivet has argued that 'invention et réalité s'entremêlent' in the novel and this blurring of the lines between fiction and reality is key as it allows a sense of authenticity without the constraints of accuracy.[14] It can be argued that this uncertainty that comes from the in-between position, much as in Condé's semi-autobiographical work, can be viewed as polluting the novel's form. Other interjections in the book come from the urban planner, and whole sections are set apart from the narrative, for example in the somewhat enigmatic inclusion of the section entitled: '*Le Noutéka des*

[12] Hardwick, *Childhood*, p. 58.
[13] McCusker, *Patrick Chamoiseau: Recovering Memory*, p. 90.
[14] Marie-José Jolivet 'Les cahiers de Marie-Sophie Laborieux existent-ils ? ou du rapport de la créolité à l'oralité et à l'écriture', *Cahiers des Sciences Humaines*, 29(4) 1993, 796-804 (796).

mornes' (161-173), explored in more detail later. The digressive and tangled narrative has multiple functions: it mirrors the way in which memory operates (something also explored by Condé in her narratives), it is reminiscent of natural ecosystems and *Relation*, and it can be considered to reflect environmental pollution and degradation. Thus, Chamoiseau develops a form of resistance which operates as a pollution of form, as developed by Watts: re-imagining the environment and inventing a hybrid, postmodern literary form with which to highlight environmental concerns alongside human postcolonial ones.

Mirroring the development of the novel itself, this chapter first explores the construction of both Texaco, also referred to as 'le Quartier', and the city, or 'L'En-Ville'. It then discusses how Chamoiseau personifies the natural environment in the novel, connecting humanity to nature, in order to demonstrate how he represents both a metaphorical and literal consumption of le Quartier by L'En-ville. Next, I argue that Chamoiseau resists French hegemony with a reversal of this consumption dynamic using links between location in the novel and the ethnoclass hierarchy. Finally, the chapter explores Chamoiseau's criticism of the way in which nature has been treated by humans and the resulting and continued estrangement between nature and humanity within the novel as representative of a wider disconnect between past and present. This will be linked to ongoing debates around pollution and estrangement from the land, with both issues being analysed in terms of the island's history and postcolonial identity, while the novel's structure will be considered as representative of a 'pollution of form' and of a natural ecosystem. This chapter also analyses the representation in *Texaco* of man-made environmental degradation in Martinique, focusing on the island's development from assimilation as part of the *mission civilisatrice*, explored in chapter two, to a postcolonial domination by France of the Antillean

land through forms of pollution, in order to explore what forms of resistance can be perceived in Chamoiseau's narrative.

L'En-ville and le Quartier

In Marie-Sophie's account, the geography of the island is split into 'l'En-ville' in the centre and 'le Quartier' at the periphery. Each area is attributed to different groups within the complex French Caribbean ethnoclass hierarchy, a remnant of the colonial era which still structures society in Martinique, which *Texaco* describes. Milne has pointed out that the novel recounts one of the biggest socio-demographic tendencies of the period: the destructuring of the agricultural world, which 'donne lieu à une croissance progressive de l'aire urbaine, due le plus souvent à un processus de squattérisasion de terrains péri-urbains par une population très démunie et inadaptée aux normes de l'économie urbaine.'[15] These areas, like Texaco, became working-class neighbourhoods which Milne argues should not be characterised as being only full of 'chaos et misère',[16] and in fact, as Serge Letchimy (who is thanked by Chamoiseau in the 'remerciements') has noted, these spaces are 'favorable[s] au developpement des relations interpersonelles et communautaires,' and involve higher levels of intimacy between inhabitants due to the close proximity of the *cases*.[17]

The construction of the shanty-town Texaco is interwoven with the construction of the narrator's identity, and the relationship that both of these constructions have to l'En-ville. Yet the seemingly inevitable consumption of Texaco and its inhabitants by l'En-ville is

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[15] Milne, *Patrick Chamoiseau* pp. 103-104.
[16] *Ibid*. p. 104.
[17] Serge Letchimy, *De l'habitat précaire à la ville: l'exemple martiniquais* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992), p. 23.

explored alongside a reversal of this dynamic, as a form of resistance to European hegemony. *Texaco* can be analysed ecocritically in three different but interrelated ways: through the personification of the natural environment, the linking of humans and nature, and overt criticism of the ways in which nature has been treated, such as pollution and *bétonisation*. As the novel progresses, Chamoiseau takes us on a geographical and historiographical journey around Martinique through the protagonists Marie-Sophie and her father, Esternome. He describes the changing landscape through Esternome, who in turn adapts his personality and outlook, and the reader eventually arrives at the destination of Texaco through Marie-Sophie. From the novel's outset, the arrival of the Urbaniste means that Texaco is in peril, threatened with destruction in the name of modernisation and development.

In *Texaco*, written when the *Créolité* movement was at its height, Chamoiseau is suggesting that Texaco and its sense of community are the epitome of *Créolité*, thus *Texaco* can be read as a plea to the reader to consider le Quartier, and by extension Creole, as worthy of preservation as they represent the mix of all influences on the island. At the beginning of the novel l'En-ville is presented by the narrator, Marie-Sophie, as a place of hope and opportunity: 'L'En-ville, avec ses chances toutes neuves, marchandes des destinées sans cannes à sucre et sans békés' (47-48). This description changes as the narrative progresses and the city is then presented as another form of imperialism, based on hierarchy and discrimination, in which the main characters must fight for existence. As McCusker points out, L'En-ville, a term invented by Chamoiseau, itself represents constant change as

an ‘ever-evolving space’, rather than a finished or fixed location or ‘accomplished reality’.[18] Following a slave revolt which is caused by an enslaved person’s arrest in L’En-ville after the first mention of ‘abolition’, L’En-ville is no longer a space of opportunity and is now presented negatively: ‘L’En-ville était soudain devenu la mâchoire même du piège’ (131). The description of L’En-ville as ‘jaws of the trap’ suggests a consumption by L’En-ville of those who are on the outside, or from the Quartiers. Descriptions such as ‘une secousse’ and ‘[u]ne vigueur’ (222) are used to compare the city to natural disasters, such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions; L’En-ville, therefore, appears as a site of negative chaos, control, and destruction.

The descriptions of both locations can also be seen to resist metropolitan French narratives of le Quartier as a place of destruction, chaos, and unwanted immigration and of L’En-ville as a place of advancement and opportunity. L’En-ville can be seen to represent both the physical city which is in opposition to le Quartier in terms of the materials used to construct it, and the pavements, roads and shops that exist there, but it can also be seen as a metaphorical construction of power juxtaposing the centre with those who are just on the outside and for whom economic power and land ownership are not an option due to the socio-economic structure of the French Caribbean. It could be argued that the binary position that Chamoiseau adopts to describe the two physical locations of l’En-ville and le Quartier perpetuates the dominance of one over the other and exaggerates the differences between them. However, in describing the two locations, Chamoiseau is highlighting a situation that already exists, and he seeks to use this binary position to provide a resistance to it through his literature. By the end of the novel, a solution to bring the two areas

[18] McCusker, *Patrick Chamoiseau: Recovering Memory*, p. 105.

together is suggested, and although this is a romanticised vision of the future for Martinique, it has the effect of forcing the reader to question why it is not possible.

In *City of Quartz,* Mike Davis states that '[t]he best place to view Los Angeles of the next millennium is from the ruins of its alternative future',[19] as he examines the over-development of the City of Los Angeles at the expense of the surrounding desert and its agriculture, mainly orange trees. Davis argues that over-development is not only the 'repackaging' of a 'myth',[20] but also the creation of a 'burgeoning fear of the city' which causes 'social anxiety' as a result of 'maladjustment to change'.[21] One manifestation of this is the development of gated communities. These ideas can be transposed onto the French Caribbean, despite their very different contexts, and can be seen in *Texaco* as the characters fear the city as an unknown and Marie-Sophie's 'conquering' of L'En-ville is seen as a success until L'En-ville 'consumes' her. L'En-ville has 'paved over' the history of the peripheral parts of the island. Her development of a shanty town, or 'urban mosaic' at the oil company Texaco's site can be seen as a reversal of this dynamic as it is built with the intention of 'paving over' the polluting and exploitative petrol provider's land. Davis also claims that developers have viewed 'the desert [in Los Angeles] as simply another abstraction of dirt and dollar signs',[22] and Peter Plagens has called the destruction of the desert for the benefit of development companies the 'ecology of evil'.[23] *Texaco* approaches a vision of the city in a way which reverses this; by the end of the novel, in a créoliste shift, Chamoiseau presents a positive vision of L'En-ville as a location which has come to appreciate its entire history,

[19] Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 2006), p 3.
[20] *Ibid*. p. 6.
[21] *Ibid*.
[22] *Ibid*. p. 4.
[23] *Ibid.*

including that of its peripheral regions, and not just the dominant history of centres and margins recounted by European stories of colonialism.

Le Quartier is presented as a place on the periphery, and, in juxtaposition to the l'En-ville, is shown as a place of positive chaos, similar to the positive chaos found in descriptions of le Foufou in *Les neuf consicences*, as explored in chapter four. The location of le Quartier, and Texaco specifically, is also described as a mangrove swamp:

> Texaco n'était pas ce que les Occidentaux appellent un bidonville, mais une mangrove, *une mangrove urbaine*. La mangrove semble de prime abord hostile aux existences. Il est difficile d'admettre que, dans ses angoisses de racines, d'ombres moussues, d'eaux voilées, la mangrove puisse être un tel berceau de vie pour les crabes, les poissons, les langoustes, l'écosystème marin. Elle ne semble appartenir ni à la terre, ni à la mer un peu comme Texaco n'est ni de la ville ni de la campagne. Pourtant, la ville se renforce en puisant dans la mangrove urbaine de Texaco, comme dans celle des autres quartiers, exactement comme la mer se repeuple par cette langue vitale qui la relie aux chimies de mangroves. Les mangroves ont besoin de la caresse régulière des vagues ; Texaco a besoin pour son plein essor et sa fonction de renaissance, que la ville le caresse, c'est dire: le considère [original emphasis] (336-337).

This lengthy quotation bears inclusion as it includes important comparison of Texaco to a mangrove, a naturally occurring tropical ecosystem, and a metaphor with particular significance for the project of *Créolité*. Here, Chamoiseau presents the mangrove, or le Quartier, as a space of surprising activity and life and as a self-sustaining environment, or ecosystem. In *Éloge de la Créolité*, this image is also privileged with regard to identity: 'La Créolité est […] notre mangrove de virtualités'.[24] The mangrove of Texaco, at the in-between position, can be seen to represent a Creole identity, and echoes Bhabha's notion of hybridity and interstitial locations as a positive third space that emerges between the colonised and

[24] Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité*, p. 28.

coloniser's cultures.[25] Milne points out that in the final line of the narrative, the narrator reflects that they were battling l'En-ville, 'pas pour le conquérir (lui qui en fait nous gobait), mais pour nous conquérir nous-mêmes dans l'inédit créole qu'il nous fallait nommer — en nous-mêmes pour nous-mêmes — jusqu'à notre pleine autorité' (498). She argues that this highlights Texaco as a third space as it transcends 'des conflits binaires réducteurs visant à la victoire de l'un ou de l'autre parti'.[26] She also posits that le Quartier's name, Texaco, reflects the hybrid third space that it has become, a space '[n]i "purement" créole, ni entièrement occidental […] qui incorpore les différences sans pour autant les gommer, ni forcément les unir dans une harmonie sereine.'[27] This hybridity points to Texaco's importance as both a place that can exist without 'help' from the outside and as a location that is in-between. Like a mangrove, it bridges the gap between land and sea, which is comparable to the space between l'En-ville and the plantation space of the *habitation*, as well as working at a metaphorical level as a place between a French identity and the 'Other'. Texaco, like the mangrove, is not static and does need the waves of the sea, or the city in Texaco's case, but this is in a way that 'le caresse', or 'le considère'. This can be interpreted as Texaco needing the city in a way that is nurturing, while the city must also bestow recognition, agency, and attention. The links between humanity and nature are made evident by Chamoiseau here through his linguistic choices: the first use of the word 'caresse' implies the repeated and rhythmical physical action of waves on the mangroves in order to sustain life, whereas the second use is a metaphorical 'taking care of' alongside 'considère' which implies that l'En-ville needs to consider Texaco in a measured way. It could be argued that the use of the

[25] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.
[26] Milne, *Patrick Chamoiseau* , p. 109.
[27] *Ibid*., 112.

word ‘caresse’ here is contradictory to Chamoiseau’s efforts to present both the mangrove and Texaco as self-sufficient and the term could be seen to perpetuate a sense of helplessness and dependency. However, I argue that the use of ‘caresse’ and ‘considère’ also suggests a need for a gentle, nurturing, and respectful relationship between l’En-ville and Texaco in a way which respects autonomy.

The sea is presented in *Texaco* as the site of colonialism and was also represented as negative space in *Chronique*, which is not surprising considering the transatlantic slave trade. In *Texaco*, the coastal sand is also presented as a negative place for the same reason: ‘Au bord de rivières, le sable de volcan est déjà du bon sable. Mais sable du bord de mer est alourdi de sel et travaillé de fer’ (56). The sand by the sea serves as a reminder of the slave ships which arrived during the slave trade, as well as being close to where békés now live in their gated homes, and where tourist hotels can be found. Juxtaposed with this is the sand higher up in the *mornes*, which is presented as ‘bon sable’. The sand here is a darker colour and could be seen to represent the colour of skin of those who were forced to move up to these sites in *marronage* during slavery and following its abolition.

Returning to the lengthy quotation, l’En-ville, or sea, needs the mangrove, or le Quartier, to sustain itself and to co-exist in the ecosystem. This could be a message from Chamoiseau suggesting that it is important that those at the centre, or metropole, consider those on the periphery, such as Martinique, as there should be recognition that they depend on one another. It can also be read as a plea to respect the mangroves on the coastal areas of the region, and to protect them from over-development. The representation of Texaco as a mangrove swamp also highlights the interconnectedness of the two areas of l’En-ville and

le Quartier, as well as the interconnectedness of identities described by the créolistes through the imagery created by the mangroves' tangled roots and the rhizome. However, as Gaensbauer has argued in relation to Condé's *Traversée de la mangrove*, the mangrove can also be a negative representation of Francophone Caribbean culture and society and even 'a suffocating trap'.[28] This analysis of a mangrove as a trap shows how authors such as Condé feel in relation to notions of a Caribbean identity expounded by the male collective of *Créolité*, as discussed previously, and therefore an analysis of the mangrove as a negative space in *Texaco* should be explored, especially in terms of female identity. This can be seen in Ninon's character in her desire to escape the Creole Quartier and work in the city factories that had recently replaced the plantations: 'Ninon voulait descendre travailler à l'Usine' (182), as her desire to leave is not shared by Esternome.

In terms of Chamoiseau's choice of a woman protagonist in this novel, in an interview with Taylor alongside his fellow créolistes, Chamoiseau argues that Texaco highlights the feminist characters he uses in his novels, whom he describes as '*matadoras*'.[29] He says that Marie-Sophie is based on Madame Sicot (a resident of Texaco whom he acknowledges in the 'remerciements'), whom he regards as a *matadora*; he suggests that his own mother has a similar character, describing them both as 'distinctive heroines'.[30] In this interview, he argues that those who criticise his work as masculinist 'presume that literature is simply an intellectual discourse about culture', forgetting that it is also testimony, positing that '[w]e can't plaster feminist principles over our narratives just to look good in the eyes of the great feminist discourses still in fashion in the West. We're bearing witness to the Antillean

[28] Gaensbauer, 'Reconfiguring Boundaries', 397.
[29] Chamoiseau, Confiant, Bernabé and Taylor, 'Créolité Bites', 154.
[30] *Ibid*.

imaginary, in which the figure of the *matadora* looms large.'[31] Mohit Chandna argues that Chamoiseau's choice of language against Annie Le Brun highlights that his attitude is often far from being feminist, as he describes Le Brun's critique of his reading of Aimé Césaire as being driven by the 'frémissement de ses ovaires'.[32] However, Chandna also writes that Marie-Sophie embodies a successful fight against 'colonialism's expansionist agenda' and 'a patriarchal society'.[33] He also points out problematic links that Chamoiseau makes between the women characters and 'a long-rejected biological essentialism that speaks of an instinctive harmony between women and nature', despite 'genuine engagements with the gendered geography that follows from colonial revolt'.[34] Highlighting the importance of Marie-Sophie's gender in the novel in relation to postcolonialism and this revolt, Milne has pointed out that Marie-Sophie's displacement of 'le "Béké de pétroles" dont elle a squattérisé — mieux colonisé! — les terres' reverses the norms that would have determined, in the past, the relationship between 'une femme créole et un Blanc'.[35] Yet, instead of the 'colonisation' being for economic gain it is for the creation of a community, which, Milne argues, confirms the victory of Creole culture and values over those of the metropole and of békés. Chanda argues that using the name 'Texaco' for three key elements of the novel — the name of the novel itself, the space, and the character of Marie-Sophie (through her use of a secret name for herself at the end of the novel) — highlights how interconnected these

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[31] *Ibid*.
[32] Mohit Chandna, *Spatial Boundaries, Abounding Spaces, Colonial Borders in French and Francophone Literature and Film* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2021), p. 165.
[33] *Ibid*.
[34] *Ibid*.
[35] Milne, *Patrick Chamoiseau*, p. 108.

elements are and therefore demonstrates the necessity to analyse postcolonial space and bodies together.[36]

Chamoiseau intertwines historical facts about Martinique, such as the 1902 eruption of Mount Pelée and the definitive 1848 abolition of slavery, throughout the main narrative, mirroring the building of a 'relational identity'. The way in which these narratives come together and overlap is representative of Glissant's concept of *Relation*.[37] Thus the reader becomes informed about key episodes in Caribbean history, through interjected facts, and often through magical realism, in Chamoiseau's idiosyncratic narrative style, developed in *Chronique* (as explored in chapter two). Combined with multiple character narratives, these facts can be seen to represent a textual ecosystem. As McCusker has pointed out, this can be seen in the concept of 'mosaic identity' central to *Créolité* as described in *Éloge de la Créolité.*[38] Knepper has also drawn attention to what she calls a 'mosaic' structure.[39] McCusker has also highlighted the links between the construction of Texaco and the structure of the novel itself. She writes that:

> The novel is itself jerry-built from fragments drawn from disparate fictional sources […]. In a sense the text becomes itself a sort of building site, drawing attention to its multiple materials rather than to any sense of cohesion or coherence. It is the disparate and interweaving threads binding the text(ile)/Texaco together which are privileged over any sense of seamlessness, just as it is through the agency of the community that the quarter, however uncomfortably, is able to gel together.[40]

Previously, in my consideration of *Chronique*, I analysed Chamoiseau's transposition of what he terms a 'biosphère' — 'un ensemble de relations subtiles, d'équilibres mouvants,

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[36] Chandna, *Spatial Boundaries*, p. 203.
[37] Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation*.
[38] Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant. *Éloge de la Créolité*, p. 903.
[39] Knepper, *Patrick Chamoiseau: A Critical Introduction,* p. 113; p. 141.
[40] McCusker, *Patrick Chamoiseau: Recovering Memory*, p. 110.

imprévisibles'[41] — onto the relationships between characters and the multiple narratives of the novel. In *Texaco*, this is once again in evidence, with overlapping and interdependent narratives being brought together inside a self-contained ecosystem, which can be viewed as a mosaic in which the lines are transparent and permeable. Within the novel's plot, the structure that exists between the independent yet interdependent narratives mirrors the 'mosaic' structure of le Quartier and its structures: 'Nos cases (reconstruites trente-douze fois) semblaient de délirantes mosaïques: des bouts de toutes qualités s'ajoutaient a des éclats de toutes espèces' (429), numerical amplification which is again typical of Chamoiseau's hyperbolic style.

A demonstration of the power given to l'En-ville and French hegemony is found in the way in which l'En-ville is presented as the centre and as order, in juxtaposition to le Quartier as the outside and as a site of disorder: 'Texaco est le désordre de Fort-de-France; pense: la poésie de son Ordre' (236). This description is provided when Adrienne's *coq*, which can be seen to represent France (explored in more detail later), attacks Esternome and then disappears shortly after his partner, Idoménée, becomes pregnant with Marie-Sophie. In this example, 'Ordre' is capitalised. This is comparable to the way in which Chamoiseau, like Glissant, capitalises History to show European dominance over it. Texaco is presented here as the poetry which allows the centre to survive. The presentation of poetry as a form of disorder is a similar challenge to the order of hegemony that can be seen in Glissant's *Relation*, and Chamoiseau uses it here to demonstrate the value of the poetic disorder of the Creole Quartier: as a corollary, Chamoiseau underscores the importance of the individual histories (which he often argues represent a form of poetry, such as in his own

[41] Chamoiseau and De Vriese, 'L'écriture de la nature', 130.

narratives) which make up the ecosystem of the Francophone Caribbean, to the larger narrative of History of the islands. To Chamoiseau, an ecosystem appears to imply processes of entanglement, with its own inherent poetry as everything crosses paths and becomes interdependent. The ecosystem is therefore presented as *Relation*, in terms of the links being the most important aspect, rather than focusing on where the different parts of the ecosystem *should* be, as can often be seen in scientific descriptions of ecosystems. Other comparisons between place and nature can be seen in the novel. Le Quartier is described as having the defensive attributes of a dog as it approaches the city: 'le Quartier se transformait en chien en fonçait vers l'En-ville' (245), whereas l'En-ville is presented to the reader as an injured snake: 'L'En-ville sans ses lumières est comme serpent blessé' (245). This description hints at a reversal of power structures and at an increasing resistance by le Quartier against l'En-ville.

Consumption of le Quartier and l'En-ville

The beginning of the second chapter, entitled 'Table Deuxième — Autour de Fort-de-France', marks the birth of Marie-Sophie. The second half of the book also marks an increased resistance against l'En-ville, or colonialism, by the people of le Quartier, who are associated with formerly enslaved people. This resistance is strikingly presented by Chamoiseau as le Quartier consuming l'En-ville. At times, this consumption is a literal description in the novel of the land in le Quartier covering or disrupting the landscape of l'En-ville. At other times it is metaphorical and is either a suggestion made by Marie-Sophie or Esternome or it is the

characters themselves who show a metaphorical consumption of l'En-ville through a resistance to forms of power such as language or a physical disruption or persistence.

The literal consumption of l'En-ville by le Quartier can be seen at multiple moments in the novel. The volcano Mount Pelée and the tragic histories with which it is irrevocably linked are used by Chamoiseau as an important site of anthropological and geographical history, as well as acting as a site of resistance. Towards the end of the first half of the novel, the depiction of the 1902 eruption shows a literal consumption of the island's then major city, Saint-Pierre, by the destructive pyroclastic eruption. Saint-Pierre is the most important colonial site in Martinique as it was the first European settlement on the island when French colonialist Pierre Belain D'Esnambuc, whose statue in the Place de la Savane, Fort-de-France, was topped in July 2020, decided to found a fort in its bay, which is a natural harbour, in 1635. The 1902 eruption, in which over 30,000 people are estimated to have perished, is a significant, yet often neglected, part of Martinican history. Its inclusion in the story of *Texaco* as a consumption of Saint-Pierre by the natural landscape works at one level to suggest a resistance by nature itself against European settlement and attempts at domination. Christopher M. Church argues that the eruption solidified the association between danger and the island in French imagination, and that the Antilles, in terms of both the human population and the environment, had already been exoticised in French narratives of the region. [42] Following the eruption, Mount Pelée came to dominate the image of Martinique for those living in mainland France. Church points out that 1 in every 4 French books that mentioned Martinique also mentioned the volcano after the eruption (a dramatic increase

[42] Christopher M. Church, *Paradise Destroyed: Catastrophe and Citizenship in the French Caribbean* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), p. 216.

from 1 in 20 before the eruption), and even today it is mentioned in most travel guides to the region.[43] Echoing the message from Descartes that man should be master of nature, '[t]he eruption shook the French belief in man's triumph over nature'.[44]

Church argues that the associations created between city and civilisation in the French imagination also extended to the Antilles. He points out that people seemed to escape from the rural areas surrounding the volcano and take refuge in the city of Saint-Pierre as they had thought they would be safe there, as 'it seemed that the eruption was a dangerous rural phenomenon from which civilization would offer sanctuary'[45] and the urban landscape seemed safer to them due to 'stone structures and [a] military presence'.[46] This association, combined with a Governor who instructed everyone to stay in the city for safety,[47] caused a swell in the population in Saint-Pierre at the time of the eruption which led to the incredibly high death toll.[48] The stone structure, which Church argues convinced inhabitants of their safety, can be compared to the assault of urbanisation on the land in *Texaco*: 'La pierre et les gens s'étaient mêlés' (195). The imagery used here, to suggest the mixing of human flesh and stone due to a natural disaster, could be seen to be an attempt by Chamoiseau to highlight the dangers of *bétonisation* and the power of nature over both man and man-made structures. A positive mixing of stone and memory can be seen through the immortalisation of victims in an ossuary and memorial in Mouillage cemetery in Martinique. This memorial is referenced in *Texaco* when Chamoiseau gives power to the stone through

[43] *Ibid*.
[44] *Ibid*., p. 215.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 194.
[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 194- 195.
[47] Governor Louis Mouttett, who also perished in the eruption. The eruption began on 23 April 1902 just before a general election was due to take place on 11 May and Church points out in *Paradise Destroyed* that staying may have been a politically driven decision to try to convince the population to vote for him (p. 194).
[48] Church, *Paradise Destroyed,* p. 194.

personification: 'Oh, comme ces os supplient! Comme ils parlent et déparlent!' (198). This memorialisation can be linked to Chamoiseau's concept of *trace-mémoire*, to which this thesis returns in chapter six via his discussion of the Rocher du Diamant in 'Le Diamant', and which also appeared as the focal point of his 2007 poem 'Trace-mémoire du Rocher'.[49]

In metropolitan France, the eruption of Mount Pelée was portrayed as a disaster which affected the entire nation and not just the overseas territory of Martinique. Church points out that Saint-Pierre, known as 'the Paris of the Antilles',[50] was occupied by a large number of békés, white functionaries, and mulattos with political aspirations. This can also be seen in *Texaco'*s narrative: the eruption of Mount Pelée marks a change in Esternome's character in terms of his identity and the structure of his life. The devastation that Esternome experiences at the loss of his beloved Ninon, Marie-Sophie's mother, is mirrored in the loss of a vital part of the Martinican landscape. Like many who were displaced during the eruption, Esternome is forced to move to Fort-de-France to begin a new life after a failed attempt to re-build Saint-Pierre, and this ultimately alters his identity. The eruption in *Texaco* also shows a comparison between the assault on the land by the volcano and an assault against humanity through the use of enslavement, linking humans and nature to show the effects of colonialism on both. Although Marie-Sophie tells Esternome's story, she claims that he covered the horror of the volcanic eruption with 'le même silence buté qu'il cultiva sa vie durant sur les antans de l'esclavage' (194). The eruption silenced the city in a way that could be compared to the silencing of those who have experienced enslavement or their descendants who experience the trauma second-hand through memory, association

[49] Patrick Chamoiseau and Anne Chopin, *Trésors cachés et patrimoine naturel de la Martinique vue du ciel* (Paris: Éditions Hervé Chopin, 2019[2007]), pp. 10-11.
[50] Church, *Paradise Destroyed*, p. 192.

and through the ongoing inequality of the ethnoclass hierarchy. Esternome and l'En-ville are also linked metaphorically by Chamoiseau following the eruption through the image of a broken heart: 'On le disait touché comme l'En-ville: pilé au cœur' (197), and death: 'Il mourait chaque nuit avec l'En-ville entier' (199).

The eruption of Mount Pelée could also be read as a consumption of le Quartier by L'En-ville. At the moment of eruption: '*Soufrière a pété, Soufrière a pété…!*' (191), a notebook entry from the urban planner to the author, or the 'Marqueur de paroles', another of Chamoiseau's alter-egos, interjects the main narrative: 'L'urbain est une violence. La ville s'étale de violence en violence' (192), and the eruption is compared to the spreading of urbanity across the island. Imagery of the eruption is used by Chamoiseau later in the novel through a hyperbolic description of how news of abolition was received by enslaved people: 'l'Histoire accélérée par les milâtes allait soulever tout le monde des ancrages de cette terre. Que tous, devenus gibiers fous, nous volerions vers l'envie pleine de devenir français' (109-110). It is important to note that 'milâtes' is a Creole word for 'mulâtre', as the author explains: 'Les mulâtres (en vérité, mon Esternome disait "milâtes", alors tu vas le prendre comme ça maintenant)' (103). The description of the population being thrown from the 'ancrages de terre' and flying like 'gibiers fous' evokes images of ash and rock being launched out of the volcano. Chamoiseau seems to suggest here that being given French rights and responsibilities which appeared to come with citizenship was not true for abolition in the French Antilles. Moreover, the hyperbole of a Martinican population being excited to 'devenir français' according to a capitalised 'Histoire' echoes Glissant and Chamoiseau's discussion of European History being only one version of history and that in reality there are many histories. Chamoiseau is offering an alternative to the version seen in

the French textbooks in the classrooms of Martinique and Guadeloupe which often omit details about the slave trade and the construction of the islands. This message echoes the narrator's comparison of Texaco to mangroves that was discussed earlier in this chapter and the need for l'En-ville to 'consider' it (337). The building up and overlapping of the rhizomatic roots of the mangrove swamps creates imagery of an overlapping and building up of different histories that make up a French Antillean history in a digressive and non-linear manner. In tandem with the earlier imagery of mangroves needing the waves, or of the Creole quarters needing the French city, that overlapping suggests that these two histories need to be combined and that one cannot exist without the other, much as ecosystems found in nature are made up of overlapping and interdependent parts.

As the novel progresses and the reader is presented with an increased resistance by the main characters against l'En-ville, le Quartier appears to make approaches towards it. The slave revolt, which followed the first mention of abolition, is described as a carnival which drowns the city: 'L'En-ville coulait dans un vieux carnaval' (130). The revolt is also described as a 'marée esclave' (132), evoking images of a 'marée noire', or oil slick. Later, the narrator remarks that Esternome saw l'En-ville as 'l'océan ouvert', as opposed to le Quartier which was 'le port d'attaché' (220). The suggestion that le Quartier is a place of refuge where people could go before facing either the open ocean or l'En-ville could be a further comment from Chamoiseau on the interconnectedness of le Quartier, or Creole culture and language, as opposed to the disconnect experienced in l'En-ville, and by extension, in French culture and language. However, this image is reversed in the following paragraph in which the narrator comments on the potential for le Quartier to fight against l'En-ville, perhaps in a reversal of the colonial gaze: 'Parfois mon Esternome inversait son regard. L'En-ville devenait

une terre découverte ; le Quartier, une furie océane. Alors, le Quartier éclaboussait l'En-ville sans cesse — comme une mer affouille sous une falaise hautaine' (220). However, these efforts seem to be without success as 'l'En-ville absorbait le Quartier comprimé à distance' (220). Following this, a literal consumption of l'En-ville by the *mornes* is described: 'Mon Esternome y voyait les débuts d'un Quartier quand, dans les mornes, la terre était instable' and '[l]es mornes sont descendus En-ville, seigneur, les mornes sont descendus En-ville dans une sacrée folie…' (221). There is a sense here that the characters are beginning to move towards l'En-ville in search of the freedom and opportunity it appears to promise.

Noutéka **and Resistance**

Despite acknowledging the possible negative readings of the Creole Quartier, the novel sets up these clichés in order to debunk them and presents it as a space of hope and interconnectedness in terms of both humanity and nature. A sentiment emerges from the *morne* after Esternome and Ninon move there following news of abolition, which the narrator calls '*Le Noutéka des mornes*' (161-173), suggesting a sense of community and creativity. McCusker points out that this crucial section of the novel 'puts the house at the centre of the project', arguing that the different building materials listed reflect various strands of identity coming together to build a house, representing 'the racial need to claim, or rather to construct, an identity'.[51] During the inserted passage, which continues for thirteen pages and is presented separately to the main narrative, there are many ellipses, and the word *(illisible)* is used instead of continuing many of the sentences, such as: '[C]'est

[51] McCusker, *Patrick Chamoiseau: Recovering Memory*, pp. 105-106.

ça l'histoire de père Grégoire… *(illisible)*' (162). This suggests that *Noutéka* is about more than can be written and alludes to the importance of *oralité* in Chamoiseau's work and in Creole and African storytelling traditions, while the use of parentheses suggests that while what is to be continued is necessary to the narrative, the story works without it, which is comparable to their function in *Chronique*. However, in *Texaco* this information is missing and replaced with '*(illisible)*', suggesting that a target audience of French metropolitan readers are excluded from this part of the storytelling, creating power for Chamoiseau over his own writing.

A sense of community is presented in the narrative through rules to adhere to in the Creole space and gardening advice such as '[c]ultiver à l'horizonale' (170), a phase that is reminiscent of Pipi's garden in *Chronique*. The use of the word 'horizontale' alludes to Chamoiseau and Glissant's ideas about the land having a consciousness, and the rhizome which spreads horizontally instead of vertically. This phrase also precedes Chamoiseau's concept of the 'horizontale plénitude du vivant' which emerges in his later works, as explored in chapters four and six. The interjections of gardening advice build up a mosaic of ideas about a Creole identity which includes nature as a vital part. Further advice that '[i]l te faut lire le paysage' (168) is also suggestive of presenting nature as an integral part of the narrative and this links the construction of the novel to an ecosystem.

Chamoiseau presents the Creole garden as a place that is tangled and illegible, and exists in a symbiotic relationship with the earth itself: 'Le tout bien emmêlé n'épuise jamais la terre. C'est ça jardin-créole' (168). Tangled roots like the rhizome speak back to Glissant's *Relation*, and language and nature are linked through the phrase 'jardin-créole'. These

jardins can still be seen in the *mornes* of Martinique today, where farmers use traditional methods to cultivate crops. The illegibility of Creole, and the unwritability of it, can be seen here as Chamoiseau juxtaposes the jardin-créole, and its tangled roots, with the reading of a French language narrative. Although the description of the garden, and Creole, as tangled suggests the illegibility of the land and of the Creole language, Chamoiseau urges the reader to 'read' the landscape and argues that this garden does not risk exhausting or damaging the Earth's resources, and so stands in opposition to Western agriculture.

The naming of the Creole quarters is influenced by the land on which the settlement is constructed: 'Quartier Créole est une permission de la géographie […] C'est la forme de la terre qui nomme le groupe des gens' (171). This is in opposition to the way in which roads and places have been named in Europe and during colonisation after 'influential' figures or after places from which colonisers have arrived. Moreover, Marie-Sophie's decision to give herself a 'secret name', which she reveals as 'Texaco', as indicated at the end of the novel (488), is a complete reversal of the European place-naming process. The strong link that has been formed between Marie-Sophie and her land is therefore made clear at this moment. However, *Texaco* has not been named after the natural landscape of the location but after the global oil company which has imposed itself on the space. This naming could be linked to the Anthropocene, coined by Crutzen in 2000 and described by Eric Prieto as 'the geological epoch marked by the preponderance of mankind's impact on our planet's surface and environment',[52] as man-made activity has affected the environment to the extent that it has left visible marks in the landscape and in *Texaco* Creole naming systems have changed to

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[52] Eric Prieto, 'Informal Urbanism and the Hard Question of the Anthropocene', *West Indian Literature*, 24(2) (2016), 46-62 (47).

account for this. Woolward points out that the word Texaco 'conjures up contemporary iterations of multinational capitalism and environmental abuse in this once exploited and now abandoned mangrove area', and argues that the area 'bears witness to' a relationship between population and land that is 'marked by exclusion and exploitation'.[53] Chamoiseau's decision to name le Quartier *Texaco* could be a deliberate choice to resist the power that the oil company had over the land by giving the power to le Quartier through the process of naming. The decision by Marie-Sophie to give herself this 'secret name' too could also indicate a transfer and reversal of power from one place to another.

Like *Chronique* (1986)*, Texaco* (1992) was written shortly after the beginning of contemporary land disputes which focused on the rights of farmers to the land on which they worked. In September 1982 in Fougain-ville, Rivière-Pilote, 'un groupe de jeunes agriculteurs a planté sa première bande-rôle sur la propriété des "békés" pour signifier que la terre devait être "à ceux qui la travaillent".'[54] Therefore it is possible that Chamoiseau is using parts of both *Chronique* and *Texaco*'s narratives to promote the voices of *petits agriculteurs* who were fighting for land rights. The claiming of rights over the Martinican land by farmers or formerly enslaved people can be seen in *Texaco* as a tool for resistance against enslavement, order, and hegemony. The main example of this is the settlement that is Texaco. Marie-Sophie is told repeatedly that she is not allowed to be there as the land belongs to the Texaco oil company and the huts are torn down before being reconstructed by those who live there. Earlier in the novel and demonstrating a sentiment that land distribution in Martinique following the abolition of slavery was unfair and perpetuated

[53] Woolward, 'Patrick Chamoiseau's *Texaco'*, 67.
[54] Christine Chivallon, 'Espace, mémoire et identité à la Martinique. La belle histoire de "Providence"/Space, memory and identity in Martinique. The beautiful story of "Providence"', *Annales de Géographie*, (638/639) (2004), 400-424 (p. 401).

poverty amongst those who were emancipated, Ninon thought that following abolition, the béké's land would be divided up amongst formerly enslaved people (121). It was Esternome who pointed out to her that 'la terre ne servait à rien si on n'etait pas béké, que tout était dans l'En-Ville' (121). This also shows the hope that formerly enslaved people in the novel attributed to the city as it was assumed that inequality existed only on the plantations.

The occupation of land and disputes over land rights are still seen in Martinique today. Such disputes highlight the connections between land and identity in the region. As Christine Chivallon has argued in her 2004 case study analysis of 'Providence', a property in Morne-Rouge, Martinique, which has been successfully occupied for many years by farmers who claim rights to the land near Mount Pelée, space and place are vital tools for resistance against order on the island, and through resistance they become 'l'une des ressources fondamentales de la continuité identitaire du groupe des petits agriculteurs.'[55]

The structure of the novel itself demonstrates Chamoiseau's linking of storytelling and natural ecosystems. The narrative begins and ends with the same story of the arrival of Christ, mirroring a life cycle, which is fundamental to the development of an ecosystem. The repetition that can be found in nature, such as yearly migrations and repeat-flowering (which are being disrupted by climate change, as explored in chapter four of this thesis), is expressed at multiple moments in the novel both literally and metaphorically. The repetition of planting and harvest that comes with farming: 'Et ça recommençait. Et ça recommençait' (178), is reflected in the repetition of hut building by both Esternome and Marie-Sophie. The repeating of hut building on the site next to oil company Texaco's reservoir tank over and over again due to the 'béké des pétroles' (389) destroying them multiple times also

[55] Chivallon, 'Espace, mémoire et identité à la Martinique', 400.

symbolises the repetitive and ongoing fight of those living in (former) colonies against the power of (post-)colonialism, demonstrating the repetition of history. The interference from those working at the Texaco site which leads to the need for repeated hut-building symbolises the wider implications of oil companies' activities for the environment and the disruption to the repetitions in nature which balance delicate ecosystems. This repetition can also be seen in the characters' identities as Marie-Sophie's founding of Texaco follows in her father Esternome's footsteps once she begins to develop similar characteristics to him as she continues his work. The inclusion of Esternome's narrative before the narrator's birth also shows Chamoiseau's comment on the multiple influences involved in a collective Caribbean identity and on the importance of the recognition of history in the development of a Creole identity. Moreover, the way in which Marie-Sophie uses the stories of others to construct Texaco as an ecosystem mirrors the multiple stories that Chamoiseau uses to build up his narrative in the novel. The life-cycle or repetition of ecosystems can be seen again as Chamoiseau nods to Glissant, from whom Chamoiseau has drawn much of his inspiration, in his afterword: 'Parce que la mémoire historique fut trop souvent raturée, l'écrivain antillais doit "fouiller" cette mémoire' (491),[56] alongside a discussion of a Mentô figure, who is introduced as a powerful slave whose power comes from the land (68), much like another *Texaco* character, Papa Totone. The Mentô is part of the process of 'becoming' (which alludes to Glissant's theories of becoming and continual change): 'le Mentô ne parle pas, et, s'il parle c'est dans trop de devenir pour être intelligible' (491). By including these passages together, he seems to suggest that Glissant is the Mentô to which he refers in the novel. A representation of Glissant as a mentor figure can also be found in *Les neuf consciences*, as

[56] This phrase can be found in Glissant's *Le Discours antillais*, p. 133.

explored in chapter four. The character develops to become a vision of four old men who descend on the plantation before playing 'dans l'eau de la rivière comme des négrillons' (126). One of these men appears as Esternome's father and another is described as 'une cocotier insoucieux des grands vents' (125), demonstrating their strong links to their natural environment. The Mentô character is a representation, and reminder, of the slave histories of the island, which is strongly reminiscent of the role that Afoukal's character plays in *Chronique*.

Pollution and Estrangement

The dispute between the residents of Texaco and the 'béké des pétroles' over land which lies near to potentially contaminated water, and near to a site of oil pollution, offers potential for exploration using Watts' analysis of a 'pollution of form'. This analysis can also be expanded to show not only conflict over land and water but also a general challenge to hegemony over language, identity, and history.

As Bénédicte André has argued, Martinique has been situated in Western discourse in opposition to the 'larger' mainland, and has been 'othered' 'through stereotypes set in opposition with the continental hegemonic "norm" including remoteness, seclusion, danger, vulnerability, primitivism, eroticism, exoticism, and warmth'.[57] André argues that in European thought, 'both the island and the short story have suffered the stigma of incompleteness, since in the eyes of hegemonic norms (the continent, the novel) they are

[57] Bénédicte André, '"Il y a toujours l'Autre": Towards a Photomosaic Reading of Otherness in Island Short Story Collections', *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 55(1) (2018), 40-51 (p. 40).

seen as lacking in complexity, as a merely diminished version of a whole that forever remains out of reach'.[58] A 'pollution of form' can therefore be analysed in *Texaco* in many ways. First, it can be interpreted as a resistance by characters against the urban planner, 'Christ', who is there to tell them if their settlement is worthy of 'salvation' and integration, which has religious connotations and is reminiscent of colonial missionaries. Second, a pollution of form can be analysed in terms of the structure of the novel which is a narrative made up of many short individual stories which overlap and work together, and which are comparable to *contes* as they are told orally and contain magical realism. André compares photomontage work to that of short story collections, and this imagery is useful in analysing Chamoiseau's approach as he brings together multiple narratives to form a larger photomosaic, or ecosystem, of Martinique (and sometimes Guadeloupe) which creates a larger novel, more accepted by French readers as being 'complete'. This is especially true for *Texaco*, as the novel received the Prix Goncourt in 1992, the year of its release. Had the novel been released as a collection of short stories which did not tie together into an over-arching narrative of the town planner who has come from outside to analyse the worth of Texaco as a settlement, the work would almost certainly not have received the same literary acknowledgement in France. Furthermore, by setting the narrative as already having an 'othered' space within the island, the novel resists the Western discourse that André describes of the island as the 'other place' in opposition to the mainland. However, situating Texaco in opposition to l'En-ville presents its own problems as the city in Martinique is often presented as an extension of the metropole in the novel. The question also arises as to the extent to which the structure of *Texaco* can be seen to be a deliberate polluting of European

[58] André, '"Il y a toujours l'Autre"', 40-41.

literary forms and a challenge to hegemonic structures while at the same time benefiting from European publishers and their networks. Is a true challenge to literary hegemony too difficult when the power lies with publishers? Chancé discusses *Texaco*'s reception in both metropolitan France and the Antilles, highlighting Bernard Pivot's negative analysis in his review in *Lire*[59] that the novel was too linguistically complicated for readers whose first language was French and that Chamoiseau would not have won the Prix Goncourt were it not for editor and publisher Antoine Gallimard, and most importantly, without the influence of Milan Kundera, who coined the term 'Chamoisified' to describe Chamoiseau's altering of French language to bring it together with Creole,[60] and his promotion of Chamoiseau to his friends and journalists.[61] Chancé points out the varied reception in Martinique: the novel was not recognised by Aimé Césaire, but it was praised by local figures including fellow créoliste Bernabé in a manner that Chancé interprets as a recognition of the award having symbolic and political value in promoting Caribbean, and Creole literature specifically, on a world stage.[62] However, she points to a possible flaw in praising *Texaco* as a Creole work when it is written primarily in French. As Walcott decried in his infamous open letter to Chamoiseau, there is a paradox that arises from challenging the hegemony of French language and advocating for the use of Creole but using French itself to do so.[63] In an interview with Taylor, Chamoiseau comments that rather than being a betrayal of Creole, the usage of both languages together is a key part of his identity: 'I had two personalities: a

[59] Bernard Pivot, 'Et pour finir, le Goncourt aussi à Kundera', *Lire*, December 1992 (no. 207).
[60] Milan Kundera, 'The Umbrella, the Night World, and the Lonely Moon', *The New York Review of Books*, 38(21) (1991), 44-48 (p. 47).
[61] Dominique Chancé, '*Texaco* de Patrick Chamoiseau, prix Goncourt 1992', in *Les Goncourt dans leur siècle: Un siècle de "Goncourt"* ed. by Jean-Louis Cabanes, Pierre-Jean Dufief, Robert Kopp and Jean-Yves Mollier (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2005), pp. 373-383 (p. 373).
[62] *Ibid*. pp. 374-375.
[63] Derek Walcott, 'A letter to Chamoiseau', *New York Review of Books,* 14 August 1997, pp. 45-48.

superego that was very French, and another part [Creole] that was freer, more secret, more underground'.[64] He explains that after reading Glissant's 1975 novel *Malemort*, in which 'two tongues [*langues*] melded to create a new language [*langage*]' [original emphasis], he 'realized that mixing the two languages would not only allow [him] to create a new literature, but also let [him be himself], just totally natural', which led to his writing of *Chronique*.[65]

Chamoiseau uses *Texaco* to resist European hegemony through multilingual and unstable narratives which challenge European ways of writing. Chamoiseau also addresses a resistance to imperialism in various forms through his political writing: *Frères migrants, Éloge de la Créolité, Manifeste pour refonder les DOM*, *Manifeste pour les 'produits'* and 'Faire-pays', and in examples of his public engagement on social media and interviews and talks at museums and at universities around the world. One of the main ways in which Chamoiseau challenges French European hegemony is through his creative use of Creole language, which is also a key part of the *Éloge de la Créolité*. At certain moments Creole language pollutes[66] the French language. Its use, intertwined with French, adds to the mosaic structure and the ecosystem of identities that Chamoiseau creates within the narrative. A French translation is often provided directly after Creole in *Texaco*, for example: '*Kouman ou pa an travay*, Tu ne travailles pas?' (55). This could signal Chamoiseau reaching out to a French metropolitan audience, and the style of the novel as a geographical and historical exploration of Martinique could also demonstrate this. However, there are moments in the novel in which Creole is presented without any French translation. An

[64] Chamoiseau, Confiant, Bernabé and Taylor, 'Créolité Bites', 132.
[65] *Ibid*.
[66] The term 'pollutes' is used here to emphasise Chamoiseau's attempt to positively disrupt the French language.

example of this can be seen when Esternome is wandering through a forest following news of the beginning of the abolition of slavery: 'mon Esternome criait comme ça: *Wô Ninon tan fè tan, tan lésé tan*…' (135). This could be because this is a moment of speech, something which cannot be seen often in the novel, and a translation would not show the reader what has been said. However, Chamoiseau could be including it to demonstrate the power of Creole as a creative language and as one which provides for him a deeper meaning than French. This view is something that can be seen in Chamoiseau's semi-autobiographical book, or childhood memoir, *Chemin-d'école*. The hybridity of Creole language emerges in the linguistic space between African languages and French. As in *Texaco*, Creole language and phrases are juxtaposed with French throughout *Chemin* to highlight cultural influences and differences, such as '*I pa konnèt non'y!... Il ne sait pas son nom!...*'[67] and *'on ne dit pas: je parle pour mon corps, on dit: Je parle à moi-même.'*[68] The inclusion of 'on ne dit pas:' before the Creole phrase suggests that children are told that this is not the correct way to say 'I talk to myself' at school, but Chamoiseau suggests that this is the more creative and accurate way to express this phrase. He believes, as do other postcolonial writers such as Glissant and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, that the oral mother tongue (in this case Creole) expresses emotions more effectively, while written French remains the language of administrative matters. In *Le Discours antillais* Glissant argues that 'l'écrit suppose le non-mouvement: le corps n'y accompagne pas le flux du dit […] l'oral au contraire est inséparable du bouger.'[69] Furthermore, Chamoiseau's use of Creole reminds us that the author is fighting against French linguistic hegemony in Martinique, and by exploiting the metonymic gap through the

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[67] Chamoiseau, *Chemin-d'école,* p. 62.
[68] *Ibid*., p. 159.
[69] Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 404.

inclusion of Creole without French translation, Chamoiseau makes it clear that his main audience is Martinique, which is also true to an extent for *Texaco*. As in *Chronique,* where the lack of translation could be connected to the untranslatability of Pipi's garden and gardening techniques, a refusal to translate Creole phrases can be seen both as a tool for resistance against the hegemony of French and as a way of informing the reader about the uniqueness of the Martinican landscape.

Texaco can also be considered to 'pollute' the form of the Christian Bible through multiple biblical references. The birth of Marie-Sophie occurs at the beginning of Table Deuxième, much as the birth of Jesus Christ takes place at the beginning of the New Testament. The contents of *Texaco* are presented in a similar way to the contents in the Bible; for example, 'Table Première' and 'Table Deuxième' can be seen to represent the Old and New Testament. This structural similarity is furthered by the creation of many sections which have titles that appear religious, describing either what is happening or the time frame, such as 'Le Sermon de Marie-Sophie Laborieux (pas sur la montagne mais devant un rhum vieux)' (43), a comedically blasphemous title. This highly fragmented structure is different from the usual style of Chamoiseau's novels in which often, the narrative is split into two, with each half presenting either a negative or a positive change, as can be found in both *Chemin d'école* and *Chronique*. Furthermore, the final section of *Texaco* is entitled 'Resurrection', and here, Chamoiseau reflects on the novel as a character within it, the 'Marqueur de paroles' (489). At times, this section also appears to be written from the point of view of the Christ figure, which would fit with the title, if this refers to the urban planner's new perspective on the role of Texaco in the history and future of Martinique as a positive change, or renewal of conscience.

The pollution of form that can be seen through references to the Bible are suggestive of the links between religion, and oil, as elements that pollute the environments in which they are imposed. The physical presence of unwanted oil as a pollutant is highly visible, and dramatically changes the environment in which is it released. By borrowing from and polluting the form of the Bible, is Chamoiseau making a comment on the ways in which an imposed Christianity, specifically Catholicism, has polluted the Francophone Caribbean? It is possible that the author is using biblical references to argue that the Bible, which has been used as a tool for European hegemony regarding religion and education in the colonising of the Caribbean, is only one version of history and that the story he tells here is just as valid. Religion was one of the main driving forces of European colonial missions in South America and the Caribbean and the *encomienda* system, derived from the written legal document the *Requerimiento,* was centred around conversion to Christianity during the initial European colonisation of the region. A critique of the use of writing to dominate can be seen in many of Chamoiseau's novels and his adoption of the structural form of the Christian Bible for his Creole narrative of *Texaco* could indicate his criticism of religion as a colonial tool to control and name both humanity and nature. As Pagden points out, the Catholic church argued that nature's '*actuality* could only be realized through the purposeful action of men'.[70] This sense of duty in the naming and categorising of nature also speaks back to the philosophical position asserted by Descartes in 1637, at the same time as the initial French colonial missions in Martinique, that it was necessary for man to be the master and possessor of nature.[71] A criticism of the naming process which was a key part of colonialism (known as discovery) in the Americas can be seen through a discussion of Esternome's own name. His

[70] Pagden, *European Encounters,* p. 6.
[71] Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode.*

name is not used by the narrator until a relatively advanced stage in the narrative, after he is given the status of 'liberté de savane' by the béké who is referred to as his master (67). There is also a note next to this first use explaining that 'Lui-même ne fut certain de s'appeler comme ça qu'à l'heure où le Béké le désigna ainsi' and asking: 'Qu'est-ce que le nom, Marie-Sophie, qu'est-ce que le nom?' (67). This questioning of colonial name-giving is also seen in *Chronique* and can be read as a criticism of the naming of both people and other living beings during the 'discovery' and practice of enslavement in the Caribbean.

The novel points to numerous environmental concerns (many of which continue to be of concern years after the novel was written) showing the potential of literature to highlight these issues to a wide audience. As the thesis explores in the chapters four and six, a strong environmental turn can be found in Chamoiseau's later work. The extinction of animals is an example of the devastating effects that colonialism has had on the island of Martinique. The destruction of the environment, including animals, echoes the destruction of the regions' human population of Amerindians, a genocide which occurred shortly after Columbus first arrived on the island. One cause of early extinctions in the region was species being brought from Europe, which is specifically mentioned in *Texaco*: 'Nous vîmes courir ces cochons-sauvages que l'Espagnol lâchait dans le pays au temps d'avant l'antan' (166). Another cause is natural disasters, and the eruption of Pelée in 1902 that is so central to *Texaco* was itself responsible for the extinction of an endemic rodent called *Megalomys demarestii*.[72] Paravisini-Gebert has recently written about the current threat of extinction facing parrots across the Caribbean region as a result of climate change and recent

[72] Vincent Lemoine and Lionel Dubief, 'Martinique', in *Important Bird Areas in the Caribbean: Key Sites for Conservation*, ed. by David C. Wege and Verónica Anadón-Irizarry (Cambridge: BirdLife International, 2008), pp. 220-229 (p. 222).

hurricanes, and she points to the importance of the parrot in the initial encounter between Columbus and the native human population, being 'one of the salient items offered in this historic first exchange'.[73] She argues that '[t]he parrots' symbolic and very public display before the old world marked, ironically the beginning of processes that would lead to most of them being now extinct' or endangered.[74] This is echoed in *Birds of the West Indies*, in which the authors argue that 'virtually every bird species presently considered endangered or threatened in the West Indies has become so as a result of human-induced causes'.[75]

One of the most frequently mentioned birds in the novel is the *coq*, which is often seen as a symbol of France. In the novel, the *coq* on Adrienne Carmelite Lapidaille's shoulder has physically replaced the parrot, a familiar symbol in stories about pirates,[76] which is referenced by the narrator. The replacement of the parrot on a shoulder with the *coq* as a symbol of France, often tormenting Esternome, serves not only as a metaphor for the reversal of an exchange between old and new but also as a reminder that French culture, language and flora and fauna have dominated and often replaced both those which previously existed, and which were brought to the region as it was 'constructed'. This replacement could also be seen as a symbol of the replacement of Caribbean/Creole traditions/values by French ones. Adrienne is introduced as a strong but cold woman who distributes food to the survivors of the eruption who had arrived in Fort-de-France (209). She could therefore be read as a personification of French colonialism, and it is noticeable that her name is similar to that of Marianne. Images in Church's book of a Marianne figure

[73] Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, 'The Parrots of the Caribbean: Facing the Uncertainties of Climate Change', *ReVista: Harvard Review of Latin America*, 18(3) (2018), 45-48 (p. 45).
[74] *Ibid*.
[75] Herbert A. Raffaele et al., *Birds of the West Indies,* Second Edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), p. 15.
[76] The colonialists and explorers who arrived in the region are often referred to as pirates.

symbolising the mère-patrie reaching out to Martinique to help[77] resonate with Chamoiseau’s image of Adrienne handing out food with the symbol of France on her shoulder. The symbol of Marianne and the gallic rooster can be seen on a set of statues that was erected in the Le Jardin d'Agronomie Tropicale in Paris, a neglected former colonial garden used for testing and experimentation, previously known as the Jardin d’Essai, and which had also been a site for human colonial zoos, notably as part of the ‘Village Colonial’, constructed for an exhibition in 1907 that attracted more than two million visitors, and was in 2022 the focus of a petition to restore the park.[78] The statue erected in 1922, ‘Le monument à la gloire de l'expansion coloniale française’, which has since been dismantled, featured Marianne with the rooster on top of a globe and three ‘colonial’ women at her feet each representing the Antilles, Africa and Asia.[79]

Other endangered birds are mentioned in the novel, perhaps chosen by Chamoiseau to highlight their need for human consideration: ‘On pouvait, Marie-Sophie, porter des chaînes aux pattes et nourrir dans sa tête un beau zibié volant […] disait papa’ (71). ‘Zibié lan mô’ is the Martinican name given to the South American bird named Black-Necked Stilt in English and ‘L'Échasse d'Amérique’ in French. This bird has a coastal habitat and is in decline due to the pollution and urban development seen on Caribbean coasts. This quotation represents another comparison of enslaved people to birds, both linking the suffering of

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[77] Church, *Paradise Destroyed*, pp. 222-223.

[78] Dialla Konate, ‘Au bois de Vincennes l’épineux dossier des vestiges coloniaux laisses à l’abandon’, *Télérama* (15 June 2022) <https://www.telerama.fr/sortir/vestiges-des-expositions-coloniales-au-bois-de-vincennes-est-ce-ainsi-que-l-histoire-s-oublie-7010907.php> [accessed 20 January 2022].

[79] Robert Aldrich, ‘Colonies et commémoration’, *Outre-Mers. Revue d’histoire*, 93(350-351) (2006), 5-26 (pp. 5-7). This set of statues also formed the focus of an interesting talk by Gemma King during the Australian Society for French Studies conference in 2021: ‘Le Jardin d’agronomie tropicale as site of memory and forgetting’, unpublished paper delivered at the conference ‘Un.sited: “Sites” in French Studies’ (ASFS, online, 3-10 December 2021). For more information on the Jardin, also see: Charles Forsdick, ‘Sites of Memory, Sites of Ruination in Postcolonial France and the Francosphere’, in *Places of Traumatic Memory*, ed. by Amy L. Hubbell, Natsuko Akagawa, Sol Rojas-Lizana and Annie Pohlman (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 133-155.

humans to the suffering of animals and highlighting a need for change. Such bird imagery is particularly important when read against Chamoiseau's subsequent literary career and birds become a central focus in the next chapter of this thesis, in a close study of *Les neuf consciences*, which provides a bird's-eye perspective of Martinique and focuses on the threats facing the island's natural environment.

Conclusion

Texaco's ending presents an idealised solution to the problem faced by residents of Texaco. The urban planner, who represents the power of political centres, has listened to Marie-Sophie, and has been persuaded to agree to help the occupants settle in the area of Texaco which becomes a recognised part of the city. However, such an ending seems unrealistic and this is where the novel struggles to address real-life solutions to the problems faced by Martinicans. The solution is presented as an integration of memory and tradition from all parts of society: 'Il me dit, en effet, que l'En-ville ingérerait l'âme de Texaco, que tout serait amélioré mais conservé selon la loi première, avec ses passes, avec ses lieux, avec sa mémoire tellement vieille dont le pays avait besoin' (486-487). Although this ending is one which seems fair, it is unlikely that the opinions and actions of politicians and lawmakers, and the (post)colonial structures that exist to perpetuate exploitation of both land and people, can ever be changed this easily. The problems that *Texaco* highlights in terms of the environment and pollution are also not simple ones to fix, and while the novel brings these issues to the attention of readers, it does little to suggest how the environmental problems should be practically addressed. The 'neat' ending to such a complex novel appears to miss

an opportunity to end with greater ambiguity and perhaps also give a voice to those who might suggest real solutions to these problems such as AOSIS, ASSAUPAMAR, CARICOM, and SIDS. However, this is counterbalanced by the novel's potential for real-life change lying in its ambition to reach a metropolitan audience, in order to highlight the political problems faced both in terms of environment and identity on this Caribbean island. *Texaco* thus makes a significant contribution to developing awareness of Martinique and the wider Caribbean area, as well as establishing Chamoiseau as an author with a pronounced interest in the environment and in forging a new hybrid literature through which to approach environmental issues.

CHAPTER FOUR

ECOLOGICAL CATASTROPHE AND PATRICK CHAMOISEAU'S *LES NEUF CONSCIENCES DU MALFINI*

Patrick Chamoiseau's *Les neuf consciences du Malfini* (2009),[1] with its dense, poetic, and philosophical prose, can be read as an effort to unify humans and nature as well as a comment on the urgent need for both local Martinican and global environmental awareness and action. In *Les neuf consciences*, animals and the natural environment are brought to the centre of the narrative through the novel's bird's-eye view, literally presented, of environmental disaster in Martinique and on a global level, and the human element is pushed to the margins. This chapter undertakes an original reading of this important and relatively recent work by Chamoiseau, which remains untranslated.

In his introduction to a 2007 coffee-table publication (re-released in 2019), *Trésors cachés et patrimoine de la Martinique vue du ciel*,[2] written as a collection of poems in

[1] Referred to hereafter as *Les neuf consciences*, with references given using paratheses in the main body of chapter, for example as (1).

[2] Chamoiseau and Chopin, *Trésors cachés*, pp. 10-11. There has also been a version published in 2008 by Éditions Hervé Chopin about Guadeloupe entitled *Trésors cachés et patrimoine de la Guadeloupe vue du ciel*, in which the photographs are also taken by Anne Chopin and the introductory text is written by Daniel Maximin, and it contains poetry and short extracts of text by various authors accompanying the photos. Both Chamoiseau and Condé have also contributed to photographic, touristic volumes that showcase Martinique and Guadeloupe respectively. See: Patrick Chamoiseau, Michel Renaudeau and Emmanuel Valentin, *Martinique*

conjunction with photographs of Martinique taken by Anne Chopin, Chamoiseau explains why this book takes the view from the sky as its focus. Chamoiseau writes that the bird's view 'est sans doute en rapport avec une forme de beauté qui ne nous sera jamais accessible'.[3] He argues that this *beauté* is something that has no morals and knows neither good nor bad, and he explains that this is because 'la vie et la mort étant liés, la plénitude d'une présence (qui est la base de toute beauté) couvre une gamme qui va du plus extrême vivant au plus extrême désolé.'[4] This concept of *beauté*, inherently linked to concepts of *plénitude* and *vivant*, can be found in L*es neuf consciences*, and two years later in 'Le Diamant', explored in chapter six. These three works can be linked through the Malfini as a bird's-eye view photograph of the Rocher du Diamant alongside a poem in *Trésors cachés* (explored further in chapter six), and the *beauté* that Chamoiseau finds in the bird's view seems to inspire the bird's-eye view that is central to *Les neuf consciences*. The novel's narrator is once more linked to the Rocher du Diamant when Chamoiseau writes in 'Le Diamant' that he salutes 'les couples de malfinis que me salient aussi de morne Larcher'.[5]

Despite a recent increase in critical attention, *Les neuf consciences* is an under-researched work which provides valuable insights into the author's literary progression towards ecocriticism, Buddhism, an increased engagement with Glissantian *Relation,* and the development of Chamoiseau's own related concept of 'horizontale plénitude'. This fundamental notion sets out the author's conception of Glissantian networks which spread horizontally and organically, rather than developing vertically in a mode of domination. In

(Paris: Richer-Hoa-Qui, 1989), and Jean du Boisberranger and Maryse Condé, *Guadeloupe* (Paris: Richer-Hoa-Qui, 1989).

[3] Chamoiseau and Chopin, *Trésors cachés*, p. 5.

[4] *Ibid*. p. 8.

[5] Chamoiseau, 'Le Diamant', p.119.

the ‘Récitation sur le vivant’, a kind of afterword, Chamoiseau proclaims: ‘Rien n'est universel, tout est diversel dans l’infinie variété du vivant et dans l’idéale perspective de son horizontale plénitude’ (228), deliberately evoking and reworking a phrase which became prominent in Glisant’s work towards the end of his life, and which is inscribed on his tombstone in the cemetery in Le Diamant.[6] The inclusion of Buddhist terminology in the novel is a new development in Chamoiseau’s writing, and corresponds to deepened links between *Relation,* interconnectedness, and the environment in this novel. Buddhism, too, holds the key to the rather cryptic title — the nine consciousnesses of Buddhism are not named in the novel, but the title forges a clear allusion to them, and there are explicit references throughout to Alaya and Amala, two of these nine consciousnesses.

Chamoiseau’s approach in *Les neuf consciences* differs from his previous work as it foregrounds Glissantian *Relation* and the overlapping interconnectedness between all living things that inhabit both Rabuchon, a forest in the Saint Joseph area of Martinique,[7] and the wider world beyond Martinique in a more overt way than he has done previously. Moreover, a central argument of this chapter is that the novel more closely aligns Chamoiseau’s work with ecocriticism, aiming as it does at a different way of seeing and perceiving the world, and educating the reader about local and global threats to the environment. *Les neuf consciences* has an urgent sense of a call to action in the form of environmental education; a rallying cry can also be seen in Chamoiseau’s 2007 novel*, Un dimanche au cachot*, which provides reflections on the role of memory in subaltern historical transmission. In 2007,

[6] Valérie Loichot writes: ‘The epitaph on the grave reads like a riddle: "Rien n'est vrai, tout est vivant" “Nothing is true, everything is alive”’, in ‘Édouard Glissant’s Graves’, *Callaloo*, 36(4) (2013), 1014-1032 (p. 1025).
[7] AZMartinique, *Rabuchon Forest* (n.d), <https://azmartinique.com/en/where-to-go/forests/rabuchon-forest> [accessed 30 January 2022].

Chamoiseau also published 'Quand les murs tombent',[8] one of several manifestos co-written with Glissant between 2000 and 2009, which have recently been published together in a single volume entitled *Manifestes*.[9] Both works call for a relational approach to the 'Other', privileged over one of domination. This approach can be seen again in *Les neuf consciences*, now expanded to include the natural world: 'l'Autre ici devient toutes les forces, toutes les présences, toutes les beautés de l'écosystème Terre' (119), with a suggestion of including living things that are as yet unknown to humans: 'L'Autre, c'est toute présence individuée ou collective, connue ou encore inconnue.' (238).

Several new aspects developed in *Les neuf consciences* inform Chamoiseau's subsequent work, for example 'Le Diamant'. The centring of the non-human voice is carried forward into *Le Papillon et la lumière*, a novel that Joel Nickels argues 'radicalizes this vision [in *Les neuf consciences*] of horizontality and nonstate space', and in which the actions of the 2009 General Strike play out allegorically within the 'moths' discourses on beauty and *l'action juste'* and in a discourse about '*how* to act politically'.[10] Chamoiseau moves further towards spirituality, the imaginary, and *Relation* in his 2012 novel *L'Empreinte à Crusoé*, a rewriting of *Robinson Crusoe* in terms of both content and form. In that novel, the island is again presented as an interrelated, living organism, and Chamoiseau demonstrates a striking

[8] Patrick Chamoiseau and Édouard Glissant, *Quand les murs tombent. L'identité nationale hors la loi* (Paris: Galaade, 2007).
[9] Patrick Chamoiseau and Édouard Glissant, *Manifestes* (Paris: Éditions la Découverte, 2021). This has recently been translated into English as: Patrick Chamoiseau and Édouard Glissant, *Manifestos*, trans. by Betsy Wing and Matt Reeck (London: Goldsmiths Press, 2022).
[10] Nickels, *World Literature and the Geographies of Resistance*, pp. 78-80.

play with structural form using long sentences containing only semi-colons and a lack of capitalisation.[11]

In 2009, Chamoiseau published *L'intraitable beauté du monde: adresse à Barack Obama*,[12] and *Manifeste pour les 'produits'*, [13] both with Glissant, and both of which highlight his attention to writing as activism during the development of *Les neuf consciences*. Here, Chamoiseau is evidently inspired by French philosopher Edgar Morin, who, as Hardwick points out, is a key influence in *Manifeste*.[14] Morin himself wrote relatively early (in terms of Francophone engagement with ecocriticism) about the relationship between nature and humanity, arguing for 'une nouvelle conscience planétaire' and the need to not only explore our relationship to nature but also to ourselves, arguing for solidarity and inter-connectedness, and against competition and aggression,[15] ideas that can be found in *Manifeste pour les 'produits'*, *Les neuf consciences*, 'Le Diamant', *L'Empreinte à Crusoé* and *Frères Migrants*. Chamoiseau's novels are characterised by the author's determination to engage the reader in political, historical, societal, and environmental debates, and he attempts to educate his readers about points of view that exist beyond the Europeanised narrative that often prevails in classrooms and history books.

This chapter builds on previous work on both *Les neuf consciences* and the wider theme of the environment in Chamoiseau's work in general, with particular focus on studies

[11] Pessini, 'Patrick Chamoiseau, L'Empreinte à Crusoé'.
[12] Patrick Chamoiseau and Édouard Glissant, *L'intraitable beauté du monde: adresse à Barack Obama* (Paris: Galaade Institut du tout-monde, 2009).
[13] Breleur et al., *Manifeste pour les 'produits'.*
[14] Hardwick, 'Towards Biopolitical Ecocriticism'.
[15] Edgar Morin, 'Pour une nouvelle conscience planétaire', *Le monde diplomatique* (October 1989) <https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/1989/10/MORIN/42105> [accessed 16 November 2021].

by Watts (2010, 2011);[16] Lucile Desblache (2008, 2011);[17] Knepper (2012);[18] Samia Kassab-Charfi (2013);[19] Bernadette Cailler (2014);[20] Marie-Christine Desmaret (2015);[21] Gwenola Caradec (2015);[22] De Vriese (2015);[23] Annabelle Marie and Jean-Louis Cornille (2017);[24] Kullberg (2018);[25] Nickels (2018);[26] and Paul Kana Nguetse (2019).[27] As Watts has stated, the difficulty in analysing a new turn in Chamoiseau's writing towards the overtly ecocritical in *Les neuf consciences* lies in how to read the novel in both a postcolonial and an ecocritical way.[28] He argues that by analysing the novel as an example of breaking down a nature/culture dualism, the Francophone postcolonial specificity of the location could be ignored, thus he presents arguments towards a reading of the novel in terms of the interrelation between both local and global: 'the representation of anthropogenic environmental change taking place on a planetary level and [...] the staging by the novel of a local ecological calamity',[29] and this chapter aims to respond to this challenge. This chapter

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[16] Watts, 'État présent'; and Watts, 'Poisoned Animal, Polluted Form'.
[17] Lucile Desblache, 'Writers on the wing: birds and the (de/re)construction of cultural memory in Patrick Chamoiseau and J. M. Coetzee's fictional narratives', *Kunapipi*, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 29(2) (2008), 178-193; and Lucile Desblache, *Plume des bêtes: Les animaux dans le roman* (Paris: Broché, 2011).
[18] Knepper, *Patrick Chamoiseau: A Critical Introduction*.
[19] Samia Kassab-Charfi, 'Patrick Chamoiseau et la poétique du "nomadisme circulaire"', in *Présence Francophone: Revue internationale de langue et de littérature,* 81(1) (2013), 9-31.
[20] Bernadette Cailler, 'Poétique, politique et éthique de l 'imaginaire dans *Les neuf consciences du Malfini* de Patrick Chamoiseau', *Présence africaine*, 2(190) (2014), 285-295.
[21] Marie-Christine Desmaret, 'Phénoménologie et esthésie des images, des visions et des représentations dans la fable écologique de Patrick Chamoiseau *Les neuf consciences du Malfini*. Apparition, disparition et réapparition', *La Tortue Verte* (2015), 19-25.
[22] Gwenola Caradec, 'L'envol (en)chanteur du colibri ou la poétique environnementale du Vivant dans *Les neuf consciences du Malfini* de Patrick Chamoiseau', *Présence Francophone: Revue internationale de langue et de littérature*, 84(1) (2015), <https://crossworks.holycross.edu/pf/vol84/iss1/7> [accessed 9 January 2021].
[23] Chamoiseau and De Vriese, 'L'écriture de la nature'.
[24] Annabelle Marie, and Jean-Louis Cornille, *Pas d'animaux: De la bête en littérature-monde* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2017).
[25] Kullberg, '*Créolité* and the Regime of Visibility'.
[26] Nickels, *World Literature and the Geographies of Resistance*.
[27] Paul Kana Nguetse, 'Le maître dans l'œil du disciple. À propos de l'apprentissage ou de l'initiation écologique dans *Les neuf consciences du Malfini* de Patrick Chamoiseau', *Quêtes littéraires*, 9 (2019) 158-170, <https://doi.org/10.31743/ql.5019>.
[28] Watts, 'État présent'.
[29] Watts, 'État présent', 6.

first analyses the animal characters themselves, then moves on to discuss the local power struggle which can be read as an allegorical postcolonial representation of Martinique. It subsequently considers the local and global ecological concerns raised by Chamoiseau and his choice to use a Buddhist lens through which to explore *Relation* and an ecological consciousness, before exploring the role of pollination and working as a collective in the forest alongside Chamoiseau's ecocritical and ecoliteral aims.

Animal Characters

Through the oral story-telling of the Malfini, a type of hawk,[30] which is transcribed by the author-narrator, Chamoiseau, the reader is transported to the forest of Rabuchon.[31] Pierre Rézeau points out that the word Malfini has origins in the creolisation of the word 'mansefenil', for which the earliest written record is found in Du Tertre's *Histoire générale des isles de S. Christophe, de la Guadeloupe* written in 1654, and it could also be a corruption of *mans phoenix* which is found in the earliest written accounts of the West Indies.[32] It is a bird with an important place in the Creole cultural imagination; for example, its flight is used to describe the act of rushing to greet a loved one in the opening page of Zobel's *La Rue Cases-Nègres.*[33] Other references to birds can be found in Chamoiseau's novels. In *Texaco*, Marie-Sophie's grandfather is fascinated by birds and as discussed in chapter three, the *coq* on Adrienne's shoulder could represent French cultural, linguistic, floral, and faunal

[30] According to Knepper, this is likely a broad-winged hawk, *Buteo platypterus*, also known as mangé poulé or chicken hawk; see: Knepper, *Patrick Chamoiseau: A Critical Introduction*, p. 272.
[31] For more information about this bird, see: The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Broad-winged Hawk (n.d), <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Broad-winged_Hawk/overview> [accessed 1 February 2022].
[32] Pierre Rézeau, 'Lexical Aspects of French and Creole in Saint-Domingue at the End of the Eighteenth Century', in *History, Society and Variation: In honor of Albert Valdman*, ed. by J. Clancy Clements, et al. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2006), pp. 47-75 (p. 71).
[33] Zobel, *La Rue Cases-Nègres*, p. 9.

domination. Chamoiseau also includes a reference to the endangered Black-Necked Stilt, known locally as a 'Zibié lan mô' in *Texaco*.[34] In *Chemin-d'école*, the hummingbird is used as a negative representation of French language domination, seen hovering over the school children and out of reach: 'Elle se tenait au-dessus d'eux dans la magnificence d'un colibri-madère immobile dans le vent.'[35] In *Chronique*, the hummingbird features in the insertion of a surreal oral *conte*, told by the character Hep-là about Ti-Boute le colibri, whose parents were killed by a hunter and who was placed under a spell which made him as small as a leaf. The tale continues that he grew a long beak to avenge his parents' death, but over time he forgets about this and uses the beak instead to become intoxicated on the nectar of flowers, until, after being frightened by a blackbird, his heart exploded.[36] This surreal mode aligns the work with the wider tradition of Caribbean and Latin American magical realism.

Early in the narrative, the Malfini, a powerful and violent bird of prey, becomes interested in a small creature he had never noticed before, and after this encounter, his character undergoes a transformation. As the narrative progresses, we meet two different types of hummingbirds — Colibri and le Foufou, who both become central characters in the Malfini's story, and who both have very different approaches to life. Chamoiseau homes in on an important behaviour that hummingbirds naturally display: pollination, and this aspect becomes central to the novel's *dénouement*. Colibri is the generic name in French for a hummingbird, and the narrator points out that this word is Amerindian-derived: '*Holibri* ou *Colibri* à la manière des Nuisibles plus anciens aujourd'hui disparus...' (32-33). The image of the hummingbird is of particular importance in Amerindian culture, representing generosity,

[34] Chamoiseau, *Texaco*, p. 71.
[35] Chamoiseau, *Chemin d'école* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996 [1994]), p. 68.
[36] Chamoiseau, *Chronique,* pp. 105-107.

resistance, and leadership, and they are also portrayed as 'messagers des esprits',[37] and 'God of war' which Chamoiseau mentions in his 2001 novel, *Biblique*. Hummingbird imagery has a specific importance in Latin America, such as in a Quechuan parable about a hummingbird which is explored later in this chapter. Le Foufou could be the Antillean Crested hummingbird, also known as 'Colibri huppé', or *Orthorhynchus Cristatus*,[38] which is a protected species in many regions of Martinique,[39] as suggested by the description of him, in contrast to Colibri:

> Colibri rayonnait d'un éclat végétal. Il n'avait pas de huppe et arborait en guise de bec une longue aiguille courbée. Le Foufou était bien plus minuscule, ses éclats variaient sans cesse, et il exhibait (au-dessus d'un bec plus court) un pompon avorté qui lui donnait l'allure d'un roi de poulailler (37).

Nickels has also pointed out that le Foufou's name, given by Malfini, is the Creole word for 'the Antillean Crested Hummingbird'.[40] As Desblache has argued, this choice allows 'Creole readers to share a sense of belonging to their own environment' as '[t]hey are agents of diversity at the heart of Caribbean landscapes and express Caribbean identities', acting as restorative agents.[41] It seems that Chamoiseau has written the novel with the aim of demonstrating an overcoming of colonial domination and a coming together of people, flora, and fauna, from both the Francophone Caribbean islands and metropolitan France. Le Foufou is deliberately juxtaposed with Colibri, and Chamoiseau presents another layer to the birds' characters, to highlight allegorically the structural differences that he perceives

[37] Philippe Erikson, 'Ode au colibri', *L'Homme*, 226 (2018), 5-18.
[38] Avibase, *Antillean Crested Hummingbird* (n.d), <https://avibase.bsc-eoc.org/species.jsp?avibaseid=479286060822E400> [accessed 2 February 2022].
[39] Direction de l'Environnement, de l'Aménagement et du Logement, *Les APB de la Martinique par communes* (n.d), <http://www.martinique.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/les-apb-de-la-martinique-par-communes-r219.html> [accessed 25 January 2022].
[40] Nickels, *World Literature and the Geographies of Resistance*, p. 74.
[41] Desblache, 'Writers on the Wing', 185.

between Creole and French approaches to domination, language, and spirituality, as in his previous novels.

In *Les neuf consciences,* the animal is centred and Chamoiseau chooses a hummingbird as the central and enlightened character who transforms the Malfini, and who is connected to Buddhist spirituality and a sense of peaceful and innocent power. As Kullberg points out, Chamoiseau's later novels appear to move beyond anthropomorphism:

> As Watts has shown, there is clearly an ecopoetic dimension to this project that aligns with a postmodern way of using animals in literature in a reversed sense: if fables have portrayed animals as humans to promote human civic morals, today animals themselves teach lessons to humans.[42]

Western fables based on Aesop's fables, such as the canonical collection written in the seventeenth century by Jean de La Fontaine, have included animals with human characteristics that allow the reader to identify with them, and allow the writer to express issues allegorically. In 2020, Joela Jacobs wrote that there has been a recent '"animal turn" in literary studies' which has moved away from a human focus.[43] *Les neuf consciences* certainly demonstrates a change in Chamoiseau's style; humans (named 'Nocifs') are pushed to the margins, their voice being found only in footnotes at the beginning and end of the Malfini's narrative, a technique which Watts terms '*meta*-diegetic', which has the effect of explicitly distancing the author from the 'story space',[44] as well as representing humans as 'negative externalities since it [a footnote] *is* a negative externality of the text' [original emphasis].[45] As seen in chapter three in terms of Watts' development of 'pollution of form', Chamoiseau's earlier novels reveal a disruption to the narrative form using footnotes,

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[42] Kullberg, '*Créolité* and the Regime of Visibility', 121.
[43] Joela Jacobs, *Animal Narratology* (Basel: MDPI, 2020), p. xi.
[44] Watts, 'Poisoned Animal, Polluted Form', 179.
[45] Watts, 'État présent'.

mosaic narratives and interjections. This can be analysed as a critique of pollution being an inconvenient truth that is being ignored, while here the footnotes are used to push the *polluter* to the margins, as an inconvenient truth and as something of which the central characters are unaware. Nonetheless, while the human is pushed to the margins of the page and narrative, the story *is* being told through a human author-narrator who writes that 'je [. . .] me mis en devoir de l'entendre... ou bien d'imaginer ce qu'il ne pouvait dire...' (17), highlighting how the animal story can only be told to other humans through the lens of a human imaginary but also how Chamoiseau is trying to bring animal and human voices together onto the same horizontal plane. As Watts points out, Chamoiseau placing himself 'within the narrative only to mark his absence indicates a change in the relationship between human and animal', as animal fables tend not to mention this human absence and therefore make it easier to perceive animals as human proxies.[46] Here, rather than acting as vessels for human concerns, the animals are a 'vehicle for responses to problems that concern them directly, if not problems shared by both animals and humans.'[47]

A fictionalised version of Chamoiseau as author-narrator often appears in his novels. Hardwick points out that 'his favoured narrative persona is that of the *marqueur de paroles*, or word-scratcher, which is indicative of his humble pose when attempting to set down the spoken word on paper',[48] as seen in *Texaco*. The etching of spoken word onto paper is a key part of the author-narrator's role in *Les neuf consciences.* The fact that he is both understanding and recording in writing the 'spoken word' of a bird is evocative of Chamoiseau's alter ego of the *Oiseau de Cham*, the master storyteller in his other novels. In

[46] Watts, 'Poisoned Animal, Polluted Form', 180.
[47] *Ibid.,* 185.
[48] Hardwick, *Childhood*, p. 58.

the preface to *Chronique*, Glissant wrote that Chamoiseau 'nous avertit lui-même qu'il se considère comme un "marqueur de paroles", "oiseau de Cham" ou "Chamgibier"'.[49]

Knepper discusses the late 1990s and 2000s as being a time that Chamoiseau both turns to Glissantian influences and emphasises the role of 'émerveille', which we might translate as 'Creole marvel', a form of magical realism, in his work. She highlights the progression of Chamoiseau's work towards more multi-layered rhizomatic narratives which are constructed around relational encounters with the 'Other', and argues that:

> [t]his bricolage (creolizing intermixture) of the self is evident in all of the works during this period. A sense of place is construed as both the product and process of criss-crossed narratives, which reflect the material flows in, through, and out of the region as well as networks of affiliation to other places in the world.[50]

As well as being present in *Texaco*, this is particularly evident in *Les neuf consciences*, in which both the local and global are explored as sites of *Relation*, understanding, and learning. Knepper also points out the importance of the landscape to the narrative form in this period of Chamoiseau's writing: 'The texts themselves come to mirror the constructs of nature: the forest, the waters, and the sedimented layers of rock and earth serve as ways of envisioning and writing these new textual landscapes.[51]

Desblache observes that in the novel, Chamoiseau engages even more strongly in allegorical discourse than previously, using two birds that have been 'relativement peu anthropomorphisés' yet are highly valued by the Antillean population, and she argues that rather than erasing the animal function of the birds, the allegorical representations function

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[49] Chamoiseau, *Chronique,* p. 6.
[50] Knepper, *Patrick Chamoiseau: A Critical Introduction*, p. 43.
[51] *Ibid.*

as ‘un véhicule de relation entre les espèces’.[52] For Watts, however, while allegorical readings of the novel are possible, ‘the narrative also resists allegorical readings and obliges us to read it as if it were centrally, if not exclusively, concerned with animals.’[53] Watts convincingly describes the novel as an ‘eco-fable’, arguing that what sets the novel apart from traditional European fables is the way in which the human is marginalised and the bird’s voice and encounter with the hummingbirds take centre stage,[54] with a focus on the Malfini’s awakening leading to him embracing ‘the “diversalité” of life, from microscopic dust to the so-called higher order creatures.’[55] Desmaret, Kana Nguetse, and Marie and Cornille all describe the novel as a ‘fable écologique’.[56] Kana Nguetse also argues that the novel can be read as an alternative *bildungsroman*, or ‘un roman initiatique ou d’apprentissage écologique’, in which the Malfini’s awakening, which sees the character moving from a predator to a protector of the environment, is a result of a novice/master relationship that develops between the Malfini and le Foufou, and in which the author and reader also enter into a pedagogical bond.[57] For Caradec, the novel moves between three different forms: ‘conte, roman initiatique et réflexion philosophique’,[58] and she argues that le Foufou’s curiosity represents the embodiment of the *poétique* that is a key part of Francophone postcolonial thought. As suggested by Desmaret,[59] and Cailler,[60] Chamoiseau may have taken inspiration from an early example of an ‘eco-fable’ — a Quechuan

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[52] Desblache, *Plume des bêtes,* p. 207.
[53] Watts, ‘Poisoned Animal, Polluted Form’, 181.
[54] Watts, ‘État présent’, 5.
[55] *Ibid*., 6.
[56] Desmaret, ‘Phénoménologie et esthésie’, 21 ; Kana Nguetse, ‘Le maître dans l’œil du disciple’, 159; and Marie and Cornille, *Pas d'animaux*, p. 35.
[57] Kana Nguetse, ‘Le maître dans l’œil du disciple’, 158-159.
[58] Caradec, ‘L’envol (en)chanteur du colibri’, 87.
[59] Desmaret, ‘Phénoménologie et esthésie’, 19.
[60] Cailler, ‘Poétique, politique et éthique’, 283.

(Amerindian) story in which a hummingbird goes back and forth to bring droplets of water to try to extinguish a forest fire. Here, the other animals in the forest laugh at the hummingbird, claiming that the fire was too big and the bird's actions too small to make a difference, but the suggestion is that a greater being sees this effort and sends a rainstorm to put the fire out.[61] The moral of the story is the same as in *Les neuf consciences*: each small action does make a difference. This Quechuan fable was explored by Franco-Algerian writer and ecologist Pierre Rabhi in his 2006 novel *La part du colibri, l'espèce humaine face à son devenir.*[62] There is a dedication to Rabhi at the beginning of *Les neuf consciences*, and Cailler points out that he also wrote 'contre la désertification de bien des terres grâce au développement de techniques appropriées'.[63] A graphic novel adaptation of the fable was published by Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas in 2008, presented as a manga-style illustrated short story with commentary from Kenyan environmental activist Wangari Maathai and the Dalai Lama,[64] demonstrating its significance and linking these ideas of collective action again to Buddhist thought. Watts has pointed out another version of a tale about the colibri within Martinican folklore, in which the hummingbird is decapitated by a 'poisson armé,' after a long struggle against many other creatures.[65] He points to an essay by Aimé Césaire and René Ménil in *Tropiques*, in which they link the colibri to maroons, thus representing 'assailants to the colonizer' and 'martyrdom of the descendants of slaves in Martinique'.[66] While this allegorical representation can be seen in the relationship between le Foufou and

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[61] Dominique Hes and Chrisna du Plessis*, Designing for Hope: Pathways to Regenerative Sustainability* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p. 215.
[62] Pierre Rabhi, *La part du colibri, l'espèce humaine face à son devenir* (La Tour-d'Aigues: Editions de l'Aube, 2006).
[63] Cailler, 'Poétique, politique et éthique', 292.
[64] Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas, *Flight of the Hummingbird: A Parable for the Environment* (Vancouver: Greystone, 2008).
[65] Watts, 'Poisoned Animal, Polluted Form', 185.
[66] *Ibid*.

Colibri in *Les neuf consciences*, a key difference, as Watts notes, is that Chamoiseau considers not only this allegorical representation of human relations but also 'suffering as a hummingbird'.[67]

Marie and Cornille argue that the story that Chamoiseau tells is too simple to be a re-writing of a fable, such as 'la vieille fable de L'Aigle et du Roitelet. Ni *Les Oiseaux* d'Aristophane, ni ceux d'Hitchcock, ni même ceux de Saint-John Perse'.[68] However, they do not reference the Quechuan parable which has many parallels to le Foufou's actions in *Les neuf consciences*. They argue that rather than a fable, inspiration has come from the meditation central to Mahayana Buddhism, evident in the references to Alaya and Amala and that the narrative progresses successively through the nine different stages, or consciousnesses: sight, sound, smell, eating, occupying space, values, self-awareness, and ego, and then Alaya, which relates to conscience and hereditary instinct. They then point to the ninth and final consciousness — Amala — a mantra repeated by the Malfini and which relates to the osmosis of the individual within the wider living world, leading to Buddhahood. However, I would argue that although all of these nine consciousnesses are explored, the narrative does not seem to present them in a specific order; rather, all of the first seven consciousnesses are explored at once by the Malfini, and the eighth one, Alaya, is referenced throughout in terms of the Malfini's development from proposing a self-centred vision of the world to one that extends to all of the living. It is the replacement of this consciousness with Amala, or Buddhahood, that le Foufou achieves at the end of the novel. Therefore, I argue that this is the progression that Chamoiseau is showing in his narrative: a

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[67] *Ibid*.
[68] Marie and Cornille, *Pas d'animaux*, p. 40.

progression away from Alaya; the experiences of the previous seven consciousnesses together; and the eventual achievement of Amala which does not depend on or work with the other consciousnesses and is, rather, a state of being at one with the world without existing any longer, in the Buddhist sense of the experience of death.

Le Foufou's journey towards Amala is not immediately obvious to the reader and instead we explore the different aspects of his personality alongside those of the other hummingbirds in terms of how their consciousnesses are interpreted by the Malfini. The representation of the bird characters at the beginning of the novel displays Chamoiseau's typical juxtaposition of rigid French domination and resourceful Creole creativity. In the novel, Colibri appears to represent the enforcement, or bureaucracy, of French imperial domination, aggressive border control and a sense of order, as seen in descriptions of the colibris as 'oiseaux-moustiques' (61; 63; 64) when they start to target le Foufou in 'round-ups' after forcing him to flee, and in their refusal of entry to 'foreigners', leading to 'des razzias et des rafles' (76) described in language deliberately evocative of genocide. Hummingbirds are known to be territorial over feeding areas, therefore this behaviour from Colibri can be read as an accurate animalistic representation of this species rather than an allegorical representation of French domination. However, this description of Colibri's behaviour is presented in contrast to le Foufou who is not interested in aggressive defence of territory, suggesting that an allegorical reading is possible here. I would argue that le Foufou represents a sense of spontaneity and inquisitiveness, as seen in descriptions of him investigating his surroundings and as having a 'manière d'être toujours à contretemps', which is what initially draws the Malfini's attention (33). He is also presented as

demonstrating creativity and a child-like innocence, especially during the moments of playing and singing with the 'enfant de Nocif' (43-44).

Le Foufou's Alaya is awakened in a moment of a potential shift from childhood to adulthood, during the second section of the novel entitled 'Le cri du monde', which takes place at the same time as the colibris elect their new guide — Colibri. This could be an allegorical representation of the way in which Chamoiseau believes that French imperialism, or its bureaucracy, can easily taint, or be a distraction from, the formulation of a Creole identity. The awakening of the Alaya is presented negatively as it leads le Foufou to eat other animals whereas previously le Foufou would play with them (77). Following this 'awakening', Alaya is described as 'un démon qui, naturel, invisible, dictait aux libertés son terrible alphabet' (82), again linking the Alaya to a form of domination. Le Foufou is also linked by the narrator to a positive sense of 'solitude' (39). In 'Le Diamant', Chamoiseau interprets the term 'solitude' as a peaceful way of being alone which, he argues, allows for mindfulness and a deeper engagement with the natural world, as le Foufou experiences here. This is in contrast to the alternative suggestion of 'solitude' as a negative loneliness based on living outside of, or above, a community, which the Malfini experiences at the beginning of the novel.

Le Foufou can be interpreted as an extension of the *Créolité* movement, which is centred around pushing boundaries, interconnectedness, and a need to question everything with a 'regard d'enfance'.[69] In terms of the format of the names given to the characters by Chamoiseau, there is an importance in the use of the definite article with le Foufou's name, whereas Colibri does not have one. This could be suggestive of Colibri holding a higher status

[69] Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité,* p. 24.

than le Foufou as seen through the Malfini's eyes; although le Foufou is capitalised it is reduced to a common noun, therefore marginalised, which could support the theory that Colibri represents the dominant France, while le Foufou represents creoleness. Importantly, this character is also physically marginalised, or marooned, by Colibri. I would argue that the definite article also appears to have been used by Chamoiseau to signify difference within a group, or to highlight a defining characteristic. Therefore, while le Foufou is a hummingbird, he is different from the other colibris and thus seen as the 'Other'. Furthermore, the capitalisation of Foufou, just as I argued in the introduction to this thesis in terms of Chamoiseau's use of 'Other/Autre' (also seen capitalised in this novel), reverses the marginalising effect of signifying difference in this way and the use of 'le' could be suggestive of le Foufou being a 'chosen one'. This othering is displayed by Colibri who, in the Malfini's opinion, has rejected le Foufou based on differences in appearance: 'je trouvais inconfortable d'admettre qu'une simple différence, même profonde, suffit à entretenir chez Colibri une telle intensité de haine et de rejet' (37). This raises questions about the French colonial perception of the colonised 'Other' and the supposed sense of superiority that can also be found here in Colibri's character. Later in the novel, during a 'conversation' between Colibri and the *vieux guide*, the reader discovers that this hatred also stems from Colibri's belief that le Foufou allowed the Malfini to consume Colibri's mother early in the novel. The Malfini also comments that while previously believing the two '[f]rères ennemis' (35) to have the same mother, he later realises that le Foufou '*avait eu plusieurs Donneurs*' [original emphasis] (38), again suggesting a surreal or magical realist thwarting of the laws of biology which also supports the hybrid representation of le Foufou as symbolic of Creole culture. The celebration of various different influences on a Creole identity is something that is

expressed in *Éloge de la Créolité*, as seen in chapter two.[70] At the end of the novel, le Foufou seems, symbolically, to reinforce the links between *Créolité* and celebrating difference, as he mixes the precious, life-giving pollen in a way that evokes images of the Caribbean as a 'melting pot': 'Le Foufou mélangeant les poussières comme s'il avait voulu que ces vies immobiles relayent leurs dissemblances' (203).

Chamoiseau continues to use *oralité* in *Les neuf consciences* to align his literature with the Creole oral tradition; the novel is a written version of a fictional oral story, told by the Malfini to the author-narrator Chamoiseau. On just two occasions, the author-narrator addresses the reader, in footnotes found at the beginning and end of the novel. The footnote at the beginning explains that the author's meeting with the Malfini took place following a cyclone; as this marks a new beginning, he comments that he was able to understand the Malfini's language (17), again positioning the work as one of magical realism. The call at the very beginning of the book, which is seen in other work by Chamoiseau, marks this as an oral narrative linked to Creole storytelling: 'Frère vivant… ô Nocif', with a footnote inserted here containing an explanation from the author-narrator about how he has come to understand the Malfini's story (17). Hardwick points out that this call is seen in many of Chamoiseau's works and signifies the oral tradition:

> *Antan* and *Chemin-d'école* are bridged by the fraternal call: 'Ô mes frères, je voudrais vous dire'. This vocative appeal is both a nod to Saint-John Perse and a reminder of the Creole oral storytelling tradition, which resonates throughout the trilogy and is exemplified by frequent use of 'ô' and 'ho'.[71]

By including the call 'ô' as a way to introduce communication with a bird, it once again highlights the role of magical realism and the imaginary in Chamoiseau's novels as this

[70] Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité,* p. 26.
[71] Hardwick, *Childhood,* p. 60.

Creole call is intended to transport the reader and author to another world; this is also indicated through the references, in the footnote, to the doors in '*Alice au pays des merveilles*' and to 'Kafka' (17), which, due to the reference to 'trop de portes' remaining open to alternative realities here, could be a reference to Franz Kafka's 1914 text *Vor dem Gesetz* (Before the Law) in which the protagonist waits by a door which is a literal representation of a European legal system and, peering inside, asks to be allowed in.[72]

Another example of Chamoiseau's *oralité* — now extended into the animal domain — is the onomatopoeic '*hinnk*' hiccup sound, which mimics the sound of a bird call. It is often found as an interruption to the main narrative and serves to indicate moments of learning and increasing awareness for the Malfini. The spiralling wandering and digressions in the form of phone calls that are found in *Un Dimanche au cahot* resurface here in this '*hinnk'* interruption, and in the movement of the birds. Knepper has called these '[s]pasms of embodied knowledge',[73] and Nickels has described them as 'numerous, painful, cognitive jolts',[74] as the Malfini learns to challenge his imperialistic view of the world. Kana Nguetse describes these 'hoquets' as moments of 'la découverte d'une réalité diamétralement opposée à l'expérience quotidienne du néophyte [Malfini].'[75] Caradec has argued that the '*hinnk'* makes a visible and distinguishable mark on the page, disrupting the text in the same way that Chamoiseau's insertions of Creole language words have done in previous novels

[72] Kafka's work can be interpreted as a comment on unequal access to the law, which relates to Chamoiseau's choice of the word EXORDE in capital letters, borrowed from legal terminology, to introduce the text which follows. The call, 'ô', is juxtaposed with the preceding formal word 'EXORDE' (17), meaning introduction and which is borrowed from the Latin 'exordium' which can often be seen in formal written legal European documents to signify the introduction.
[73] Knepper, *Patrick Chamoiseau: A Critical Introduction*, p. 224.
[74] Nickels, *World Literature and the Geographies of Resistance*, p. 74.
[75] Kana Nguetse, 'Le maître dans l'œil du disciple', 162.

and the Creole lists of Martinican flora and fauna in *Les neuf consciences*.[76] This listing of flora and fauna, often using Creole, is a technique which can also be found in his later essay 'Le Diamant', as I demonstrate in chapter six. There is a focus in the novel on the variety of sounds that different birds make, and there is a dedication at the beginning of the book to Édouard Benito-Espinal, who has written extensively about the flora and fauna of the Caribbean, including about the birds of Martinique.[77] Le Foufou's relation to others is demonstrated through the character's understanding of different calls as this language learning is used to appreciate other birds' stories. It is also used to gain a form of power as knowledge, as his mimicry of the sound of large predatory birds is often used to scare others. Nickels argues that le Foufou's ability in 'omniversal mimesis is a source of incredible power in the asymmetric engagements' that he faces, and that this mimesis which evolves to include all parts of the forest later in the novel allegorically represents the autonomous community activity that was seen during the 2009 strikes.[78]

When the hummingbirds are first 'discovered' by the Malfini, they are not given names but simply described in appearance and movement. They are compared to both birds and insects, the Malfini thinking that they could be 'presque les deux à la fois' (32). The Malfini's choice not to name the birds is described as his refusal to accept their existence (32), until the Malfini hears a 'Nocif' name them 'Holibri ou Colibri, à la manière de Nuisibles plus anciens aujourd'hui disparus…' (32-33). This section is particularly concerned with the naming of things, and initial contact with the 'Other'. It is notable here that the word

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[76] Caradec, 'L'envol (en)chanteur du colibri', 92.
[77] For example: Édouard Benito-Espinal, *Oiseaux des Petites Antilles* (Anse des Lézards: Latanier, 1990); Édouard Benito-Espinal, Patricia Hautcastel and Jean-Claude Roché*, Oiseaux des Antilles: 90 espèces d'oiseaux suivi de 15 ambiances naturelles* [CD], (2005); and Édouard Benito-Espinal and Patricia Hautcastel, *Oiseaux de la Martinique* (Gosier: PLB, 2007).
[78] Nickels, *World Literature and the Geographies of Resistance*, p. 76.

'Nuisibles' is used instead of 'Nocifs' to describe native Amerindians who have now disappeared. The word 'Nuisible' suggests they were less damaging than the more toxic 'Nocif', yet they are still not presented as the same as, or equal to, the birds themselves. All humans in the novel are thereby both pushed to the margins and described in a way that suggests they have had too much power. This continues until near the end of the novel, when the Malfini notices the relationship between le Foufou and a 'Nocif' who has been feeding and drawing him, demonstrating le Foufou's ability for *Relation* once more, this time with humans. The Malfini also notes that following one of le Foufou's disappearances, in which he takes a journey of enlightenment, the Nocif searches for him, demonstrating his concern and empathy for non-human life (100). However, it is also noticeable that at one point in the novel, le Foufou only eats from the 'Nocif': 'Il n'utilisait que la provende quotidienne du Nocif pour se sustenter' (92-93); this could highlight the risk of dependency of animals on humans that could develop during conservation efforts.

Initially, le Foufou is named by the Malfini as 'Froufrou' due to the 'froufrou des ailes' he observed (26), and then 'Foufou' (33). Knepper points out that:

> [t]he slippage from 'Froufrou' ('frou-frou' means 'to rustle') to the Creole name for the bird "Foufou" calls the reader's attention to the common practice of dropping the 'r' when words shift from French to Creole. Thus, the bird re-enacts creolizing processes as it comes into contact with the other bird.[79]

This analysis reinforces the notion of le Foufou being the vehicle for a specific, Creole world-view, as does the narrator's insistence on the bird's flexibility and adaptability, even in the face of seemingly impossible struggles and deadly peril. The Malfini also gives Colibri and le Foufou other names throughout the novel, such as 'l'insignifiant', and other birds in the

[79] Knepper, *Patrick Chamoiseau: A Critical Introduction*, p. 279.

novel are also described as 'insignifiances' (69), suggestive of the hierarchy at the top of which the Malfini places himself. However, by the end of the novel, there is a significant shift in Malfini's view of both le Foufou and Rabuchon's other animals, as now they all work collectively, or as an adapted ecosystem, to pollinate and sustain the Rabuchon forest, with the suggestion that this local change will radiate across the wider world and avert global environmental catastrophe.

The name 'le Foufou' could also be translated as 'the crazy one', and this is likely to be the first meaning that springs to the reader's mind. Thus Chamoiseau's choice in *Les neuf consciences* to have a central character who creates disorder against Colibri's order to create a better community and environment, and for this character to be named le Foufou, could be linked to Glissant's suggestion in *La case du commandeur* (1981) that to 'resist the homogenising socio-cultural forces of departmentalisation', the characters had to be presented as insane as a 'kind of restorative counter-order.'[80] Indeed, the Malfini often comments on le Foufou's behaviour as being perplexing and appearing to lack any Western notions of logic; what emerges is that he is operating according to his own, Creole, logic. Le Foufou's apparent disconnection with parts of his own Alaya, such as the need to eat, confused the Malfini: 'manger était au centre de l'existence, et constituait le sens ultime de toutes mes perceptions, or je ne le sentais pas se nourrir!', as to begin with the Malfini only witnesses le Foufou *playing* with the flowers (55). Yet witnessing le Foufou moving beyond his Alaya forces the Malfini realise that it is possible to live outside of natural instinct: 'soudain, je me mis à trembler a l'idée de cet inconcevable: *vivre sans Alaya!'* [original emphasis] (87). As Nickels has written, Alaya is 'a term from the Upanishads that refers to an

[80] J. Michael Dash, *Édouard Glissant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.127.

all-encompassing, foundational consciousness, which exists beneath the seven other modalities of sense-consciousness.'[81] The Malfini also questions why le Foufou is so connected to the natural world around him: '*Hinnk!* À quoi peut bien server de saluer la lumière!?' (42). However, following this interruptive questioning, the Malfini decides that this way of thinking about le Foufou is limiting his own experience of the world, and begins to try to learn more about the reasons for le Foufou's behaviour.

At the beginning of the encounter, the Malfini questions why le Foufou is so different and remarks that it could be that he is a 'victime de ces poisons que les Nocifs disséminent autour d'eux' (34). Evoking (possibly unintentionally) Carson's *Silent Spring*, the poison that Chamoiseau alludes to here also seems to be responsible for the *mort lente* as it is linked to human activity on the banana plantation nearby: 'La terre noire (et malement odorante) que les Nocifs labouraient pour planter leurs bananes était faite de poussières millénaires [...] Tout allait à poussières. Tout provenait de poussières' (57), and during this *mort lente*, the Malfini realised that while many other species of flora and fauna were disappearing, '[l]es bananiers seuls demeuraient florissants' (138). Furthermore, mid-way through the novel, there is a protest at the plantation in which the protesters 'se mirent à renverser les plants à grands cris grands mouvements […] Les échauffourées furent interminables. Les discussions aussi' (146). The addition of 'les discussions' here after the full stop could suggest an argument that there are many discussions about environmental issues but little in the way of action. As Watts points out, 'Chamoiseau is clearly evoking the widely recognized poisoning of soil and groundwater in Martinique with chlordécone',[82] as explored in chapter two. This

[81] Nickels, *World Literature and the Geographies of Resistance*, p. 74.
[82] Watts, 'État présent', 6.

important contemporary environmental scandal in Martinique was discussed in detail in chapter two in connection with Pipi's disastrous over-reliance on 'scientific methods' of gardening in contrast to methods that promote listening to, or reading, the land. Watts argues that '[t]hrough this precise example of poisoning at the hands of agricultural pesticides, Chamoiseau creates an alignment between the Martinican subaltern — the descendant of slaves who tend to be the present-day agricultural workers in Martinique — and the non human world.'[83]

As the novel progresses, a *mort lente* takes over the forest, and it is le Foufou's influence on the collective, with his mindful determination to pollinate, which brings the forest back to life. Observing his actions, and gradually succumbing to the almost hypnotic, repetitive rhythms of his coming and going, the animals eventually work together to ensure the restoration, without really knowing what they are doing. The narrator describes them as becoming 'une structure collective, chaotique toujours, indéfinissable et incertaine, mais intense et réelle' (206), once again linking productive chaos to a collective effort and potentially to creoleness. As discussed in greater detail later, the end of the novel appears to show le Foufou reaching Amala, the ninth consciousness, or Buddhahood, through a transcendence, which seems to be linked to both this act of pollination and his ability to inspire collective action through *Relation*. Working as a collective allows the animals to restore the Rabuchon forest and despite the problem of the *mort lente* still existing beyond the forest, it no longer threatens their lives as they have learned to live with it and work together in a life-preserving way. Iona Wynter-Parks argues that in the novel, 'difference between species and among species is highlighted since all have a valued role to play. The

[83] Watts, 'Poisoned Animal, Polluted Form', 190.

[author puts] in motion the idea of working in an inclusive way for the health of the whole community'.[84] Towards the end of the novel, the Malfini highlights his own differences in describing how he struggled to pollinate in the same way as le Foufou and Colibri: 'Mes plumes ne retenaient rien de cette curieuse poussière. Aucune fleur n'avait pas prévu ma masse, mon bec d'estoc, mes ailes de force…', but that he was able to help: 'Je commençai par ramasser ou arracher du bec tout ce qui portait des spores, des surfaces granuleuses, des cœurs grenés et, à sa suite, j'allai les disperser dans l'air humide de Rabuchon' and to replant struggling plants (204). This highlights Chamoiseau's message that to move forward, we all have a part to play; the roles will all be different, because we are all different, but in working together the ecosystems of life function. Thus, environmental success should not be about making everything and every action the same, but about embracing differences in a productive and unrestrictive way. Natural ecosystems hold very good examples of how to move forward in more sustainable ways to limit, and reverse, anthropogenic destruction of the environment. Capra argues that we should look to these ecosystems and how they work together interdependently as an example of how we can build sustainable communities, pointing to examples of repetitive patterns that can be found in the relationships between interlinked cyclical food chains and the importance of recognising the non-linear nature of networks and the potentially beneficial effects of partnership, co-operation, and self-organisation within these networks.[85]

[84] Iona Wynter-Parks, 'Understanding Across Differences in Patrick Chamoiseau's *Les neuf consciences du Malfini* and in Dany Laferrière's *Autoportrait de Paris avec Chat*', in *Posthumanist Perspectives on Literary and Cultural Animals*, ed. by Krishanu Maiti (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2021), pp. 113-126 (p. 121).
[85] Fritjof Capra, *Ecology and Community* (2009), <https://www.ecoliteracy.org/article/ecology-and-community> [accessed 20 January 2022].

The Local and the Global

Through the Malfini's bird's-eye point of view, the novel describes the habitat and behaviours of other animals and insects that inhabit the forest of Rabuchon and the surrounding area. For example, the Malfini describes a spider's habitat as 'l'attrape', which ends up holding the corpse of the colibris' 'vieux guide' in one of the 'filets gluants' of which the centre is described as a 'cathédrale' (66); yet it is also described as 'une féerie de scintillements et de lignes invisibles' (66). A similar description of a spider's web is found in 'Le Diamant': 'les araignées dont les pièges remplissaient les sous-bois de féeries luisantes', where Chamoiseau makes an explicit comment on species loss, describing these sights as rare in the Antilles in 2011.[86] In *Les neuf consciences*, the web is described as an area to be fearful of, even for larger birds, but these descriptions of webs also figure it as a magical place, demonstrating Chamoiseau's aim in *Les neuf consciences*, as in 'Le Diamant', to encourage education, appreciation, and consideration of all parts of the natural world. The Malfini goes on to describe le Foufou entering the web and deconstructing it, creating a path for the colibris to retrieve their *vieux guide*'s corpse. This deconstruction is described as a playful and deliberate act which allows le Foufou to watch as the spiders reconstruct their web. The process of reconstruction is described in detail: 'je vis une myriade de fils leur poindre de l'abdomen, flotter, aller, se croiser, s'adjoindre et se disjoindre dans des destins imperceptibles' (68). The Malfini describes the spiders as 'ces repugnantes bestioles', but in contrast describes the web as 'le piège fabuleux' which 'se remettait à vivre d'une manière magique, une féerie labile, qui ne transmettait qu'un effet de fraîcheur et d'immuable

[86] Chamoiseau, 'Le Diamant', p. 118.

innocence' (68). The contrasting descriptions demonstrate the way in which Chamoiseau is reminding the reader to think of all living things as valuable despite their both negative and positive traits.

Le Foufou's deconstruction and witnessing of the re-construction of the spider's web are reflected in the transformation of the Malfini's own perception of what a hummingbird, in the form of both Colibri and le Foufou, might be, and the subsequent unconscious construction of a new multi-layered and fluid meaning of their presence. The Malfini initially believes that the hummingbird is weak due to its small, frail appearance, but this is challenged at multiple points throughout the novel to such an extent that after their journey of discovery in the middle of the novel the Malfini begins to describe le Foufou as 'le petit-maître'. The Hegelian master-slave dialectic,[87] which was interpreted in chapter two to mean that all consciousnesses are interwoven and that one cannot realise one's own consciousness without realising the 'Other's' consciousness, can also be applied here as the Malfini only realises his own consciousness and emerges from being dominated by his Alaya through his recognition of le Foufou's consciousness. The idea that small things can hold great power, which the Malfini learns of le Foufou, is alluded to in the epigraph in a quotation from Aimé Césaire: '"*Je me suis toujours étonné qu'un corps si frêle puisse supporter, sans éclater, le pas de charge d'un cœur qui bat"*,' which he states, in parentheses, is '[*à*] *propos du colibri*' (11). This persuasively argues, with a nod to the founding father of French Caribbean literature and the *Négritude* movement, that it is imperative to look to the smallest things, such as birds, to both learn, and deconstruct thought processes, about the world and the 'Other', and to learn about their astonishing

[87] Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*.

power, particularly in terms of roles in the wider ecosystems of the planet. For small island societies such as Martinique, these reminders that small can be powerful are particularly resonant for projects of identity construction, politics, and environmental action.

In terms of the deconstruction of language, the destruction of the web to watch it be rebuilt could also be read as a reference to the way in which Chamoiseau and the créolistes use Creole to playfully destabilise the French language, as can be seen in Chamoiseau's earlier autobiographical series *Une enfance créole* in which the two languages are intertwined and Creole is used often without translation, also seen in *Chronique*. The deconstruction of the web is described as an 'art fabuleux et terrible' (69), which might represent the paradoxical possible interpretations of the deconstruction of language and ideas, which nonetheless releases creative potential. The créolistes wrote that: 'La Créolité c'est "le monde diffracté mais recompose"',[88] suggesting that a deconstruction and piecing together of the different parts is necessary for moving forward. However, instead of being celebrated for allowing the retrieval of the *vieux guide*'s corpse, le Foufou is shunned once again and sent back to his 'coin désolé' (71) after his cheerful playfulness creates disorder at the 'ceremony' in which Colibri is designated as the new 'guide' for the colibris; at a symbolic level, this would appear to suggest that creoleness is not yet celebrated in parts of Martinican society.

Kullberg argues that '[t]he politics that is put forward in this novel is not national or regional, as in the case of the *Éloge*. Here, identity politics has turned toward ecopoetics: a

[88] Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité*, p. 27.

global concern that is experienced locally and expressed poetically.'[89] While this analysis holds true for much of the novel, around the middle, in a significant development, the focus does for a relatively brief time shift from local to global. The Malfini follows le Foufou on one of his migrations, or journeys, away from the Rabuchon forest. Linking past to present in these journeys, Kassab-Charfi argues that during '[l]es mélancolies sépulcrales habituellement suggérées par le survol des océans et surtout de l'Atlantique, dont l'évocation douloureuse réactive la remémoration des traversées africaines aux temps de la Traite, sont ici relayées par une vision élargie aux désastres affligeant la Terre.'[90] These journeys can therefore be linked to a sense of learning about, and linking together, the destruction of cultures and environments by humans as a result of colonialism and post-colonialism. By observing le Foufou's relation to other birds through listening to their stories, the Malfini learns about these changing landscapes. Wynter-Parks suggests that Chamoiseau illustrates 'Morton's term "zones of exchange" through the (human and nonhuman) figure of the refugee'.[91] Le Foufou's spiritual development through *Relation* is intensified by the migrations that he takes in and out of the forest as he experiences these 'zones of exchange'. During their return flight to Rabuchon, le Foufou and the Malfini meet some migratory birds (112-113). The Malfini comments that he does not usually pay attention to the migratory birds as he does not understand their language, but this time he was watching and listening to them. The Malfini points to the importance of eyes and vision once more in remarking that he is able to see the thoughts and memories of the migratory birds in their eyes: 'Un regard chargé de paysages, de terres, de souvenirs, de magnétismes, de lumières

[89] Kullberg, '*Créolité* and the Regime of Visibility', 125.
[90] Kassab-Charfi, 'Patrick Chamoiseau et la poétique', 26.
[91] Wynter-Parks, 'Understanding Across Differences', p.114.

et de cycles obscurs...' (112). In a long discourse that spans a few pages, but which simply lists various events rather than offering any explanation or analysis, the birds describe the changing landscapes that they have seen during their travels after being questioned on 'la cause de cette paranoïa', when they are observed trembling with a worry 'qui leur brûlait l'esprit' (112). The birds describe a world that is out of sync and rapidly changing:

> Ils parlaient de saisons déboulées en avance, ou qui tardaient outre mesure, ou qui s'installaient en dérive inconstante hors des vieilles habitudes. Ils parlaient de furies naturelles inconnues des mémoires et qui déroutaient des siècles d'habitudes, au point de donner l'impression que le monde était en train de crier... (112)

The act of crying out here once more evokes the importance of *oralité* to Chamoiseau's writing, as he suggests that the climate crisis is the Earth calling for help.

Next, the birds turn their attention from the land to the sea, and discuss the changes they have witnessed in the oceans: 'ils chevrotaient que les océans perdaient de leur allant, et que leurs pierres vivantes, couvertes d'éponges et d'algues, gîtes de tant d'existences, se mettaient à blêmir, à gémir …' (112-113). This could be a reference to coral bleaching, which is a significant problem around the world, particularly in the Caribbean where it is being caused by increasing sea temperatures, as indicated in an article which describes 2005 as a record year for severe coral bleaching in the region.[92] The birds provide detailed descriptions, mentioning 'de bras de mer qui s'étaient épuisés de fleuves incapables d'atteindre aux rives des océans, de lacs qui fermentaient en boues mortes' (113). This could be a reference to the wider Francophone world and specifically Lake Chad, which was being widely reported on in Francophone media around the time *Les neuf consciences* was completed as the UN estimated that the lake could dry up within 20 years, triggering

[92] C. Mark Eakin et al., 'Caribbean Corals in Crisis: Record Thermal Stress, Bleaching, and Mortality in 2005', *PLoS ONE*, 5 (11) (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0013969>, 2.

humanitarian disasters, if there were no interventions.[93] An article published in 2011 claims the lake decreased by more than 90% in area in the previous 40 years, and discusses the reasons for, and possible solutions to, the problem, blaming ‘persistent droughts and increasing irrigation withdrawals’ as well as the lake’s ‘bathymetry — which allows its division into two smaller lakes’.[94] At the time of writing this thesis, there is yet to be any sustained action taken, but in more recent years there have been talks to act on a problematic plan first suggested by Bonifica in the 1970s, named ‘Transaqua’, proposing to transfer water from the Congo River Basin into Lake Chad.[95]

Most worryingly, the birds reveal that they are struggling to follow their basic instinct to migrate as the seasons are no longer progressing as expected and the changing climate is affecting where they can go:

> Quand ils ne tournaient pas en rond, ils débouchaient en des lieux inscrits dans leurs mémoires, mais ils y arrivaient ou trop tôt ou trop tard, car, au lieu des ripailles attendues, il n’y avait que des sècheresses rampantes, des froids inhabituels, des démesures d’orages, d’inondations et de tornades... (113).

Confused and disorientated, the birds find that their ability to feed is affected by these changes: ‘Ils se retrouvaient souvent sans fleurs, sans graines, sans insectes, sans rien de ce qu’avait prévu la sapience jusqu’alors infaillible de leur ordre...’ (113). Here, without specifically referencing contemporary science, Chamoiseau is commenting on the known phenomenon of changing seasons caused by global warming leading to ecological mismatch in many parts of the planet, something which is affecting migratory birds and causing

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[93] United Nations, ‘Shrinking Lake Chad could trigger humanitarian disaster, UN agency warns’, *UN News* (15 October 2009) <https://news.un.org/en/story/2009/10/317442-shrinking-lake-chad-could-trigger-humanitarian-disaster-un-agency-warns> [accessed 2 February 2022].

[94] H. Gao et al., ‘On the causes of the shrinking of Lake Chad’, *Environmental Research Letters* 6(3) (2011), 1.

[95] Nidhi Nagabhatla and Ramazan Caner Sayan, ‘Transaqua, Lake Chad and the Congo Basin — A Call for Cautious Action’, *UNU-CRIS* <https://cris.unu.edu/transaqua-lake-chad-and-congo-basin> [Accessed 2 February 2022].

population decline due to an inability of some birds to adjust migration phenology.[96] Chamoiseau's deliberate strategy of avoiding scientific accounts and leaving the birds to try to discover the causes of the *mort lente* for themselves allows him to centre the bird's voice and focus on lived experience rather than on producing a scientific diatribe. Another possible argument for why Chamoiseau does not explicitly name the causes of these changes is that the novel could be read as an ecoliteral encouragement to his readers to undertake their own research, which would correspond with Chamoiseau occupying a position where his literature is to be seen as an important starting point that ignites the imagination and desire to research problems, rather than attempting to offer a totalising authoritative narrative, or any concrete solutions. Chamoiseau often points out in interviews that he writes about the poetic and not the science. When asked about the focus on ecology in *Les neuf consciences* during a virtual discussion in 2020 with researchers at the Atelier Interdisciplinaire de Recherche sur l'Environnement de Sciences Po in Paris, he answers that the novel is more about *Relation* than it is about ecology, and argues that *Relation* is not only about other cultures and neighbours, but should be understood to include everything *vivant* on the planet, across boundaries, in an 'écosystème relationnelle'.[97] He also states that he is above all a writer and artist and that his role is not to solve ecological problems, but to emphasise the importance of all living things. Watts points out that Chamoiseau's writing about local and global environmental concerns in the novel 'operate[s] according to the laws of what Lawrence Buell calls toxic discourse […]: "Although [toxic discourse] rests on anxieties about environmental poisoning for which there is often strong evidence, it is a

[96] Nicola Saino et al., 'Climate Warming, Ecological Mismatch at Arrival and Population Decline in Migratory Birds', *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, 278(1707) (2011), 835-842.
[97] IddriTV, *Dialogue avec Patrick Chamoiseau*, online video recording, YouTube, 29 May 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lrl4O5btnQ> [accessed 2 February 2022], 40m16s.

discourse of allegation or insinuation rather than of proof"'.[98] Support for Watts' argument can be seen in Chamoiseau's suggestions of the *chlordécone* pesticide being responsible for le Foufou's behaviour and the local changes witnessed on the banana plantation and within the forest itself, as well as in the descriptions of global change given by the migratory and sea birds; at the same time, these observations remain at the level of allegation or insinuation, so much so that Chamoiseau refrains from ever mentioning specific details such as the term *chlordécone.*

After the migratory birds' description of disconcerting changes, the seagulls take up the narrative and explain marine changes: 'Ils craillaient, eux, à propos de vagues rageuses, hors rythmes, hors temps, qui se soulevaient soudain pour gober les nuages' (114), suggesting a sense of disconnect between both the birds and their environment, and a disruption to the water itself that they had not felt before. The birds continue, mentioning 'de tapis d'algues qui devraient sans bruit comme de vrais cimetières' (114). The 'tapis d'algues' here is likely a reference to the sargassum seaweed pollution which has been an increasing problem on the beaches of Guadeloupe and Martinique in recent years, with notable issues occurring in 2011, 2015 and 2018.[99] In 'Sargazos en Antillas Francesas' (2020), Mildred Cabrejas Quintana discusses the possible causes of this problem, commenting that although its presence has been known in the Antilles since Columbus' arrival, there are well-founded suspicions that the current crisis has its origins in deforestation (the trees would have previously absorbed pesticides) and pesticide use in Brazilian agriculture, as well as in

[98] Watts, 'État présent', 6.
[99] Claire Mufson, 'Mystery seaweed threatens French Caribbean', *France24* (29 September 2018) <https://www.france24.com/en/20180929-france-macron-seaweed-guadeloupe-hulot> [accessed 26 January 2022].

the rising sea temperatures.[100] She quotes Olivia Losbar who wrote that preliminary studies established a correlation between these factors and an exponential growth of this algae in recent years.[101] So severe is the sargassum problem in Martinique that the Direction de l'Environnement, de l'Aménagement et du Logement (DEAL), run by the regional government's Ministère de la Transition écologique, publish weekly 'Bulletins de prévision des échouages de sargasses'.[102] L'association anti-sargasses de frégate (AASF) in Martinique published a letter in *Antilla* addressed to officials on behalf of the residents of Le François, where sargassum is a significant problem, indicating that funding to clear up and repair parts of the area has been withdrawn and that there is a lack of state help, often leaving residents to clear it up, and fund defences and repairs themselves. They comment that despite the millions of Euros given by the state to research the problem, no real action has been taken to reduce or mitigate the problem severely affecting property and health.[103] The question of responsibility for the clearing of the seaweed does not currently have an answer, and it has led to the creation of some initiatives that explore potential uses for the seaweed.[104] Victoire

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[100] Mildred Cabrejas Quintana, 'Sargazos en Antillas Francesas: ¿Vector de Decolonidad?', in *Cambio climatico y sus impactos en el gran caribe*, ed. by Jacqueline Laguardia Martinez, (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2020) pp. 141-166.

[101] Olivia Losbar, *Sargasses: l'inquiétude des chercheurs américain* (9 July 2019) <https://www.rci.fm/guadeloupe/infos/Risques-naturels/Sargasses-linquietude-des-chercheurs-americains#> [accessed 11 January 2022].

[102] Direction de l'Environnement, de l'Aménagement et du Logement*, Le bulletin de prévision des échouages de sargasses* (30 March 2023), <https://www.martinique.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/le-bulletin-de-prevision-des-echouages-de-a1355.html> [accessed 31 March 2023].

[103] Le Bureau de l'association anti-sargasses de frégate, 'Urgence sargasses à la frégate', *Antilla* (24 December 2021), <https://antilla-martinique.com/urgence-sargasses-a-la-fregate/> [accessed 28 January 2022].

[104] An unpublished paper presented by Brandon Hunter-Pazzara, at Princeton University, an Institute of Modern Languages Research conference, held online in June 2022 entitled 'Climate, Capital and Tourism in the Americas', posed the question: 'Who is Responsible for the Seaweed?' His paper addressed the causes of the increase in sargassum, and questioned whose responsibility it is to physically remove it. The question of what to do with the seaweed emerged and a member of the audience mentioned that in Haiti there are initiatives to turn it into biofuel or fertiliser. Hunter-Pazzara argued that this is not effective action and that it is too early to know if these initiatives will have any benefit. Nevertheless, a similar idea is already in action, through Finnish biochemist Dr Mari Granström's business Origin by Ocean (ObO)'s initiative (funded both commercially and by the European Union) to turn both sargassum from the Dominican Republic and microalgae from the cost of

Cottereau et al. point out that the type of sargassum found in Martinique's waters is Sargassum natans and S. fluitans, which releases hydrogen sulphide as it rots on the shore, causing an unpleasant odour, and which has been identified by French doctors to be detrimental to human health, leading to many hospitalisations.[105] They point out another under-researched consequence of the sargassum accumulation — arsenic contamination — shown to be found in bivalves, a type of mollusc consumed in Martinique and known for filtering 'bioaccumulating micropollutants' such as arsenic which is carried by the sargassum.[106]

The sea birds also decry the lack of food, which arises for multiple reasons:

> Ils criaillaient le mal qu'ils avaient parfois à retrouver ces populaces d'écailles qui les nourrissaient depuis tant de mémoires, et sur des courbes précises, et qui maintenant dérivaient n'importe où, au gré de goémons migrants et de chaleurs instables. Ils sentaient les océans trembler comme si une part de leur immensité s'était comme affligée … (114).

Fishing, by humans, is an important part of Martinican culture and seafood makes up a large part of Martinican diet. Yet over-fishing is a global problem and there are calls to make the practice more sustainable. Earlier in the novel, the Malfini criticises the 'Nocifs' for over-fishing: 'des Nocifs, accrochés à des yoles, s'ingéniaient à occire des existences marines' (102). It is important to note the fishing boat's name — yole — as these are important in Martinican culture, being used for boat-racing as well as fishing. Martinican yoles have recently been given safeguarded status by UNESCO, which aims to 'preserve the know-how

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Finland into a replacement for plastic (amongst other oil-based products) using a biorefinery technology they call 'Nauvu', in a pilot production scheme due to fully launch in 2025-2026; see: Jo Harper, *Turning problem sea algae into a replacement for plastic* (23 January 2023), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-64317261> [accessed 1 March 2023].

[105] Victoire Cottereau, Alexandra Coynel, Damien A. Devault, *et al.*, 'The Silent Spring of Sargassum', *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, 28 (2021), 15580-15583 (p. 15580).

[106] Cottereau *et al*. 'The Silent Spring of Sargassum'.

of local boat builders; transmit know-how on sailing; strengthen the ties between yole practitioners and the local community; and create a federation capable of organizing major events.'[107] Furthermore, as indicated by the sea-birds, changes to migratory patterns for the fish, linked to sea warming, which is increasing greatly in the Antilles in particular, as reported in 2017,[108] causes a problem for the birds that depend on them.

After this encounter with migratory and sea birds, the Malfini seems to be living in a more relational way, moving away from his Alaya and the instinct to hunt and kill which was formerly at the centre of his being. He notes that: 'L'eau même me paraissait vivante en habitant ces vies sans nombre qui l'habitaient' (115). The move towards using the term 'vivant' is something that can also be seen in 'Le Diamant', and the list-like style of the speeches (enhanced by the use of ellipses to separate each event that is discussed) by both the migratory and sea birds is also similar to the style seen in 'Le Diamant', in Chamoiseau's lists of the species that he finds on the beach in the bay and the changes that they and the landscape are experiencing. The pace of the novel changes during this encounter and throughout the discussion of the different problems that both the migratory birds and the seagulls have noticed. Whereas the rest of the novel has a slower pace, which Desmaret describes as 'rythmique, légère, cadencée, pleine d'élan et d'envol',[109] matching the Malfini's soaring flight (the pace only increasing during a chase or an attack), this middle section of the novel and speech by the birds they meet appears as lists, which creates a

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[107] UNESCO, The Martinique yole, from construction to sailing practices, a model for heritage safeguarding (2020), <https://ich.unesco.org/en/BSP/the-martinique-yole-from-construction-to-sailing-practices-a-model-for-heritage-safeguarding-01582> [accessed 31 January 2022].

[108] Michael A. Taylor and Kimberly A. Stephenson, 'Impacts of Climate Change on Sea Temperature in the Coastal and Marine Environments of Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS)', *Caribbean Marine Climate Change Report Card: Science Review* (2017), 23-30.

[109] Desmaret, 'Phénoménologie et esthésie', 20.

sense of overwhelm and panic. This section only takes up a few pages of the novel, yet it is one of the most significant moments in terms of Chamoiseau's ecological message about the anthropogenic climate change which underpins the novel. It allows the reader to feel the birds' panic in a way that is linked to how a bird might experience change, therefore re-centring the animal's point of view. There is confusion and a lack of understanding about what is causing these problems, deriving from the deliberate lack of information given by the author. By excluding key information about the causes of these problems, Chamoiseau presents an opportunity for the reader to research these problems for themselves and it suggests that he is writing for a reader who is not necessarily familiar with Martinique. The faster pace also evokes a sense of the world passing by quickly and feelings of helplessness and confusion. The section can also be read as highlighting differing perspectives on climate change, as while le Foufou listens to the migratory birds, the Malfini suggests that they are 'insensé[s]' and that le Foufou is naïve for believing them: 'Les migrateurs déliraient ainsi, et, bien que tout ceci me semblât insensé, le Foufou les écoutait avec grave appétence — sans doute du fait de sa candeur naïve' (113). Here, the narrative is strongly arguing for the importance of listening and taking note of accounts provided by others, often with knowledge of contexts distant to our own, rather than automatically dismissing them.

Buddhism — a Shift in Consciousness

Knepper has written about the Buddhist influences found in *Les neuf consciences* and argues that Chamoiseau's inclusion of Buddhist concepts is a deliberate challenge to 'Western

forms of Enlightenment attained through reason', a common theme of his œuvre.[110] In *Chemin-d'école*, for example, he challenges written European History (with a capital H to demonstrate its supposed superiority) which is taught in schools in the Francophone Caribbean and mimics the enumerated and methodical way in which facts are often presented in European textbooks. In *Chronique* he argues that this same dominant History excludes oral histories that are a key part of Creole identity, and the land itself is also presented as an alternative to Western education in the form of medicine as *papa-feuilles* heals Pipi using intuition and understanding of the land. The potential healing power of the land is shown as an alternative system of knowledge to Western scientific medicine, and thus Creole identity is juxtaposed with European identity through the environment.

Much as Chamoiseau does not provide much detail about the ecological concerns he references in his novels, he presents Buddhist ideas in *Les neuf consciences* to the reader without explaining or elaborating on them, in a manner reminiscent of his use of Creole without translation. He alludes to the nine consciousnesses of Buddhism through the novel's title and in references to Alaya and Amala, indicating the importance of Buddhism, and again the lack of information either presents a problematic gap in knowledge, or it leads the reader to investigate these ideas for themselves. Daisaku Ikeda points out that in Buddhist teaching, consciousness has a different meaning to Western understandings of 'conscious awareness' and the 'ability to think', and comments that in Buddhism, 'consciousness operates on several levels' and 'implies a capacity or energy that operates whether or not

[110] Knepper, *Patrick Chamoiseau: A Critical Introduction*, p. 27.

we are consciously aware of it'.[111] Ikeda also explains that the concept of 'nine consciousnesses', has been 'developed largely in the T'ien-t'ai and Flower Garland schools of sixth-century China' and in both T'ien-t'ai's and Nichiren's teachings, the ninth consciousness is 'understood as synonymous with the tenth world — Buddhahood.'[112] The first five of the nine consciousnesses are the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Towards the end of the novel, and at the end of le Foufou's journey (216), the Malfini's focus on chanting 'Amala' (also the subheading of the section), without understanding why, shows that Chamoiseau is inspired by Japanese Buddhist priest Nichiren's Buddhism, part of Mahayana, one of the main branches of Buddhism. A key chant in Nichiren Buddhism, is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which means 'The ultimate Law or truth of the universe, according to Nichiren's teaching.'[113] According to The World Tribune, which based an article on Nichiren Daishonin's teaching of Buddhism in *The Daimoku of the Lotus* Sutra,[114] the character Myo (one of the names within this chant) means '"mystic" or "wonderful."' The article explains that in his work, 'Nichiren Daishonin discusses these three meanings of myo: to open, to be fully endowed and to revive.'[115]

The novel's dedication to Yasmina Ho-You-Fat-Deslauriers, a comedienne and film producer at Kréol productions and Le Grand Balan, included with the phrase: 'Qui m'a fait entendre le Myo…', suggests that she could have inspired the new Buddhist elements of

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[111] Daisaku Ikeda, *Unlocking the Mysteries of Birth & Death: ... And Everything in Between, A Buddhist View of Life*, 2nd edition (Santa Monica: Middleway Press, 2004 [1988]), p. 152.
[112] *Ibid*.
[113] Soka Gakkai Nicheren Buddhism Library, *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism: Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, <https://www.nichirenlibrary.org/en/dic/Content/N/11> [Accessed 25 January 2022].
[114] Soka Gakkai Nicheren Buddhism Library, *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1: Introduction*, <https://www.nichirenlibrary.org/en/wnd-1/Introduction/3#Nichiren%20Daishonin%E2%80%99s%20Buddhism> [Accessed 25 January 2022].
[115] The World Tribune, *Myo Means "to Open, to Be Fully Endowed and to Revive*" (2019), <https://www.worldtribune.org/2019/06/our-prayers-will-be-answered-2-2/> [Accessed 25 January 2022].

Chamoiseau's writing presented here in *Les neuf consciences*.[116] Ho-You-Fat-Deslauriers is the creator and organiser of the *Pitt à Pawol* series of interviews, which focus on *oralité* and the *conte* tradition, with various writers, including Condé. Chamoiseau has been the 'maître des lieux' for this for many years.[117] He also took part in an interview on 29 May 2013 on *Les neuf consciences* in discussion with the public, organised by Ho-You-Fat-Deslauriers and Jean-René Lemoine as part of a wider conference on his work in Ivry-sur-Seine. He discusses the novel briefly in an online recording to promote the session and states that the *oralité* of the Malfini that he imagined was a key part of the writing of the novel, and this was brought out during the session through the reading of passages alongside music.[118] In 2021, in an interview that Chamoiseau gave for the *Fondation pour la mémoire de l'esclavage*,[119] he discusses the history of colonisation in Martinique, and uses the paradigm of *Relation* to argue that the countries of the world are no longer connected in a manner which is vertical, but instead in a horizontal way, with both colonialist and colonised histories and memories overlapping and intertwining with each other in an ecosystem, which, it could be argued, is

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[116] There are other dedications to Ho-You-Fat-Deslauriers in Chamoiseau's novels, for example in *Chemin-d'école*, alongside her husband, film director Guy Deslauriers (who is a long-standing collaborator of Chamoiseau; they have made several feature films together over the last two decades, with Chamoiseau as scriptwriter), the dramatised television production of which she performed in during the period 1997 to 1999 (see: Daniel Meyer-Dinkgrafe, *Who's Who in Contemporary World Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 129). There is also a dedication to her in *Frères migrants* (2017), demonstrating that they have known each other a long time. She has also worked on several prominent films with Chamoiseau (alongside Guy Deslauriers), including short television films and feature-length productions, such as: *Femmes-Solitude* (1995), *Biguine* (2002), *La tragédie de la mangrove* (2011), and *Édouard Glissant* (2012). For a chronology of Chamoiseau's work up to 2009, alongside parts of Martinican history from DOM status in 1946, see Knepper, *Patrick Chamoiseau: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 10-15.

[117] Grand Balan, *Pitt à Pawol* (n.d), <https://grandbalan.wordpress.com/pitt-a-pawol/> [accessed 2 February 2022].

[118] Ivry sur Seine, Ivry: dialogue avec Chamoiseau, online video recording, YouTube, 11 June 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ExAWNn31W4> [accessed 2 February 2022].

[119] Fondation pour la mémoire de l'esclavage, *Carte blanche à Patrick Chamoiseau*, online video recording, YouTube, 27 June 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8Rz-jR37DI> [Accessed 18 November 2021].

an overly-optimistic view of the world that Chamoiseau has long argued is still governed by hierarchies and vertical thinking.

The Buddhist influence on the novel may also have been inspired by Glissant. Knepper points out that in a section of *Poétique de la Relation* called “Expanse and Filiation,” Glissant observes that Buddhism offers a model for the dissolution of self in the world: ‘Buddhist mythologies, to offer an almost commonplace comparison, are based on temporal cycles and consider first of all, and uniquely, the individual (himself impermanent or almost so), whose “stories” are of self-perfection through dissolution into the All.’[120] This dissolution into the world seems to happen to le Foufou at the end of the novel through his transcendence, in Buddhist terms, to Buddhahood.

The nine consciousnesses are also connected to Nichiren Buddhism, with the chant of ‘Nam-myoho-renge-kyo’ connected to the ninth consciousness of Amala (or Buddha nature) which allows peaceful co-existence with other life forms if one can attain it, as le Foufou seems to at the end of the narrative. The Malfini describes le Foufou’s experience as follows: ‘nous gardions la sensation qu’il faisait autre chose, qu’il évoluait ailleurs, et qu’il entrevoyait bien d’autres horizons.’ He explains that le Foufou then follows ‘un oiseau de lumière […] au bout de la septième ventée’ by doing ‘une spirale bizarre’ and then turning into a silhouette which is ‘un noir intense’ (215), followed by an explosion and silence, then by ‘[u]n océan de lumière!’ (216), which seems to be representative of le Foufou’s transcendence to the tenth world of Buddhahood. Following this apparent transcendence, the Malfini tries to attain the same ninth consciousness as le Foufou through the act of chanting: ‘Des lors, je me répétais

[120] Knepper, *Patrick Chamoiseau: A Critical Introduction*, p. 281.

sans jamais le comprendre: *Amala! Amala! Amala!*' (216). In the final chapter, as he begins to reach the same level of perception as le Foufou, now struck by a sense of there being more similarities than differences between all living things, he remarks: 'J'avais conservé ce vocale — *Amala!* — et, quand la vision survenait, je le prononçais comme un mantra' (221). According to the Lotus Sutra of Nichiren's Buddhism, anyone can attain enlightenment through chanting, because chanting 'Nam-myoho-renge-kyo' is powerful enough to awaken the Buddha nature in anyone.[121] Dan Lusthaus explains that the ninth (pure) consciousness of *amala-vijñāna* was developed in the sixth century in China, by translator Paramärtha who declared the Alaya to be defiled, so he posited this ninth consciousness to replace Alaya and to be reached after 'one Awakens'.[122]

The movement that le Foufou makes during transcendence — a 'spirale bizarre' — can be linked to enlightenment and divinity and it first appears earlier in the novel during a storm when the Malfini remarks that he sees le Foufou become one with the wind:

> je le revoyais, tourbillonnant toujours, utilisant les précipitations, se jouant d'elles, virevoltant dans ces atrocités qui auraient dû l'écarteler. J'étais une fois encore témoin d'un vrai prodige [...]. Sa manière d'être au cœur des forces primales suggérait qu'il se rapprochait d'une... divinité (96).

The first time that the Malfini experiences a similar movement of spiralling up into the sky seems to signal his own awakening:

> Le manque d'air, l'altitude, associés à la faim, transformaient les alchimies de notre cerveau et modifiaient nos perceptions […] C'était une autre perception. À la fois floue et intense, vaste et précise, consciente et inconsciente [. . .] *je ne sentais plus de fatigue* [. . .] je peux dire que c'est cela qui nous sauva d'un épuisement total (119).

[121] The World Tribune, *Myo Means "to Open, to Be Fully Endowed and to Revive"*.
[122] Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogacara Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-Shih Lun* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), p.172.

It is during one of these movements that the Malfini realises le Foufou's eyes have the same 'lumière' and 'activité' as those of the Nocifs: 'je perçus dans ses pupilles le même éclat, la même activité que j'avais découverte chez son ami Nocif [. . .] *Il avait presque des yeux de Nocif*!' [original emphasis] (120). This focus on seeing and the similarity found in eyes could be a suggestion that we should see humans and nature on the same, horizontal, plane of consciousness, and not separate or in a vertical, hierarchical relationship. In Buddhism, the Alaya transcends time and generations. The Malfini describes seeing his own Alaya during this spriralling as 'une ancestrale mémoire', and expresses that '[e]lle était faite de lumière et d'obscurité pleine, de mort sans fin et de vie éternelle, de tout le passé possible, de tout le présent, de tout le vivant' (120).

The spiral and a circling movement is symbolic of the many repetitive cycles of renewal found in nature. The opportunity for renewal demonstrated by the deconstruction of the spider's web by le Foufou and the repetitive action of rebuilding can be linked to the spiralling motion of le Foufou's flights up into the clouds. The spiral can also be linked to the repetition found in memory and to the repetitive *ritournelle* of the song that a young 'Nocif' girl sings while collecting water (43); a display that the Malfini compares to the child-like nature and happiness seen in the behaviour of le Foufou. The moment provides another example of le Foufou using *Relation* for self-development as he plays in the water to the sound of her song (44), showing a blurring of the lines between humanity and nature as they work together. Knepper has pointed out the symbolism of the spiralling movement in circles in Francophone Caribbean literature: 'For Glissant and Frankétienne, the circle represents the creative errance of the postcolonial world. In the world of the criss-crossing marvel, it is not surprising that the flight patterns of Chamoiseau's hummingbird and hawk should

embody this natural, intertextual, and scribal form.'[123] Rachel Douglas writes that Haitian writer Frankétienne's re-writing of his own work mirrors the spiralling literary aesthetic that can be found in his *œuvre*.[124] She analyses the re-writing of his work *Les Métamorphoses de l'Oiseau Schizophone* as a spiral movement and points to the spiral in the work as a site of repetition and dynamic openness and as a continuing cycle rather than a closed circle,[125] which she links to Glissant's concepts of *Chaos-monde*, linked to unpredictability, uncertainty and interactions, *Tout-Monde*, and *Relation*.[126] *Les neuf consciences* itself takes on a cyclical literary form as the opening footnote, indicating the beginning of a discourse by the Malfini to author-narrator Chamoiseau, is mirrored in the footnote at the end of the novel which marks the same moment of contact between the Malfini and Chamoiseau. This second footnote completes the one found at the beginning, and they wrap around the Malfini's narrative as if the narrative is a single moment in time — a single cry from the Malfini. The main section of narrative also takes place in a different literary space to the footnotes, which are written as the author's thoughts, allowing a sense of the Malfini's narrative continuing beyond the novel's written form.

Repetition is also central to the novel's resolution, in the action that le Foufou takes in relentlessly pollinating the flowers of the forest; this action is mimicked by the other creatures in the forest so that it becomes a collective repetitive action which aims to bring positive change. The sense of a collective pollinating mission strengthens after le Foufou's disappearance. At first there is a 'detresse collective' (219), which becomes a 'ferveur

[123] Knepper, *Patrick Chamoiseau: A Critical Introduction*, p. 280.
[124] Rachel Douglas, 'Eating His Words: An Aesthetic of Rewriting Exemplified in *Les Métamorphoses de l'Oiseau Schizophone*', *The Journal of Haitian Studies*, 14(1) (2008), 54-76 (p. 54).
[125] *Ibid*., 64.
[126] *Ibid*., 67.

collective' (220) and a reinvigoration of the pollination processes as 'une part consciente du quotidien' in Rabuchon, or as the Malfini now calls it, the '[j]ardin magique' (220). This seems to be a message from Chamoiseau to the reader that everyone can take daily local action, however seemingly insignificant, to reduce the impact of climate change at a global level. Knepper argues that this new effort to pollinate, after being inspired by le Foufou, sees the Malfini becoming a 'gardener', and '[t]his transformation of the world into a garden to be tended and inhabited rather than dominated can be seen as a counter-response to the conquest of the Caribbean and the transformation of it into an infernal new Eden of slavery and exploitation'.[127]

The Malfini appears to feel a calling to take le Foufou's place, now displaying a stronger sense of *Relation*, and comments that '[t]ous me regardaient comme le nouveau Guide' (219), and that he had become like 'un sage considérable ou une puissance inattaquable' (223). As Knepper points out, this sense of lineage, which replaces a vertical genealogy and is seen in Buddhist teaching, 'consists of a group of teachings and/or practices handed down from teachers to students; the latter eventually become teachers and sages in their own right'.[128] Knepper suggests that the narrative could be read as an allegorical representation of Chamoiseau's relationship with Glissant, possibly signalling Chamoiseau's later move towards more relational poetics in his writing. As she points out, the inspiration of Glissant's theories of *Tout-Monde* and *Relation* can be clearly seen in Chamoiseau's writing in *Les neuf consciences*, and his influence is visible in the character of le Foufou.[129] Caradec has also argued that there are clear links between le Foufou and Glissant through

[127] Knepper, *Patrick Chamoiseau: A Critical Introduction*, p. 276.
[128] *Ibid*., p. 280.
[129] *Ibid*.

the choice to name le Foufou *maître*: 'Sous la plume de Chamoiseau, ce terme [Maître] ne saurait passer inaperçu puisqu'il est précisément le titre qu'il réserve à son propre Maître, Édouard Glissant'.[130] Furthermore, linking the role of pollination in the novel and Glissant's influence on Chamoiseau, Kassab-Charfi has suggested that this action of repeated pollination is representative of 'la fertilisation des graines glissantiennes par l'active méditation et médiation de Chamoiseau'.[131] Knepper also convincingly argues that the Malfini is Chamoiseau's representation of himself as the voice of the Malfini and author-narrator are inseparable, and the Malfini learns from le Foufou how to live in terms of *Relation* and the 'horizontale plénitude'.[132] As there are two references to Aimé Césaire and Glissant at the beginning of the book signalling their influence on Chamoiseau's work,[133] the 'vieux guide' who appears briefly early in the novel could be representative of Césaire, who died in 2008, as the novel was being written. Therefore, it may be inferred that the rather cryptic *mort du vieux guide* section in the novel (65-68), as explored in terms of the representation of the spider trap earlier in this chapter, is representative of his passing.

Chamoiseau has recently written an essay on Glissant's influence, linking 'beauté' and *Relation*, in which he calls Glissant a 'butineur'.[134] Chamoiseau comments that he discovered Glissant's work shortly before he turned twenty and that for him, the concept of *Relation* is 'un "poécept", j'entends par-là "concept poétique", lieu de déflagration du rationnel et du sensible.' He adds that he belives it is 'la base la plus essentielle pour

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[130] Caradec, 'L'envol (en)chanteur du colibri', 91.
[131] Kassab-Charfi, 'Patrick Chamoiseau et la poétique', 27.
[132] Knepper, *Patrick Chamoiseau: A Critical Introduction*, p. 280.
[133] 'Édouard Glissant "*Rien n'est vrai, tout est vivant*"' (11); this phrase is also included after the end of the novel, in the Répétitions et gloses du Nocif (230-239), demonstrating once more Glissant's strong influence on the novel; and 'Aimé Césaire (*A propos du colibri*) "*Je me suis toujours étonné qu'un corps si frêle puisse supporter, sans éclater, le pas de charge d'un cœur qui bat*"' (11).
[134] Chamoiseau, 'Toute la beauté relationnelle du monde', 124.

envisager l'imprévisible et dynamique complexité du monde contemporain'.[135] He explains that after discovering Glissant he found his 'esthétique', his 'clé de divination, de chant et d'interprétation de moi-même et du monde', suggesting that the concept of *Relation* forms the basis of all of his work. Through the mention of 'chant', he also links *Les neuf consciences* to the creation of his 'esthétique' and projection of his self through his discovery of Glissant's work and his description of an 'awakening' after reading Glissant's novel *Malemort* mirrors the 'awakening' of the Malfini through his encounter with le Foufou in *Les neuf consciences*. Chamoiseau explains that he used the French language in his early writing in a way that excluded Creole, which he describes as his 'langue matricelle'.[136] He writes that this approach to writing was 'mimétiquement césarienne',[137] and it isolated him from the decolonial deconstruction and reconstruction, and the progress of neoliberal capitalist globalisation, of the world around him. He describes his reading of *Malemort* as a 'shock' and an 'epiphany',[138] which, I would argue, is reminiscent of the *hinnk* sound connected to the Malfini's awakening.

A Shift in Perception: Visibility

Just as the novel's interest in Buddhism is orchestrated to bring about a shift in consciousness, there is also an accompanying shift in perception. Verbs of sight are used often in the novel by Chamoiseau, and the repetition of 'je vis' at the beginning provides as sense of movement as the Malfini flies around the forest in addition to establishing that we

[135] *Ibid*.
[136] *Ibid*.
[137] *Ibid*.
[138] *Ibid*.

are seeing the narrative through the Malfini's eyes. In realising that he had not noticed the hummingbirds before, the Malfini remarks that 'j'avais toujours été une manière d'aveugle' (27). This shift from being blind to seeing coincides with 'discovering' the birds for the first time, and this progresses from seeing to understanding later in the novel as the Mafini explores the changing forest, and wider world, alongside le Foufou. Here, vision takes the form of le Foufou looking closely and noticing small details, something which the Malfini tries to do, and which creates a state of meditation. The encounter the Malfini has with le Foufou alters the way he sees and thinks: 'En fait, je savais voir, il me fallut apprendre à regarder... Je savais prendre, il me fallut consentir à me laisser surprendre...' (28), and the Malfini starts to notice more detail in the world around him: 'Je scrutai les ravines comme jamais auparavant. J'examinai les écorces et les feuilles, ces têtes vives que les plantes présentaient au soleil. Je fixai les herbes, les trous de terre, les roches. Je m'astreignis même à contempler les immobilités' (28). This encounter moves beyond an allegorical representation of coloniser and colonised to demonstrate the relationship between humanity and nature. Chamoiseau encourages the reader to look closely at the small details in nature, and he appears to argue that this can change the way in which we see the world, in a positive and eco-conscious way.

Through the Malfini's gaze, Chamoiseau encourages the reader to learn more about their surrounding environment and the use of sight verbs encourages the reader to 'read' the environment with a new intensity. Kullberg highlights the importance of the Malfini's gaze in the novel, to such an extent that: '[the] plot seems secondary; the core of the novel is localized to the Malfini's gaze and his readings of the birds and the forest of Rabuchon in the heart of Martinique. The descriptive gaze and not the narrative voice holds this novel

together.'[139] This idea of sight and seeing can also be linked to the *Éloge de la Créolité*, as the authors are asking to be seen, and there are many examples of verbs of sight within key phrases in the manifesto, for example the idea of interior vision linked to the child's gaze mentioned earlier in the chapter: 'Ouvrir les yeux sur soi-même à la manière des régionalistes ne suffisait pas […] Il fallait nous laver les yeux: retourner la vision que nous avions de notre réalité pour en surprendre la vrai. Un regard neuf'.[140] *Les neuf consciences* and, as seen in chapter six, 'Le Diamant' develop this as they can both be read as a demand for all living things to be noticed and seen in a way that they have not been before, with a focus on internalisation and meditation.

Kullberg has explored how the notion of visibility develops between *Éloge de la Créolité* and *Les neuf consciences* in her 2018 article. She points out that *Éloge* is filled with verbs of sight such as 'voir' and 'regarder', and nouns such as 'vue' and 'vision intérieure', arguing that 'questions of seeing and being seen, of what is visible and what is not, govern this manifesto.'[141] She argues that:

> Chamoiseau uses the regime of visibility to establish a relational conception of identity. But it is important to note that the way relationality operates here departs from Glissant's concept of relation as a form of contact, linguistic or phenomenological, that operates beyond and in spite of comprehension. In Chamoiseau's novel relational identity starts with observation, which leads to interpretation, which ultimately allows the observer to transcend his current identity.[142]

Two types of *Relation* appear to structure the novel — both a Glissantian *Relation* represented by le Foufou's contacts with others through actions and listening, which so

[139] Kullberg, '*Créolité* and the Regime of Visibility', 121.
[140] Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité,* pp. 23-24.
[141] Kullberg '*Créolité* and the Regime of Visibility', 116.
[142] *Ibid*., 124.

deeply inspires the Malfini, and also a connection between the Malfini and his future/past self, based on the awakening of a self-awareness through the observation of le Foufou and an exploration of the self through the 'Other' (le Foufou)'s eyes, as Kullberg describes here and which aligns the novel with Buddhism.

In interviews, Chamoiseau is often asked about his views on politics and the environmental crisis. De Vriese in particular links Chamoiseau's novels and ecocriticism with the 'real-world' issues that are represented in his novels L*es neuf consciences*, *Texaco, Biblique, Papillon et la lumière* and *L'Empreinte à Crusoé*.[143] He asks Chamoiseau whether he considers that an ecological consciousness (understood here as a respect for the natural world and a feeling of being engaged with, and part of, nature) is key in many of his novels, not just *Les neuf consciences,* which has been presented as 'une fable "qui s'empare de la conscience écologique".'[144] The author responds that ecological consciousness is a key part of 'haute conscience', which is about, and connects, the complexities of the entire world, how identity is formed, and how cultures respond to each other, and he points out that this idea is present in all of his novels in some form or another, confirming that ecological consciousness is a key part of this, with its potential to remind us that everything has its place, that change is permanent, and that renewal is essential.

Nickels has linked the collective group formed in the novel during the effort to pollinate, based on an 'auto-mimesis', to the sense of a collective that was formed in the region around 2009, pointing out that *Les neuf consciences* was written 'during the period of strikes, factory occupations, and heightened political focus that anticipated the 2009

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[143] Chamoiseau and De Vriese, 'L'écriture de la nature'.
[144] *Ibid.*, 128.

General Strike'.[145] He posits that the novel's characters 'encode overlapping subject-positions and modes of self-perception that belong to the Martinican population' — the French imperialist state (Malfini), state actors/bureaucrats who '[govern] in the name of this imperial power' (Colibri) and the marginalised, living 'in a desolate corner of Rabuchon' (le Foufou).[146] He argues that le Foufou represents 'a vision of political agency' as he does not place himself at the centre of a leadership structure, instead leading by example to encourage collective action. He also argues that the nonstate power represented by le Foufou is linked by Chamoiseau to the current struggle against French neo-colonialism through his choice of a hummingbird as this character, pointing out that Aimé Césaire and René Ménil have previously linked the hummingbird to *marronnage*. Thus, he argues, 'Chamoiseau's image of an unpredictable, leaderless, nonstate combatant is meant to evoke the forms of networked anti-neocolonial resistance embodied in the 2009 General Strike'.[147] He comments that during the strike, the Guadeloupean-based collective LKP (*Liyannaj Kont Pwofitasyon*, or *Collectif contre l'exploitation outrancière* in French) sought to encourage the population to work as a collective, despite differing political opinions about independence, in order to prosper, and they proclaimed the importance of all sectors of society as being capable of horizontal, that is to say nonstate, co-ordination and of self-governance.[148] Thus if the novel can be read as both allegorical of a collective non-state effort against neo-colonialism on a local stage, and in an ecoliteral way in terms of global anthropogenic change, it seems that Chamoiseau is suggesting nature as a source of inspiration on how to

[145] Nickels, *World Literature and the Geographies of Resistance*, p. 73.
[146] *Ibid*., pp. 75-76.
[147] *Ibid*., p. 77.
[148] *Ibid*., pp. 80-81.

mobilise in terms of a struggle against neo-colonialism that is affecting both humanity and nature.

Conclusion

Desmaret comments that Chamoiseau 'se situe de loin, de haut, comme le Malfini' and 'butine la poussière d'or, comme le colibri.'[149] He takes inspiration from imagining a hawk's lived experience, and he uses this imaginary in his narrative to inspire and educate readers to think in the same ecological relational way. In a 2009 interview he pointed to his inspiration behind the novel and choice of birds as narrative voices:

> J'ai toujours été fasciné par le colibri et, comme très souvent en ce qui concerne la nature antillaise, c'est un vers de Césaire qui m'avait préparé à découvrir cette incroyable créature [...] J'avais déclamé la chose durant des années, jusqu'à me retrouver un jour en face d'un colibri, immobile dans le vent, dégageant une énergie impensable dans une virgule d'existence. Je n'avais même pas encore vingt ans, mais on peut dire que ce roman a commencé dès cet instant.[150]

This demonstrates that it is the hummingbird, as a representation of something previously unseen or too small to have been noticed, that is central to Chamoiseau's own awakening to a new understanding of reality which underpins his later development of the concept of 'horizontale plénitude du vivant'.

He wrote 'Le Diamant' several years after *Les neuf consciences,* and as chapter six demonstrates, the essay contains many similar descriptions of nature, particularly long lists of living beings and environmental changes, and the same messages that we need to take a

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[149] Desmaret, 'Phénoménologie et esthésie', 25.

[150] Valérie Marin la Meslée, 'Chamoiseau: "cet esprit colonial qui subsiste"', *Le Point* (2 April 2009), <https://www.lepoint.fr/debats/chamoiseau-cet-esprit-colonial-qui-subsiste-02-04-2009-331635_2.php> [accessed 11 March 2022].

more considered and detailed look at nature, appreciate all of the under-appreciated and delicate ecosystems of the world, and understand the history and future of the land alongside the present. In addition, *Les neuf consciences* makes it clear that Chamoiseau is arguing that *Relation* and horizontal contact between the living are more important concepts than defining and differentiating; le Foufou's power and energy comes from the interactions that take place between himself and others.

Another message in the novel is that we all need to do what we can, like the creatures of Rabuchon with their pollination, to help our local environment and small actions can achieve global impact. The departure from a discourse identifying who is responsible for damage in *Texaco* to a more collective local responsibility for change in *Les neuf consciences* could be read as surprising. However, Chamoiseau seems to suggest that local preservation and restoration is a collective responsibility but that on the global stage listening to others beyond our own borders will be essential to gain a whole picture of what is happening to the planet. What is clear is that both approaches matter in different ways, and through Chamoiseau's le Foufou the reader learns of different approaches to both the environment and other animals around them.

As the analysis above has demonstrated, Chamoiseau does not explicitly name the threats faced locally and globally in this novel, nor during wider public engagement. As we have seen, the author's own argument is that this is deliberate because he sees himself as a poet whose role is to awaken others. However, it is also notable that this exposes a gap between fiction/art and reality. The same could be argued for Chamoiseau's more political work, such as *Manifeste*. As Hardwick has pointed out, 'the text fails to offer any concrete,

specific advice', and '[t]he serious ecological issues raised by the kepone (chlordecone) pollution scandal go unaddressed'.[151] Furthermore, a search in December 2021 of his Twitter account, which Chamoiseau uses regularly to promote ecological and humanitarian awareness, shows he does not reference *chlordécone* or sargassum directly.[152] However, in an interview in which he is asked if the destruction of the Rabuchon fauna is linked to *chlordécone*, he responds that he believes that 'dans tous les territoires du monde vous aurez une catastrophe écologique insidieuse, sous une forme quelconque' and goes on to acknowledge that for the French Antilles, this ecological disaster has been caused by 'la molécule du chlordécone'.[153] He argues that the story transcends all reality and is primarily preoccupied with decrying a way of being human which has for so long been vertical, and which is over; most important for the author is his message that 'la porte de l'horizontale plénitude du vivant est ouverte.'[154]

While Chamoiseau does not explicitly name environmental problems or make specific recommendations for solutions to them in the novel, the bird's-eye view that he has presented gives a new perspective on these issues, emphasising a need to develop a more effective way for humans to read and understand the landscape which they inhabit. The novel also points readers away from an internalised view — whether that is internal in terms of their own mind or internal in terms of their immediate environment — and towards the external, in a more relational way. The novel presents a new reality to the reader and proposes an exploration of their own and the 'Other's' consciousness(es) as they read the

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[151] Hardwick, 'Towards Biopolitical Ecocriticism', 378.
[152] Chamoiseau (@PCHAMOISEAU), <https://twitter.com/PCHAMOISEAU> [accessed 2 February 2022].
[153] Chamoiseau and De Vriese, 'L'écriture de la nature', 129.
[154] *Ibid*.

pages that effectively trace the bird's eye view of the Rabuchon forest of Martinique, and beyond.

CHAPTER FIVE

REBELLION AND RAPPROCHEMENT IN MARYSE CONDÉ'S *METS ET MERVEILLES AND VICTOIRE: LES SAVEURS ET LES MOTS*

Food as a tool for power, especially in a (post)colonial context, has already been explored in this thesis, particularly regarding the reasons given to justify the initial conquest of the Caribbean, the calculated exploitation of the land for food exports — which went hand-in-hand with human exploitation through enslavement — through to the post-colonial era and the continued dependence of Martinique and Guadeloupe on the metropole for food. However, food also has the power to unite and provide hope for the future. Previous chapters have examined forms of domination of the land under colonialism, and in the post-colonial era. Through this lens, the land often emerges as damaged, and even de-natured, and all human relationships with the land are similarly complicated and tarnished. In this chapter, food provides a different angle through which to analyse issues relating to the land. It offers the potential for reconciliation and rapprochement, by emphasising the land's fertile and nutrient-producing potential — even in the dominated lands of the Caribbean — thus repositioning the land as a nurturing force and as the fundamental source of human sustenance.

This chapter focuses on Condé to explore how her work on what Cope has termed 'culinary reconciliation',[1] in terms of a scene in *Victoire les saveurs et les mots*[2] (discussed in detail later), can be productively read with reference to ecocritical studies and the wider environmental debate. Through close examination of Condé's *Victoire* and *Mets et merveilles*,[3] with a particular focus on the origins of dishes, what emerges is Condé's clear conviction that cooking — and culinary practices as an artform, a form of creative self-expression — relates directly to identity, both as a creative practice and as a postcolonial metaphor. Like Caribbean food, Caribbean culture is shown to have adapted to accommodate multiple 'external' and indigenous aspects; and Condé appears to argue that both food and wider Caribbean culture are all the richer for this. Under colonialism, a Caribbean culture was constructed from a complicated, fragmented patchwork of international influences, anchored around the exploitation of food and human resources, for 'consumption' (metaphorically and physically). In a continuation of this line of argument, it could be argued that the dishes so meticulously described in Condé's *Mets* are also original international fragmented constructions, packaged in such a way as to be consumed by 'external' readers.

The chapter also explores the role of rebellion and the debate around Condé's 'literary cannibalism', and situates her work in relation to ecofeminism. While the majority of research on Condé's work has tended to focus on identity, exile, and migration,[4]

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[1] Cope, *The Pen and the Pan,* p. 194.

[2] Referred to hereafter as *Victoire*, with references given using paratheses in the main body of chapter, for example as (*V*: 1).

[3] Referred to hereafter as *Mets*, with references given using paratheses in the main body of chapter, for example as (*M*: 1).

[4] For example: Ghinelli, *Archipels littéraires*; Fulton, *Signs of Dissent;* Johnson 'Departures and Arrivals'; Hardwick, *Childhood*; and Thomas, *Connecting Histories*. Condé has also given numerous interviews, for

Traversée de la Mangrove has received ecocritical attention from Chamoiseau (1991),[5] Gaensbauer (2004),[6] Annie Rehill (2013),[7] and Kullberg (2015).[8] Limited research currently exists on *Mets*: to date, I have identified an overview by Elena Fermi (2016),[9] a discussion of one chapter by Bénédicte Boisseron (2018),[10] and an article on food in *Mets* by Béatrice N'Guessan Larroux (2019).[11] However, none of the existing studies run beyond a few pages; nor do the researchers position their studies as aligned with ecocritical research. In terms of *Victoire*, Thomas undertakes an in-depth discussion of the role of cooking in the book in her article 'The Cook and the Writer',[12] focusing on its intergenerational aspect, and she analyses Condé's comparisons between cooking and creativity as expressions of social mobility. *Victoire* is also referenced in terms of comparing cooking to writing in a chapter entitled 'Kitchen Narrative' in Loichot's work on literary 'cannibals', *The Tropics Bite Back*. However, *Victoire* is only covered in two paragraphs, and is used by Loichot to provide a comparison to Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994) and 'Women like us' in *Krik? Krak!* (1996), in a discussion of the role of cooking as a tool for intergenerational connection.[13] This

example: VèVè A. Clark, Maryse Condé, and Cecile Daheny, '"Je Me Suis Réconciliée Avec Mon Île": Une Interview de Maryse Condé', *Callaloo,* 38 (1989), 86-132; Françoise Pfaff, *Conversations with Maryse Condé,* and *Nouveaux entretiens avec Maryse Condé*; Fulton, '"Respecter l'étrangeté de l'autre"'; Hardwick, '"J'ai toujours été"' ; and Peter Jordens, 'Interview with Maryse Condé About "Le fabuleux et triste destin d'ivan et d'ivana"', *Repeating Islands,* <https://repeatingislands.com/2019/06/04/interview-with-maryse-Condé-about-le-fabuleux-et-triste-destin-divan-et-divana/> [accessed 4 December 2019].

[5] Chamoiseau, 'Reflections on Maryse Condé's *Traversée*'.

[6] Gaensbauer, 'Reconfiguring Boundaries'.

[7] Annie Rehill, 'Perspective éco-critique: La nature dans trois romans de Roumain, Zobel et Condé', *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, 16(1) (2013), 135-150.

[8] Kullberg, 'L'écriture arborescente de la Caraïbe'.

[9] Elena Fermi, 'Maryse Condé, *Mets et merveilles'*, *Studi Francesi*, 180(LX | III) (2016), 578, <http://journals.openedition.org/studifrancesi/5462> [accessed 22 November 2019].

[10] Bénédicte Boisseron, '"L'Amérique, je veux l'avoir et je l'aurai". Un regard afro-américain sur *Mets et merveilles*', in *Sans fards, mélanges en l'honneur de Maryse Condé*, ed. by Laura Carvigan-Cassin (Pointe-à-Pitre: Presses universitaires des Antilles, 2019), pp. 109-122.

[11] Béatrice N'Guessan Larroux, 'Mets et merveilles littéraires de Maryse Condé', *Elfe* XX-XXI, 7() (2019) <https://doi.org/10.4000/elfe.345>.

[12] Thomas, 'The Cook and the Writer'.

[13] Loichot, *The Tropics Bite Back*.

chapter aims to move the scholarly understanding of *Mets* and *Victoire* forward, by providing the first in-depth ecocritical and comparative analysis of both texts.

As Fermi has described*, Mets* is an '[a]utobiographie, récit de voyage, roman de formation et livre de cuisine à la fois', and can be read as a sequel to both *La Vie sans fards* (2012)[14] and *Victoire*.[15] It thus augments with Condé's earlier 1999 childhood memoir, *Le Cœur* (examined in chapter two). Felisa Vergara Reynolds analyses *La Vie sans fards* in relation to Aimé Césaire's *Cahier*, which she points out is explicitly referenced in the work, in order to demonstrate that Césaire's vision differs greatly from the reality of Condé's own '*retour au pays natal*'.[16] For Vergara Reynolds, *La Vie sans fards* 'harkens to an earlier period of her writing by highlighting the post-colonial reality of the 1960s', and indeed, that text discusses her life in Guinea, Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Senegal as a period of 'tremendous deprivation'.[17] The semi-autobiographical narrative of *Mets* moves beyond this sense of a 'return' to, or longing for, the African continent as it follows Condé in her culinary and intellectual wanderings around the world as her career progresses and she grows older. Maryann Tebben has argued that reading *Victoire* and *Mets* together 'undermines the idea that Condé translates her grandmother's edible creations into words in order to bring Victoire to the forefront' and that instead she 'inhabits Victoire to create a new platform for her culinary adventures'.[18] However, this chapter argues that although *Victoire* is a re-imagining of her grandmother's life and Condé uses the text to bridge a gap between herself

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[14] Maryse Condé, *La Vie sans fards* (Paris: JC Lattès, 2012).
[15] Fermi, 'Maryse Condé', 578.
[16] Felisa Vergara Reynolds, 'Maryse Condé's *La Vie sans fards*: Cahier d'un retour au pays natal?', *Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, 12.2/13.1 (2021/2022), 2-12 <http://sfps.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/12.2_13.1-online-1.pdf> [accessed 16 September 2022].
[17] Vergara Reynolds, 'Maryse Condé's *La Vie sans fards*', 2-3.
[18] Maryann Tebben, '"Mon callaloo": Maryse Condé Writing Herself as Female Cook', *Modern & Contemporary France*, 29(3) (2021), 281-299 (p. 284).

and Victoire which places emphasis on their similarities, there are clear differences between the two women in terms of education, culinary style, and political and social agency that are highlighted by Condé. From a comparative analysis, Victoire emerges at the forefront of *Victoire*, and Condé emerges at the forefront of *Mets*. Furthermore, as Mary Jane Green has commented, '[w]hile it is through her imagination that the narrator sees herself as connected to her grandmother, Condé alerts her wary readers to the fact that *Victoire* is also a work of historical research and reconstruction',[19] which is made clear in the dedication to prominent Guadeloupean historians and writers Raymond Boutin, Lucie Julia, Jean-Michel Renault, 'et tout particulièrement Jean-Pierre Sainton' (*V*: 9).

Mets comprises twenty short chapters,[20] without a contents page. Condé presents reflective prose alongside recipe details and lists, for example: 'Je melangai soigneusement l'eau, le lait concentré, la farine, la poudre de koko' (*M*: 21-22). As the narrative progresses, the reader is guided from Condé's childhood in Guadeloupe, to Africa, where she once believed — because of Césaire's *Négritude* — her roots must lie, then to metropolitan France, and then subsequently to England, Jamaica, India, Japan, USA, Cuba, Israel, South Africa, and Romania. At intervals, she returns to Guadeloupe and such chapters provide opportunities for reminiscence and often create intersections with her other semi-autobiographical works *Le Cœur* and *Victoire*. Half-way through *Mets*, she takes a therapeutic trip to her childhood home in Pointe-à-Pitre, where she faces 'les fantômes du passé', and she comments that she looked up tearily at the balcony (which appears in *Le Cœur*) that she would stand on as a child to watch Carnival and to observe the children with

[19] Mary Jane Green, 'Maryse Condé's *Victoire*: Thinking Back Through Her Mothers', *Nottingham French Studies*, 53(3) (2014), 297-313 (p. 301).
[20] There are two chapter thirteens, which will be explored later in this chapter.

whom she was forbidden to mix (*M*: 81), and another trip takes place toward the end of the book when she returns to sell this house (*M*: 313). *Mets* extends the arguments in *Victoire* about the possibility of considering cooking as a creative act equal to writing, which unites different cultures and generations. The link Condé forges between female generations is evident in both her narratives and in her dedications — *Victoire* is dedicated to her three daughters and two granddaughters (*V*: 9), and *Le Cœur* is dedicated to her mother.[21] *Mets* differs in this regard as it is dedicated to her husband Richard Philcox, who is also, famously, the translator of many of her works into English. As *Mets* progresses, there is a reflective tone which becomes more nostalgic as Condé faces the reality of becoming older and experiencing chronic ill health, and thus becoming unable to travel or write. Towards the end, the tone of *Mets* turns towards the changing landscape in terms of both the consumption of food and the destruction of the environment, mirroring changes that the author sees within herself.

In this chapter, the Caribbean landscape, and its consumption, is shown not as only a site of exploitation, but also as a site of reconciliation which has the potential to bring communities together to 'heal the wounds of history'. *Mets* and *Victoire* demonstrate how Condé's later work has become increasingly preoccupied with ecological issues, promoting a consideration of the self in relation to the connections found in nature. The use of food, as a way of consuming the natural environment, with a focus on the origins of crops and animals, as a reflection of how different environments and identities combine in the Francophone Caribbean will be explored as a postcolonial tool used by Condé. Condé favours a more personal, and immediate approach over the collective approach seen in Chamoiseau. She

[21] Condé, *Le Cœur*, p. 7.

positions the act of cooking as a site of reconciliation, using the origins of different dishes and ingredients to provide metaphors for the mixing and merging of cultures undertaken by an individual chef. The physical act of merging ingredients through cooking can be seen at multiple points in both *Mets* and *Victoire* to represent the way in which cultures have merged due to (post)colonialism and migration not only in the Francophone Caribbean but across the globe. Food can unite cultures, and *Mets* demonstrates a physical move away from Guadeloupe and towards appreciating other cultures through the acts of travelling and learning about different cuisines, as well as reflecting on how Condé aims to inspire similar patterns of discovery and cultural openness in her readers.

Cooking as Rebellion

Before exploring cooking as a site of reconciliation, it is necessary to investigate Condé's relationship to cooking as a tool for rebellion, which was explored briefly in chapter two. Despite her assertion in *Mets* that she does not understand where 'cette image d'écrivaine rebelle, nomade, inconvenante' comes from, and her claim that she exposes 'seulement ma vérité' (*M*: 255), her literary style and persona thrives on rebellion against prescribed notions of identity, something she equates with both her writing and her cooking. In her original volume of interviews with Françoise Pfaff, Condé comments that a Caribbean identity cannot be reproduced like a recipe, and that there are several different ways to be Caribbean,[22] linking her rebellious identity to rebellion in her cooking. This style is evident from the beginning of *Mets* — one of the first dishes mentioned is also one of the earliest dishes that

[22] Maryse Condé and Françoise Pfaff, *Conversations with Maryse Condé* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996) p. 133.

she ever cooks, aged fifteen: 'un colombo de cabri, le plat national que nous ont légué les Indiens' (*M*: 23). The Colombo instantly encapsulates the complexity of Francophone Caribbean cooking — at once 'emblematic' as 'le plat national', and as 'Other' due to its heritage from the Indian subcontinent, and a reminder of the cultural legacy of indentured labour which is an ongoing area of 'devoir de mémoire' in the Antilles.[23]

However, in typical Condéan style, the adolescent narrator Maryse is figured as rebellious — and chastised by others as such — when she decides to adapt the dish by adding cinnamon. This draws the approbation of Adélia, a family servant, who simply tells Maryse that this is wrong. The narrator compares Adélia to her own mother, and the maternal figure in Condé's autobiographical writing tends to be associated with refusals, interdictions, and punishments. The incident leads her to pose one of her characteristically blunt questions — via the narrator in the metanarrative, rather than by her adolescent self: 'Qui a décidé cela?' (*M*: 24), which echoes the similarly provocative questions that close each chapter of *Le Cœur*. From the outset, Maryse's rebellious instincts are central to the narrative as she goes on to declare: 'Je n'avais aucun goût pour les plats traditionnels dont les recettes immuables semblent provenir de textes sacrés légués par nos ancêtres. J'aimais créer, inventer' (*M*: 24). This manner of questioning who decides what can and cannot go into a dish, and her conviction that this should be able to evolve over time, rather than remaining a static, un-touchable and predictable formula, draws an immediate comparison with Condé's own life and literary work, and her stance against the *Créolité* movement.

[23] In October 2012, the *Parc Naturel Regional de la Martinique* participated in the *Semaine nationale du goût*, organised by the *Office du Tourisme du Morne-Rouge* and local schools, which aimed to teach students about 'Creole' cuisine and the ingredients and preparation of the national dish 'Colombo de cabri', which is evocative of this scene in *Mets.* See: Parc Natural Régional de la Martinique, *Éducation à l'Environnement* (n.d), <http://pnr-martinique.com/habiter/education-a-lenvironnement/> [accessed 29 July 2022].

Again, she compares the written word to cooking directly, to argue that both are acts with the potential to perplex, due to the tendency to overzealously codify and prescribe what constitutes a 'recipe' — and she is inviting her readers to explore cuisine as a form of postcolonial discourse. In addition, her comment 'nos ancêtres' in reference to 'les Indiens' who 'gave' the Colombo curry dish to the region, highlights her belief that the region's Indian indentured labourers should be firmly accepted as an integral part of a Caribbean (culinary) identity — although their more general cultural integration has been far more problematic, as her works often explore. For example, in *Traversée de la mangrove*, she positions the most influential family in the novel as descendants of Indian indentured labourers, and similar themes emerge in *Mets* in the chapter 'Dal is Dal'. Moreover, the cinnamon that she adds originates from Sri Lanka, again inviting her gesture to be read, in a wider global framework, as not culturally inappropriate.

The choice of ingredients for this Colombo dish represents three different influences on French Creole identity in Martinique and Guadeloupe: 'la viande de porc, de la chair de crabe de terre et des pousses d'épinards' (*M*: 24) which each represent European, Amerindian, and Indian influences. The inclusion of pork highlights the European migration of farm animals during the initial colonisation, particularly pigs which were one of the most destructive to the native environment.[24] The *crabe de terre*, or blue land crab, is an animal native to the region's coast and the Amerindian diet; and spinach is native to central and western Asia, representing another potential link to indentured labourers. It seems highly likely that Condé has deliberately chosen these three ingredients to underscore important and varied influences on the Caribbean, in a tangible demonstration of how they can be

[24] Paravisini-Gebert, 'Food, Biodiversity, Extinctions', 23.

mixed to create something new, something Creole; an original creation with which she firmly identifies, as a positive and interesting creation, rather than a travesty that represents 'cette horrible mixture', as declared by Adélia (*M*: 24). Adélia's disgust foreshadows Maryse's rejection by her family, who also find her adapted Colombo unpalatable. Again, this sets up a central Condéan theme: her individual persistence in the face of wider disapprobation, as the narrator comments, with determination and resignation: 'je m'enhardissais' (*M*: 23). This rebellion in her cooking is a site of resistance against her own mother, Jeanne, who repeatedly tries to dissuade her from cooking in both *Mets* and *Victoire*, arguing that '"[s]eules les personnes bêtes se passionnent pour la cuisine"' (*M*: 23). For the narrator, this comment is interpreted as a rejection of both her own identity and that of her grandmother Victoire, based on the assumption that cooking is an uncreative, meaningless job suited to those who are lacking in intellect.

Condé resists the rules of cooking that others uphold in the form of a recipe by disrupting culinary traditions through modifying and improvising. Fermi argues that in *Mets*, 'elle mène son enquête personnelle sur les plats qu'on peut y goûter et prend plaisir, une fois revenue chez elle, à les réinventer, les recréer car pour elle la cuisine est une zone franche dont les règles peuvent être réécrites'.[25] Condé certainly attempts to re-write the rules through her modifications: the narrator alters almost every dish she learns to cook, and this sparks her interest in cooking. Other examples of recipes she alters while learning to cook are the 'pudding de Noël', in which she replaces 'les raisins de Smyrne par des miettes de dates confites' (*M*: 32), the 'brandade de morue' in which she swaps potatoes for 'patates douces' (*M*: 21), and the 'flankoko', to which she adds rum (*M*: 22). In *Mets,* the constantly

[25] Fermi, 'Maryse Condé', 578.

changing and evolving identity, recipes, and landscapes as part of life, and, crucially, as a form of resistance, echo Glissant's theories of Caribbean identity such as *Antillanité* and *Relation*, in which he observes that relationships between all living things and places are constantly changing and evolving, allowing positive renewal.[26]

Towards the end of *Mets*, the narrator reflects on an early-career trip to Bermuda, and provocatively suggests that due to a lack of rebellion against colonialism, 'l'île ne semblait avoir rien inventé' (*M*: 374), apart from 'Bermudan' shorts. This statement intentionally evokes Aimé Césaire's defence of 'ceux qui n'ont jamais rien inventé' in *Cahier*,[27] and therefore Condé could be ironically referencing the exclusion of certain groups of people from history. Instead, she finds, Bermuda presents itself as a replica of American culture — Frank Sinatra, Clint Eastwood and 'hamburgers de la pire espèce' (*M*: 374). In the final chapter, after a trip to l'île Ouessant (Ushant), located off the coast of Brittany, she compares the two islands and concludes that 'il faut de l'oppression et donc de la rébellion pour créer une culture authentique' (*M*: 374). The use of the word 'authentique' here appears to refer to a culture that has resisted being 'consumed' by a dominant force, and to imply difference from, or an altered version of, any culture imposed by colonialism, as opposed to the definition of authenticity as being true to an original idea. This echoes Bhabha's theory of mimicry, which marks an important step to self-definition due to its ability to disrupt and therefore undermine colonial authority, as the 'Other' emerges as '*a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*' [original emphasis].[28] For Bhabha, both the existence and use of this difference is key as it highlights a humanity in the

[26] Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, and *Poétique de la Relation*.
[27] Césaire, *Cahier,* p. 47.
[28] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 86.

'Other' which undermines notions of European superiority, and presents a site for upward mobility, understood as a process that goes hand-in-hand with the gradual but unstoppable disruption of established colonial power hierarchies. This mimicry can be compared to Condé's own theory of literary cannibalism in which the coloniser's taught cultural tools are used and changed to benefit the 'colonised' and to reverse the consumption of the 'Other' by the (post)colonial power.[29] Condé discusses her theory in *Mets*, writing that it developed as a response to the literary exoticisation of the Caribbean, and is a technique in which she takes the best values from the colonial culture or literature and consumes/others them in her writing (*M*: 242). She explains this idea in detail and begins with a description of Brazilian modernist poet José Oswald de Andrade's 'Manifesto Antropófago' (1928),[30] which proposed that to overcome colonised inferiority it would be necessary to 'métaphoriquement imiter les Indiens tupi' (*M*: 241), who had (literally) consumed Portuguese Catholic priests who sought to convert them. Condé writes that the Tupi people 'se repaissaient surtout des parties nobles de leurs victimes, c'est-à-dire de celles qui pouvaient les rendre plus forts et plus intelligents: foie, cœur, cerveau', and points out that Oswald de Andrade argues '[d]'une manière similaire les colonisés devaient opérer un tri parmi les valeurs occidentales qui leur avaient été imposées. Ils devaient retenir seulement celles qui pouvaient conduire à leur enrichissement' (*M*: 241-242). This practice of metaphorical cannibalism in which the consumer retains only the best parts of a culture, or text, forms the basis of her theory, and she claims that her literary cannibalism results from

[29] For analysis of Literary Cannibalism, see Loichot's *The Tropics Bite Back*, and for an analysis of the concept focusing on *Mets*, see Bonnie Thomas' article 'Culture, Cuisine, and Cannibalism: Maryse Condé's *Mets et merveilles*' *The French Review*, 91(4) (2018), 71-82.

[30] José Oswald de Andrade, 'Manifesto Antropófago', *Revista de Antropofagia*, 1(1) (1928). In *Mets*, Condé incorrectly names this as *Manifesto Antropofágico*, and incorrectly states the work was published in 1924 (*M*: 241). In 1924, Oswalde de Andrade instead published *Manifesto Pau-Brasil*.

admiration, exemplified, for Condé, by her adaptation of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* into *La Migration de cœurs* (1995) (*M*: 315). According to Condé, one of her students, whom she names as Adoremus Bokandé, was strongly against her theory due to the negative connotations of the word cannibal in early colonial portrayals of African and Caribbean tribes (*M*: 243). In chapter thirteen, she directly discusses her theory of literary cannibalism, yet the following chapter is also numbered thirteen. This may be an editorial error, but the repetition is also possibly a deliberate choice by Condé as she seems to be questioning (re)presentation and the second chapter thirteen again engages with her literary cannibalism as she explains that Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was inspiration for *Célanire cou-coupé* (2000) and *Les belles ténébreuses* (2008) (*M*: 251-252). The title of *Célanire cou-coupé* also appears to take inspiration from Aimé Césaire's reference to Guillaume Apollinaire's 1913 surrealist poem 'Zone' at the end of his own poem 'Soleil cou-coupé' in *Cahier*, highlighting further literary cannibalism (although this is not discussed in the chapter). In the second chapter thirteen, Condé discusses fielding questions about her rebellious writing at a conference in Romania, and comments that she does not recognise herself in these descriptions, emphasising a certain distance between author and critic (*M*: 255). For Loichot, literary cannibalism is a metaphorical 'feasting on words' and 'the conscious effort of Caribbean writers to devour fragments of texts written mostly, but not only, by European or colonial writers,' in addition to '[an] act of ingestion, not to be confused with assimilation or plagiarism, […] driven by a violence that responds to revenge.'[31] Cope extends Condé's use of literary cannibalism to Victoire's role in *Victoire*, arguing that 'her cooking is exchangeable with her body, and we are shown how both her

[31] Loichot, *The Tropics Bite Back*, p. 180.

food and her body become fodder to satisfy the appetites of others.'[32] Therefore, 'when people are eating Victoire's cooking, they are eating not only her labour but her body — and, indeed, are consuming her, since cooking is her creative outlet. Her food metonymically stands in for her identity, her self'.[33]

Condé seems to suggest in *Mets* that oppression presents opportunities that would otherwise not exist, and that suffering can be reframed as a catalyst for human advancement and cultural development, thus, following Bhabha, giving powerful agency to those categorised as 'colonised'. Her argument that postcolonial oppression and rebellion leads to a new, disruptive type of authenticity can also be applied to her cooking, as she uses it alongside and via her literature to oppose cultural and societal 'norms' in relation to both identities imposed by colonialism and the preparing of food according to the prescribed written 'rules' of a recipe. As already seen in the analysis of *Chronique* in chapter two, the use of food to represent the power of postcolonial resistance through mimicry demonstrates how food can be representative of social mobility. Through the act of physically/chemically altering the produce of the natural environment through the cooking process, combined with her altering of the dish, it can be argued that the natural environment is doubly altered by Condé. Through rebellion against an established order, she transforms cooking into the re-production of the natural environment into a dish, thus into an authentic form of art. This is comparable to other postcolonial authors, such as Chamoiseau, who alter the re-production of their own identity markers, such as language, as a postcolonial tool for rebellion and authenticity.

[32] Cope, *The Pen and the Pan,* p. 179.
[33] *Ibid*., p. 180.

The linking of identity and cooking in *Victoire* and *Mets* highlights ways in which both can be considered 'higher' forms of artistic and cultural expression as Condé challenges the hierarchy imposed by her mother when she was a child, of French cooking and written language occupying a status above Creole cooking and oral language. Mets' *quatrième de couverture* describes the art of putting a meal together as analogous to the art of writing, and early on, she claims that '[c]uisiner est un art' (*M*: 49). As Loichot points out, in *Victoire* Condé demonstrates that 'cooking *is* writing' [my emphasis].[34] In the second volume of interviews with Pfaff, Condé comments that both *Victoire* and *Mets* 'ont essayé de prouver que la création est multiforme et qu'il n'y a pas de hiérarchie entre nourrir avec des mains et nourrir avec des mots, c'est le même effort.'[35] Indeed, Condé's adaptation of formulaic recipes throughout *Mets* can be discussed with reference to structures of language and the ways in which postcolonial writers alter colonial language usage in their writing. Fermi points out that in *Mets* 'Condé cherche à donner sa réponse à une question qui l'a tourmentée depuis son enfance: faut-il hiérarchiser la passion pour la littérature et celle pour la cuisine?'[36] This is resolved to some extent in the final chapter, when Condé discusses differences between the two and explains her preferences (explored later in this chapter).

Gender and Rebellion

This section will begin with a discussion of how feminism has been included in environmental debates. The term é*cofeminisme* was first introduced by Françoise

[34] Loichot, *The Tropics Bite Back,* p. 131.
[35] Françoise Pfaff, *Nouveaux entretiens avec Maryse Condé; écrivain et témoin de son temps* (Paris: Karthala, 2016), p. 74.
[36] Fermi, 'Maryse Condé'.

d'Eaubonne in 1974 in *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (part of a collection entitled *Femmes en movement*),[37] to describe the fight of women and nature against male domination as a consequence of patriarchy and capitalism. In later work, D'Eaubonne argues that '[l]e rapport de l'homme à la nature est plus que jamais, celui de l'homme à la femme.'[38] She states that the rise of patriarchy coincided with male discoveries of agricultural fertility and the role of man in human reproduction and that this led directly to two ecological disasters that now threaten the world: an exhaustion of natural resources and over-population. D'Eaubonne links the struggle for female liberation to ecological freedom through the reversal of patriarchy, a step she regards as necessary to protect the future of the world.[39] Greta Gaard, Simon C. Estok, and Serpil Oppermann argue that 'feminist ecocriticism opens up new ethical pathways to contest the sexist, racist, speciesist, ecophobic, classist, nationalist, and homophobic discourses of "nature," which have served to perpetuate gendered dualities and bodily boundaries.'[40]

According to Susan Buckingham, ecofeminism demands that 'women's equality should not be achieved at the expense of worsening the environment, and neither should environmental improvements be gained at the expense of women.'[41] Various strands of ecofeminism have emerged, as Buckingham observes, for example the essentialist argument that women are closer to nature due to their tendency to nurture life and therefore

[37] Françoise d'Eaubonne, *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (Paris: Pierre Horay Editions, 1974).
[38] Françoise d'Eaubonne, *Écologie/féminisme*: *Révolution ou mutation?* (Paris: Éditions ATP, 1978), p. 15.
[39] Françoise d'Eaubonne, 'Feminism-Ecology: Revolution or Mutation?', *Ethics and the Environment*, 4(2) (1999), 175-177.
[40] Greta Gaard, Simon C. Estok, and Serpil Oppermann, *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism*: *Making a Difference* (New York; Oxford: Routledge, 2013), p. 2.
[41] Susan Buckingham, 'Ecofeminism', *International Encyclopaedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences*, (2015), 845-850 (p. 845).

demonstrate the basis of an 'ethic of care' needed to stop environmental destruction. This, she writes, has been criticised for many reasons but mainly because of the relegation of women for centuries to the domestic sphere due to biology.[42] She also points to a second strand which focuses on a reasoning that women have been in more direct contact with nature due to the typical work they have historically done — cooking, collecting water, subsistence farming — and as these roles are often most obvious in more rural parts of the world, the exploitation of women is strongly linked to the exploitation of nature.[43] This focus on location is also evident in the argument that women in some parts of the world are disproportionately affected by climate change, yet tend to be less involved in decision-making regarding solutions to environmental problems, as pointed out by UK based organisation The Women's Environmental Network which estimates that 80% of people displaced by climate change are women.[44] The second strand that Buckingham highlights is evident in both *Mets* and *Victoire* in terms of the cooking that the protagonists Maryse and Victoire do. In contrast to other characters in both books, these women seem to be closer to nature in terms of their focus on the ingredients that go into their dishes and how these are blended. The work of both women in the kitchen is not described in terms of their domestic duties as related to their biology as women; the author instead chooses to compare cooking to writing to move away from domestic duties and to suggest that cooking is more than a means of nourishment, and it can be used as a powerful tool for expression.

In Guadeloupean culture, a woman's role in the creating and providing of food can be viewed as central to society and is celebrated at a national level in the annual *Fête des*

[42] Buckingham, 'Ecofeminism', 846.
[43] *Ibid*.
[44] Women's Environmental Network, *Our Work* (2023), <https://www.wen.org.uk/our-work/womens-climate-action/> [accessed 25 January 2023].

cuisinières celebrating St. Laurent, patron saint of female cooks in August. Brinda Mehta comments that the event celebrates women's creative role in the 'cross-cultural culinary mosaic' of Creole food.[45] In both *Victoire* and *Mets*, Condé attempts to dispel the international stereotype that domestic cooking for daily nourishment is a role exclusively for women, in opposition to a more creative and professional type of cooking, often led by men. This sense of a woman's role of nourishment is deep-rooted in history around the world but is particularly evident in postcolonial societies that have been presented as the child of the 'motherland'. Martinique and Guadeloupe were constructed in this image and France has been portrayed as a nourishing and protective *mère-patrie* despite the reality that colonisation and imperialism dominated and exploited both humans and the natural environment, limiting both nourishment and protection. Condé repeatedly challenges the subaltern status of the role of domestic cook, the role taken by her grandmother Victoire, as she refers to the constraints placed on women in a postcolonial context. Hardwick has pointed out that in *Le Cœur*, Condé explicitly calls her maternal grandmother (known as Elodie in that text) *subaltern*, arguing that Victoire has been written out of her daughter Jeanne's history, much as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has argued that the subaltern woman's voice is irretrievably excluded from history.[46] In 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' Spivak theorises the multiple and complex difficulties of any claims to access authentic female voices, and the difficulty of 'representing' the subaltern woman in postcolonial writing, due to a double subjugation which prevents such women from 'speaking'.[47] In acknowledging her grandmother's own marginal, subaltern status, and then attempting to give her a voice

[45] Brinda Mehta, *Notions of Identity, Diaspora, and Gender in Caribbean Women's Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 90.
[46] Hardwick, *Childhood,* p. 192.
[47] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak', *Die Philisophin*, 14(27) (1988), 42-58.

through fiction about her life and the creativity of her cooking, Condé is attempting to tackle the challenge of representation as defined by Spivak, and is at pains to highlight her grandmother's active and positive contribution to society, and indeed to history. Loichot has argued that Condé 'dismantles the opposition between "high" and "low" cultural forms of expression' and 'redefines her grandmother's craft as art, not as subservience' by placing writing and cooking alongside each other.[48] Furthermore, as Thomas argues, through religious references Victoire 'takes on a role of definitive influence',[49] and in this manner, Condé writes her grandmother into History with a capital H: 'Alors, elle dominait le monde. Pour un temps, elle devenait Dieu. Là aussi, comme un écrivain' (*V*: 123). These male-gendered and indeed sacrilegious references demonstrate that cooking gave Victoire a sense of dominance and power over her own creativity, in a society where being a poor, Black woman, and a servant and cook, meant she was viewed as possessing a lesser form of creativity, self-expression, and even humanity. Thomas has also pointed out that although both language and food have been used as a tool for colonial assimilation, food has also become a tool for Victoire's autonomy as she uses cooking as language and a form of expression and as a way to climb her social and family hierarchy.[50] This is then mirrored in the way in which Condé uses cooking to impress guests that she respects in *Mets.*

In *Victoire*, Condé explicitly uses a literary metaphor to comment that when living with her daughter Jeanne, Victoire found herself to be in the same position as she was at Anne-Marie's: 'la position d'un écrivain forcé d'honorer des commandes d'éditeur' (*M*: 240). In this manner, she is directly comparing Victoire's experience with her own lived experience

[48] Loichot, *The Tropics Bite Back*, pp. 91-92.
[49] Thomas, 'The Cook and the Writer', 9.
[50] *Ibid*., 5.

as a writer who must comply with her editor in order to be published. In the foreword to *Mets*, Condé discusses the inspiration behind writing the book, commenting that she wanted to produce a cookery book linked to cultural production just as Mary-Ann Caws, American author and professor at The City University of New York (CUNY) (Condé is an emeritus professor at another New York institution, Columbia), had achieved with *The Modern Art Cookbook*.[51] Caws' experimental book explores parallels between the art of cuisine and the visual and verbal arts, achieved through descriptions of how artists ate, cooked, and depicted food.[52]

While *Victoire* focuses on her grandmother's cooking, *Mets* provides a more detailed analysis of Condé's own relationship with the food she has cooked and consumed while studying, teaching, and writing in various locations around the world. Much as she feels constrained by the rules of cooking, in the first pages of *Mets*, Condé expresses her frustration with the 'rules' of Francophone writing — which she compares unfavourably with Anglophone publishers in the United States, such as those who approved *The Modern Art Cookbook* for publication. She explains that when she, alongside French chef Otis Lebert, presented a similar concept to her regular publishers, Robert Laffont, the idea was dismissed because, in the French publishers' eyes, cookbooks are a specific category which is seen as the specific territory of certain publishers. *Mets*, then, is from its outset positioned as a pioneering, interdisciplinary act of non-conformity and rebellion. Despite the fruits of this culinary obsession being published by JC Lattès (albeit in a different form from that originally

[51] Mary-Ann Caws, *The Modern Art Cookbook* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013).
[52] The structure of Caws' book and the aims of *Mets* can be compared to Michael W. Twitty's books *The Cooking Gene* (New York: Amistad, 2017), which traces the food of the Southern USA associated with the practice of slavery through his own ancestry,[52] and *Koshersoul* (New York: Amistad, 2022), which develops *The Cooking Gene* to include food associated with the Jewish diaspora.[52]

proposed by Condé, as it is not a collaboration with Lebert), this chronicle of initial rejection demonstrates what the author perceives to be the limitations of Francophone publishing; yet she also states that this rejection led her to reconsider the significance that cooking has had in her life, a theme to which she returns at the end of *Mets*.

Condé uses meals in *Mets*, and her detailed explanations of each dish, to invite the reader into the experience of preparing and consuming that meal, and to analyse different cultural and culinary traditions. The book then acts at one level as a recipe book (as she intended), and its great achievement is to make another dimension of cooking — the cultural dimension — truly visible. On the subject of creativity, once again comparing the cook to the writer, in *Victoire*, Condé discusses how her grandmother Victoire, who is working as a live-in maid/cook, regrets telling Anne-Marie, her white employer, the secrets of her 'compositions culinaires' because '[c]omme un écrivain dont l'éditeur décide du nom, de la couverture, des illustrations de l'ouvrage, c'était en partie se dessaisir de sa création', as Anne-Marie 'les baptise et les fasse imprimer' (*V*: 123). This culinary betrayal, which could be interpreted as an act of plagiarism, demonstrates the power that was taken from Victoire regarding her own creations and this dynamic is re-created in Condé's struggles to publish her creative culinary concept in the form of *Mets* as she had originally envisioned it.

It is not only (post)colonial constraints that Condé expresses in *Mets* and *Victoire*. She makes it clear that the act of cooking does not equate to the fact of conforming to gender stereotypes — it is not merely a matter or just feeding and pleasing her guests with food. She also sees the roles of cook and host as providing layers to her identity, and a chance to show that she can be both a nurturing cook and a feminist writer: 'Être excellente cuisinière

contribuait aussi pour moi à casser cette image d'intellectuelle, de militante et de féministe que l'on me colle trop aisément' (*M*: 12). This desire not to conform to any stereotypes fuels her passion for both writing and cooking. Yet in this work, she does not engage at length with cooking as an essential form of everyday caregiving — the kind of cooking traditionally associated with female roles — and occupies territory more often held by male chefs. However, she does depict an everyday form of cooking in *Victoire*, and in this sense her grandmother is the most rebellious character in terms of gender stereotypes as she turns 'everyday' cooking into a form of artistic expression despite the restrictions placed on her. The gendered role of cooking is mentioned by Condé at the beginning of *Mets* (*M*: 12-13), but although she repeatedly discusses her joy in pleasing others with her cooking at dinner parties, she does not seem to extend this via reflections on cooking for her own children and family as a form of 'everyday' cooking, therefore highlighting differences between herself and her grandmother.

In terms of her wider œuvre, Condé often refers to constraints and frameworks she feels are placed on her, and other women Francophone Caribbean writers, from within the literary circus itself, notably by the all-male créolistes. It is this restrictive framework, or 'order' that she discusses and derides in the early nineties, when the *Créolité* movement was in its heyday, in 'Order, Disorder',[53] and in her co-edited volume *Penser la créolité*,[54] which was discussed in chapter one. For Fulton, Condé argues for 'disorder' in the form of literary freedom for Caribbean writers, against the 'order' required to achieve political solidarity, as

[53] Condé, 'Order, Disorder'.
[54] Condé and Cottenet-Hage, *Penser la créolité.*

suggested by the créolistes.[55] Chamoiseau has praised Condé for including Creole words and phrases, some of which relate to the link between people and the environment, such as: ‘tired bodies roll like gum-trees, there are *soukougnans*, the forest is called *bois*’.[56] However, he argues that by using French words such as *Île* and *village* she is aiming her writing at people other than the Creole inhabitants of the French Caribbean, in part due to the use of footnotes to explain or translate terms. He asks: ‘How can we construct our own literature if we fail to speak profoundly to ourselves if, at the very moment of writing, we address another people, another culture, other needs?’.[57] Condé responded to Chamoiseau in her subsequent works and interviews, commenting that language is not the only signifier of culture,[58] and suggests in both *Mets* and *Victoire* that culture and identity are made of many components and survive, even thrive, when restrictions are imposed upon them. In a key moment in *Mets* while in Israel, Condé is asked about her writing style and why she does not write in Creole, responding via a refrain which she often utters: ‘je n’écris pas en français, je n’écris pas en créole, j’écris en Maryse Condé’ (*M*: 203), highlighting her rebellion against both French and the créolistes. Condé demonstrates that what is most important to her is a sense of belonging and a personal relationship to various aspects of her identity, including a connection to the land, with no regard for any rules which aim to dictate how that relationship should be expressed.

Rebellion and Reconciliation

[55] Fulton, *Signs of Dissent*, p. 2.
[56] Chamoiseau, ‘Reflections on Maryse Condé's *Traversée*’, 393.
[57] *Ibid*., 394.
[58] Hardwick, ‘“J’ai toujours été”’, 114.

In *Mets*, Maryse cooks for others in what is presented as a form of constructive rebellion which brings different people together, often with cultural and political implications. This contrasts with Victoire, who cooks for others as her job, and who is most often excluded from the table due to her social status and her lack of French. There is a pattern throughout *Mets* whereby Maryse cooks a meal to bring people together, especially when there is conflict or a lack of cohesion. This is particularly evident in the fourth chapter, when she travels back to Guadeloupe and cooks for her brother's family after being inspired by a module she taught at Paris VII, l'Université Paris Diderot, called 'ethno-cuisine' (also the chapter's title), in which she taught students about Guadeloupean food. During the course, she felt inspired to cook the dishes for her students, but without modifications, as she felt content and did not experience the need to rebel. Condé describes in detail what she taught on the experimental module, thereby educating the reader about food sources in Guadeloupe, although she mentions that it was challenging to teach as she was not the culinary expert she was assumed to be, and that she sourced much of her information from 'des ouvrages des voyageurs ou des missionaires' (*M*: 76). This episode highlights food as an evolving historical colonial system; moreover, it makes explicit that many of the trees and foods that are considered to be synonymous with the Caribbean were in fact imported during the colonial era. Here, she describes feeling as if she were taking apart the landscape and looking at it through a magnifying glass, which is reminiscent of an approach akin to ecoliteracy (explored in chapter six). In a list of 'espèces exogènes' that Condé created as preparation for teaching, she encourages her reader to 'read' the landscape and look at the history of food and its circulation as a colonial system. She mentions 'la canne à sucre', which was brought to the region from Cyprus and became the dominant crop in the region

and the crop associated with transatlantic slavery. She also discusses 'l'arbre à pain', which originates from Tahiti, and which was brought to the Caribbean to feed enslaved people,[59] and 'le cocotier', which originated in either Asia or South America. She also mentions 'manioc' (manihot esculenta) which Hardwick points out 'reveals two fascinating transnational phenomena'[60] — the circulation of Amerindian peoples as demonstrated by this staple food in their diet, and its connection to Africa (where it is now a staple crop) due to colonialism, as it was introduced to Africa from Portuguese colonies in Brazil.[61] Hardwick explains that manioc was a term imposed by the French and adapted from 'manioka', the term used by the Tupi people of Brazil[62] (serving as a reminder of the early French colonial *comptoirs* in Brazil), and that according to Breton's dictionary the crop was called 'kiére' by the Kalinago and Arawak peoples who inhabited Martinique at the time of conquest.[63] In *Le grand livre*, manioc is mentioned by Breuil as one of the 'plantes alimentaires' that were brought over to the Caribbean during Amerindian colonisation, along with pineapple as well as medicinal, sacred, and ornamental plants.[64] Condé's reflections on produce, tradition, the soil, and provenance all develop and complicate the question around which this chapter of *Mets* is framed: What makes a nation's cuisine 'authentic'? Condé's brief but detailed exploration of the origins of different ingredients associated with the Francophone Caribbean, such as sugarcane, highlights the complexity of any notions of 'authenticity'. In a typically self-critical reflective tone, Condé draws attention to (what she identifies as) the

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[59] Elizabeth DeLoughrey, 'Globalizing the Routes of Breadfruit and Other Bounties', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 8(3) (2007), <10.1353/cch.2008.0003>.
[60] Hardwick, *Joseph Zobel*, p. 130.
[61] *Ibid*., p. 131.
[62] The Tupi people are mentioned by Condé in the first chapter 13 of *Mets* in her discussion of literary cannibalism, as explored earlier in this chapter.
[63] Hardwick, *Joseph Zobel*, p. 131.
[64] Breuil, 'Les grands écosystèmes terrestres', 69.

shortcomings of her own teaching on 'authentic' 'ethno-cuisine', now daring to contradict her earlier self, with the benefit of hindsight and experience, to argue that her course, however well-intentioned and carefully researched, was not an accurate representation of consumption on the island; indeed, in her later years, she highlights the increasing use of fast-food and the effects of globalisation. This episode is reminiscent of her questioning how she perceives and presents Guadeloupe to others in *Le Cœur*, when she is asked to present a school project on an author from the region to the class and chooses Zobel. She reflects retrospectively here, as she does in *Mets*, that she had repackaged herself to please her teacher and classmates and emphasise stereotypes, when in reality her only experience of Creole and the cane fields at that age was through the eyes of a tourist.

The reflections on 'ethno-cuisine' also create a juxtaposition between 'authentic' food and fast-food when she attempts to prepare 'authentic' Guadeloupean food for her brother's family during a visit (*M*: 79-80). However, echoing her thoughts about the increasing use of fast-food, her meal is not well-received as the narrator notes that 'personne ne semblait avoir goût à mes compositions' (*M*: 80), and they preferred pizza which was now a staple part of their diet: 'Deux fois par jour pour nourrir toutes ces bouches ma belle-sœur commandait au Gargantua, un restaurant tout proche, des pizzas margarita' (*M*: 79). Here, her attempt to use food to bring people together fails, and Maryse's sister-in-law responds to her cooking with a list of 'interdits':

> Il ne fallait pas mélanger le sucre et le salé. Il ne fallait pas mélanger la viande et le poisson. Ni la viande et les crustacés. Le plantain ne se mangeait jamais vert ni les mangues. Le thon mêlé de curry était inconcevable. Il ne fallait pas mettre de tomates dans le court-bouillon de poisson, seulement de beurre rouge. Le coq au vin se préparait avec du vin et non avec du rhum vieux (*M*: 80).

This is reminiscent of the prohibitive and immutable culinary 'rules' she had been informed of by both her mother and Adélia earlier in her life.

Food as a tool of rapprochement and appeasement again fails Maryse early in *Mets* when she and Richard visit José, whom she knew while living in Paris. The narrator informs the reader that José is now part of the 'comité directeur de l'UPLG' (*Union populaire pour la libération de la Guadeloupe*) (M: 83), of which Maryse was also part, following her role in the AGEG (*Association générale des étudiants guadeloupéens*), while living in Paris. She appears to write positively about these political groups, expressing that at the time they gave her a sense of belonging and awakened her politically as she began to consider independence for Guadeloupe and Martinique as a viable option. She calls the islands *confettis* here, referring to the phrase *confettis d'empire*, used by Jean-Claude Guillebaud to describe the small (in terms of land mass, rather than populations) French 'regions' that remained attached to France following a decolonisation period for many French colonies.[65]

However, these culinary failures cause Maryse to feel excluded from the group and like an *étrangère* for not being authentically Guadeloupean enough, in their opinion (*M*: 84). This is ironic as the group reject her 'ethno-cuisine': 'le lambi mêlé à du haddock […] avec du cive et des petits oignons [sic]' in favour of pizza, which becomes a symbol of the globalised food market here for the author, writing that they are 'décidément fort appréciées dans le pays' (*M*: 84). José's main criticisms of Maryse were firstly that she spoke 'en français-

[65] The exact provenance of this infamous phrase, often used to describe the French Caribbean, is unclear. In *Narratives of the French Empire*: *Fiction, Nostalgia, and Imperial Rivalries, 1784 to the Present* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), Kate Marsh argued that although the phrase may have been inspired by the way in which Napoleon described the *Outre-mer*, as is commonly claimed, it also echoed a phrase used by Philippe Decraene to describe the 'vestiges of the French colonial presence in India as 'les ultimes confettis d'empire de Dupleix' (p. 10).

français et non en créole' (*M*: 84), which is interestingly the opposite of how Victoire was criticised for speaking Creole during a meal she prepared for those Jeanne respected in *Victoire* (*V*: 241-242). Secondly, he stated she should not be in a relationship with Richard due to the colour of his skin, as José' saw him as representative of, and responsible for, 'tous les crimes passés ou présents du colonialisme' (*M*: 84). This echoes binary sentiments that can be found in the *Négritude* movement, sentiments that are reductive and a form of what Jean-Paul Sartre termed 'racisme anti-raciste',[66] once again highlighting the irony of the political group's attitude, and the way in which their ideological extremism does not allow for the space of reconciliation that Condé's cooking and writing are working towards.

Mets and *Victoire* demonstrate Condé's linking of politics and cooking, as many political discussions take place around the dinner table. In *Victoire*, this highlights Victoire's lack of political awareness, and in *Mets* it demonstrates the author-narrator's growing political knowledge and evolving personal views. For Fulton, Condé's self-critique marks her work 'with a keen awareness of the political and theoretical discussions surrounding the artistic production of Francophone Caribbean writers'.[67] In 2004, Condé was invited by Jacques Chirac to serve as the first president of the *Comité pour la mémoire de l'esclavage* (CPME) when it was created on 5 January, following the recognition of slavery as a crime against humanity by 'la loi Taubira' promulgated on 10 May 2001. As Hardwick comments, when Condé was asked to present her role at the CPME for an article in the communist newspaper *L'Humanité*, she referenced moments in her own life, such as the scene with

[66] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Orphée noir' (preface), in Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française* (Paris, Presses universitaires de France: 1948), pp. ix-xliv (p. xiv).
[67] Fulton, *Signs of Dissent*, p. 2.

Anne-Marie in *Le Cœur* — which Hardwick theorises as the 'scene of recognition'.[68] Furthermore, the article's title itself, 'Parce que tu es une nègresse…',[69] is a direct reference to this moment in which Maryse is depicted as first becoming aware of racism and the slave history of her birthplace. In a 2015 interview, Condé discussed her role at the CPME as allowing her to raise the history of slavery with her own children, after she had initially repeated the same mistakes as her parents by avoiding direct discussion. A key feature of Hardwick's 'scene of recognition' is the parental failure to respond to the child's question: here, Condé acknowledges those uncomfortable silences, and promotes discussion in order to '[réparer] la chose bien mieux' than her parents, however late it was.[70] In *Victoire*, there is a likely allusion to Bhabha when the narrator calls La Pointe a 'société pointoise du mimétisme', which is itself an indicator of the author's position within United States academe at that time (*M*: 238); she also argues that '[s]i Fanon avait déjà écrit *Peau noire, masques blancs*, il aurait hautement apprécié les pages sur le complexe de lactification' (*M*: 223), in reference to the Grands Nègres, including her father Auguste. In *Le Cœur*, she also affirms her position vis-à-vis postcolonial theory, when she writes: 'J'étais "peau noire, masque blanc" et c'est pour moi que Frantz Fanon allait écrire'.[71]

Condé also passes comment on how power frameworks operate to promote European and male dominance: 'Sainte-Marie n'aurait été qu'un point de peu d'importance sur la carte du pays si la caravelle de Christophe Colomb n'y avait abordé en 1493'.[72] This is similar to Chamoiseau's comments on how the 'discovery' of the Americas has been

[68] Hardwick, *Childhood,* pp. 16-17.
[69] Maryse Condé, 'Parce que tu es une négresse', *L'Humanité*, (10 May 2006), <https://www.humanite.fr/parce-que-tu-es-une-negresse-349733> [accessed 30 June 2022].
[70] Rebut, 'Maryse Condé'.
[71] Condé*, Le Cœur,* p. 103.
[72] *Ibid*., p. 93.

recorded and taught, and education in the region has been dominated by European textbooks. However, in a further development, Condé has criticised the *Créolité* movement, and Chamoiseau himself, in a similar way for having prescribed notions of identity and for being male-dominated, as discussed previously. Her awareness of politics is in contrast to her grandmother Victoire, who, she writes, 'ignorait ce que signifiat les mots: "classe", "exploiteurs". À ses yeux, les Walberg n'etaient pas des ennemis […] ils s'etaient toujours comportés comme de bons maîtres' (*M*: 233). Using the word 'maîtres' here alone shows Victoire's naivety as this loaded term highlights the continued ethnoclass heirarchies that exist long after the abolition of slavery.

The third time in this chapter that Condé uses cooking to impress others, bring people together, and generate a sense of belonging is during her stay with Michelle, the daughter of Adélia (Maryse's mother's former servant), while visiting Marie-Galante. This is a more positive experience for the narrator and this time does not end in disappointment, although it is noted that this time, 'j'avais mis une sourdine à ma rage de créativité' (*M*: 88). This pattern of cooking to please others despite potential mixed reactions makes it clear that cooking is used by the narrator as a tool for longed-for immediate approval, in contrast to the act of writing for approval as written text is consumed slowly and often anonymously by readers. In a recent interview with Marine Rebut, she explains that *Mets* was written to show the 'softer' and later years of her life, in which cooking became central and was a tool for pleasing others, particularly her children and grandchildren.[73]

Michelle tells Maryse that she now runs her mother's old restaurant but that because '[l]a société a beaucoup changé', she has turned it into a pizza restaurant, arguing that this is

[73] Rebut, 'Maryse Condé'.

the food that the region wants: ‘C’est ce que les gens aiment à present’ (*M*: 88). Linking cooking to gender, Michelle argues that women now work outside the home and have no time to cook for their family and so convenience makes life easier, but ‘[q]uand elles veulent de plats guadeloupéens elles vont au supermarché acheter du boudin, de la chiquetaille de morue en pots et de la pâte surgelée pour accras ou dwombes’ (*M*: 88). Here, again women are being criticised for using convenience food or lacking culinary knowledge without mention of the male figures in the family and their role in providing food. While Condé uses both *Mets* and *Victoire* to highlight that women can use food as a form of expression, as Victoire did, in order to move beyond gender and social stereotypes associated with cooking, there is a lack of discussion around how home-cooking fits into this and instead we find criticisms of women who do not seem to be fitting into the stereotypical roles that Condé claims to be trying to break down in the two works.

Changing Landscape, Culture, and Food

Musing on the noticeable increase in pizza consumption as a symbol of culinary change in the region, in *Mets* the narrator states in a tone of consternation, mingled with humour: ‘Le pays changeait constamment. Il fallait suivre son évolution, le comprendre et en anticiper les conséquences. En un mot il fallait résoudre le mystère de la suprématie des pizzas margarita’ (*M*: 90). Benjamin Poole has analysed the way in which the rise of fast-food in France is often given as an example of the ‘Americanisation’ of French society as a myth, writing that French

gastronomy is itself complicit in the 'transnational process' of fast-food development.[74] He writes that this began with Jacques Borel's 'food-service empire' in 1960s Paris,[75] and that the Americanisation represented by this food type was simply a branding tool, and a means to provide exoticism, to 'consume it *without* identifying with it' [original emphasis].[76] However, Poole acknowledges that while the extent of 'Americanisation' is a myth, that is not to deny that patterns of mass consumption and production of ideas, products, and capital did originate in the United States.[77]

A shift from fresh home cooking, which the family experienced growing up in Guadeloupe, to convenience food is also criticised in *Mets*. When Maryse is studying in Paris, she comments that one of her sisters feeds her baby with 'des petits pots' which had just started to appear in pharmacies and supermarkets (*M*: 29), while her husband chooses to eat hot roast chicken bought from a nearby shop. Condé comments on the shop's name, 'traiteur', as appropriate, suggesting she disapproves of these forms of convenience food. Later in this paragraph, she explicitly connects her brother-in-law's cheating with a lack of home-cooking, and compares his lover, 'une blondinette fadasse' (*M*: 29) to French food: 'Moi, je compris qu'il avait cédé à la séduction de la cuisine française' (*M*: 30). Here, Condé seems to be contradicting her feminist stance, suggesting that the role of cooking is a female duty to satisfy men. However, I would argue that she is once again provoking her reader and presenting the episode ironically to criticise her brother-in-law, and to highlight the need to challenge this stereotype and the replacement of 'home cooked' Guadeloupean food with

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[74] Benjamin Poole, 'French Fast Food and the Myth of Americanisation', *Modern and Contemporary France*, 28(2) (2020), 141-156 (p. 142).
[75] *Ibid*., 144.
[76] *Ibid*., 151.
[77] *Ibid*., 142.

both convenience food and 'French' food. Condé also criticises her brother and sister-in-law's over-reliance on fast food and 'des pizzas margarita', as discussed above (*M*: 79), therefore this criticism does not seem to be exclusively aimed at her female siblings, yet she does not appear to offer much sympathy for their situations either, contradicting the extent to which her work brings about culinary reconciliation. Her sisters' reliance on convenience food — due precisely to the (patriarchal) demands on them as working women and mothers — could be linked to the family's use of servants and the disapproval that their mother, Jeanne, had for cooking. This is something that Condé herself did not experience due to her culinary curiosity, her relationship with Adélia, and her rebellious nature. However, it is interesting that Condé herself had a live-in cook whist she was living in West Africa, although she writes that this displeased her as she enjoyed cooking meals herself (*M*: 40) but that it was necessary at the time due to her depression (*M*: 55).

A shift in the Francophone Caribbean towards fast-food and supermarkets has been discussed in chapter two, via analysis of Chamoiseau's critique in *Chronique* and his contribution to *Manifeste pour les 'produits'*, read alongside Pépin's *Lettre ouverte.* The market vendors in *Chronique* turn to chicken and fries, and hamburgers, much as Condé's family have turned to pizza and pre-cooked chicken in *Mets*. This desire for convenience is criticised by Condé, who, like Chamoiseau, the other authors of *Manifeste* and Pépin has advocated for French Caribbean independence, and regards a move towards self-sufficient food production as essential for greater political independence, as highlighted in *Manifeste*.[78] The 2009 strikes in Guadeloupe, explored in chapter two, demonstrated a shift towards a different patterns of consuming food as Guadeloupeans used both their own

[78] Breleur et al., *Manifeste pour les 'produits',* p. 5.

gardens and the local markets for food.[79] However, these strikes and this temporary change are not mentioned by Condé in *Mets*, despite her openly *indépendantiste* approach. Near the beginning, she argues against the globalisation of food, yet as the book continues, Condé does appear to advocate for a more global food culture in terms of openness to others and this changing attitude coincides with her growing culinary, political, and intellectual experiences overseas. In one of the final chapters, she writes that she no longer needs to travel to experience the food of other cultures as she can enjoy the diversity of the food markets of New York, commenting that: 'Je découvris que pour connaître la cuisine d'un pays il n'est pas nécessaire de voyager' (*M*: 290). This also demonstrates her belief that dishes 'belonging' to different places know no borders, but that she can access and share knowledge about different cultures and cuisines with other people in ways other than physically travelling. Condé uses food and recipes to express cultural openness which challenges ideas of fixed or spatially-constructed identity, as in the claim that she takes home anywhere in the world with her: her recipes are transportable representations of culinary environments she has experienced.

There is also therefore a link between *Mets* and postcolonial travel writing, which would repay further scholarship in future.[80] As she travels around the world, Condé records her observations of different cultures and landscapes through the lenses of intellectual and culinary discoveries, intertwining the two and questioning what it means to be a national dish or to have a national identity. Furthermore, in a chapter called 'Le goût de Tokyo', she

[79] Bonilla, 'Guadeloupe Is Ours', 126.

[80] For more about Francophone postcolonial travel writing, see Charles Forsdick, 'Francophone Postcolonial Travel Writing: The emergence of a Tradition', in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Travel Writing,* ed. by Robert Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 93-108; and for links between travel writing and Condé, see Charles Forsdick, 'Maryse Condé, *Étonnante Voyageuse*', *Yale French Studies*, (140) (2022), 32-47.

references poet Henri Michaux's 1933 text *Un barbare en Asie*,[81] writing that after receiving an invitation to Tokyo for a conference on Marcel Proust she worried that '[l]e Barbare, c'etait moi' (*M*: 157). She writes that she disagrees with Michaux's subjective analysis of the trees in Japan as sickly and meagre, quoting the poet directly, and writing that for her, '[l]es arbres du Japon sont splendides' (*M*: 158). However, here it seems that she is being 'consumed' by the landscape, as it has a dizzying effect on her, and she writes that 'Tokyo éveilla en moi une terreur' and her confusion led to her recalling a disturbing African *conte* in which a baby kills his mother and is in turn killed by his city, thus suggesting that she feels like she is being 'consumed' by Tokyo (*M*: 159). Her description of Tokyo at night as 'violemment éclairée' with signage that was beyond her understanding (*M*: 159) is similar to Roland Barthes's description of Japan in his 1979 text *Empire des signes*. Condé's description of feeling consumed by the city contrasts with the consumption and exoticisation of the Caribbean landscape by early travel writers, whom Chamoiseau references in 'Le Diamant', explored in the next chapter of this thesis.

In *Victoire*, the narrator explains that her grandmother left Marie-Galante, her native island, with Jeanne in June 1890 and never returned, and asks 'Est-ce pour cela que Marie-Galante fonctionna dans mon imaginaire comme une terre mythique, un paradis à reconquérir?' (*M*: 96). In *Le Cœur,* Maryse takes a similar trip to Marie-Galante, evoking a sense of her visiting to '*reconquérir*' this '*paradis*', a part of her identity that in *Victoire* she compares to 'mon placenta, enterré sous un arbre' (*V*: 96). This links to the practice in the Caribbean of planting a placenta underneath a tree for good luck when a baby is born, as Loichot points out: 'A frequent sacred practice in the Antilles consists of "twinning" a

[81] Henri Michaux, *Un barbare en Asie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1933).

newborn with a tree by planting the placenta or the umbilical cord in the roots of a tree.'[82] Kullberg writes that in *Traversée de la mangrove*, '[l']arbre, dans la mangrove, se déleste de la ligne droite d'une famille bien ancrée dans le sol'.[83] In the Caribbean, the mangrove tree can thus be seen to complicate a linear genealogy and it demonstrates the linking of identities between the different Caribbean islands, which Condé could be referring to here and which evokes Glissantian *Relation*. During the trip to Marie-Galante in *Le Cœur,* the narrator describes the sea as initially turbulent, but '[a]près ces trois heures et demie d'agonie, l'île était sortie de l'eau' and '[l]e mer s'était calmée comme par enchantement'.[84] The turbulent sea represents Maryse's uncertainty about her own identity. However, the sea calms once she can see Marie-Galante, as though she is now reconciled with a part of her forgotten identity, the 'placenta', or 'lost paradise'. She mentions a connection to Marie-Galante in *Mets* and *Victoire* multiple times, and in *Mets* she makes sure to re-visit the island during her final tour of Guadeloupe. During this visit, she competes with Michells using 'recettes originales' (*M*: 314), but Maryse admits that Michelle is the better cook when she prepares a meal which she states is no longer cooked in Guadeloupe: 'la fressure […] fait de tous les abats du porc épicés et grillés sur une sorte de barbecue' (*M*: 314-315). This visit reaffirms Condé's strong links to both the physical island and to its history, traditions, and food.

Both writing and cooking give Condé a sense of belonging which ties her to the Guadeloupean land and people, despite the isolation she experienced while living in there, a factor which prompted her decision to accept a tenured position at The University of

[82] Valérie Loichot, *Water Graves: The Art of the Unritual in the Greater Caribbean* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2020) p. 157.
[83] Kullberg, 'L'écriture arborescente de la Caraïbe', 10.
[84] *Le Cœur*, p. 84.

California, Berkeley, and her relocation to the United States (*M*: 149). She writes that through her literature, she maintains 'un dialogue précieux avec l'île tout entière' even if she thought people were not interested in it (*M*: 149). However, this connection for Condé extends beyond her literature. She writes that in Guadeloupe: 'Quand, au petit matin, avant de me tourner vers mon ordinateur, j'ouvrais les fenêtres de ma chambre sur les contreforts encore embrumes de la Soufrière, je me rappelle le merveilleux sentiment d'embrasement de mes sens' (*M*: 149). Although she argues that her literature maintains her connection to the people of Guadeloupe, the Caribbean land and the unique sensory experience it offers seems to hold even more power over her sense of belonging. The strength of this connection is demonstrated in the juxtaposition between the computer, as a symbol of technology and her writing, and the natural landscape which provides this 'igniting of senses' before she has begun working. Her writing then provides the link between technology, people, cooking, and the landscape.

Despite this connection to the land, there are moments in *Mets* when her fear of a lack of belonging is represented by the changing environment. At times this is also linked to food; on the first page of *Mets*, the narrator describes a dream she had many times as a child in which she leaves the house to buy a *doucelet* (Creole cake) which is forbidden by her mother, much as Creole language is, as seen in *Le Cœur* and *Victoire*. It is possible that the addition of the *doucelet* to this nightmare is deliberate to highlight her mother's refusal to accept Creole language, traditions, or food in favour of French. During this dream, the environment changes around her: 'je m'apercevais avec terreur, l'environnement était modifié. Les familières maisons hautes et basses avaient disparu. La rue s'était métamorphosée en un terrain vague d'où jaillissaient des poteaux électriques roides et

menaçants' (*M*: 18). Here, she links here forbidden food to the changing environment (seen here as urbanisation) and links the forbidden part of the dream to her inspiration to be creative with her cooking.

A change in the culinary landscape of Guadeloupe is linked to the evolving physical landscape that Condé witnesses each time she returns to the island. Her return in the 'ethno-cuisine' chapter, and her realisation that fast-food is now common on the island, is combined with her realisation that the environment where she grew up had also changed. Her descriptions of her surroundings appear to change when she goes back to Guadeloupe, and the environment is described with a more poetic tone, suggesting a creative inspiration that she finds in the landscape, for example: 'Au fur et à mesure que nous montions vers la Soufrière l'ombre tombait', and 'la mer dont nous entendions la grande voix pleureuse' (*M*: 79), and 'le ciel saignait contre la mer' (*M*: 78). These metaphors evoke strong imagery equating nature with force, and the personification of both the waves and the sunset add to a poetic tone. In *Mets* she describes the changing landscape of her childhood, through the changes at the summer house in Sarcelles, and becomes upset as her memories are altered as the house has been destroyed. She describes how the once well-kept garden is now overgrown: 'Un champ emmêlé d'icaques et de goyaviers avait remplacé le jardin bien entretenu dans lequel je jouais à me perdre' (*M*: 82). Here, the plants, guava and icaques (coco plums), which are near-native (they came from South America, along with manioc and pineapple), have taken over the well-kept garden. During this trip back to Guadeloupe, Maryse appears closer to her landscape than she was as a child; this is reflected in the way in which a more Creole landscape, with near-native plants, has taken over the garden which was part of the summer home of a relatively wealthy family who saw themselves as 'Grand

Nègres', and who mimicked, and seemed to thrive on, French coloniality. However, the road which destroyed the house was built by the council, itself a sign of the industrialisation and development of the region. The changing landscape links back to the dream she describes at the beginning of the book, in which urbanisation takes over the familiar landscape of her home as a response to her having food which is forbidden. This sets the tone for the rest of *Mets* and indeed the rest of her life, as she expresses that certain food and culture is forbidden to her, and she dreaded the consequences of any transgression.

Fear and uncertainty, as represented using descriptions of the environment, can also be seen in *Victoire* when Victoire first arrives in La Pointe to begin her new life:

> Victoire était effrayée par le grondement des rivières et des ravines qui sinuaient en bas de ponts de liane, la touffeur de la végétation agressive prête à la dévorer: toutes qualités d'arbres aux aisselles rongées d'ananas-bois ou d'ananas-marron, de lianes, d'orchidées, de fougères arborescentes, d'arbustes. Ce paysage était tellement différent du plat pays cannier de Marie-Galante (*V*: 94)

The devouring of Victoire by the landscape contrasts with the way in which both she and Maryse control and consume the landscape through cooking. Similarly, both nature and capitalism taking over and changing the landscape she remembers from her childhood is experienced later in *Mets* during her trip to Guadeloupe to sell their house. During her nostalgic tour of the island 'pour prendre un dernier cliché dans [son] cœur, plus récent et plus fidèle' (*M*: 313), she visits l'Anse à la Barque on the coast where she felt, aged 10, for the first time 'une profonde émotion causée par la beauté de la Nature' (*M*: 316). However, on her return '[i]l était déparé par de nombreuses gargotes[85] sans caractère' (*M*: 317). Afterwards, they visited La Rose, near Montebello, which she writes is named after the pink apple trees that used to grow there (*M*: 318) and which used to have a rum distillery owned

[85] Meaning a cheap restaurant.

by her parents' friends, the Bolivars. She reminisces about the area as the place where she learned to swim with her brother Sandrino, and which seemed to be a community meeting place for young and old to play, wash clothes, and 'show off'. On her return, the transformation is similar to that at Sarcelles, as the council had changed the roads resulting in a scene of desolation: '[t]out était laissé à l'abandon' and '[d]es herbes aquatiques' had taken over (*M*: 319).

Although she mentions learning to swim as a happy memory, she also writes about her fear of the sea and its negative connotations in *Mets*, such as in the story she is told by Adélia about an enslaved woman who is raped and drowns herself in the sea at Viard (*M*: 199-200).[86] In *Victoire*, the sea is not presented positively, and is associated with uncertainty and fear. Condé writes that '[l]es ondes tropicales qui n'avaient pas encore été dotées de ce nom poétique, qu'on appelait simplement "grosses pluies", "tempêtes", se succédaient' in the rainy winter following the birth of her father, Auguste (*M*: 263). In *Le Cœur*, the trip that Maryse took to Marie-Galante is framed around the journey across a turbulent sea which becomes calm as soon as she sees the island, potentially signifying her uncertainty about her own identity as if the island represents a part of her forgotten identity.

However, in *Mets* she demonstrates mixed feelings about the sea, writing at the end of the book that '[j]e n'ai peut-être pas suffisamment parlé de la mer et des sentiments mêlés qu'elle m'inspire' (*M*: 363) and 'la mer me fascine, je l'adore' (*M*: 364). Here, she appears happiest when sitting near the sea or upon seeing the sea, experiences that inspire poetic descriptions, such as 'le bateau dansait et chaloupait sur la mer' (*M*: 363), where the

[86] This link between the sea and rape appears in Condé's earlier novel *Moi, Tituba, sorcière… Noire de Salem* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986).

rhyme of ‘dansait’ and ‘chaloupait’ create a rhythmic effect which mirrors the waves, and the personifying words themselves evoke images of the shapes boats make on the waves like dancers. Highlighting a negative side of the sea and role of water in global warming debates, she writes in this final chapter that she has often thought about the idea that one day the sea will ‘recouvrira l’univers et que son empire ne connaîtra pas de limites. La terre sera lavée de ses petitesses, de ses mesquineries, de ses souffrances et de ses deuils’ (*M*: 364). She writes that this inspired the title of one of her later novels, *En attendant la montée des eaux* (2010), set in Haiti. However, while evoking a sense of urgency surrounding climate change and rising sea levels, and consequently the disappearance of entire nations, this final comment on the sea also suggests it holds the possibility of inspiring a more positive vision of the future. This can be linked to the idea that the sea knows no real boundaries and is like the way in which Condé uses cooking and recipes to demonstrate that food knows no borders throughout *Mets*. Moreover, despite the strong link to the Guadeloupean landscape, there is also a strong sense throughout *Mets* that Condé is arguing that her home extends beyond physical borders just as food does, and that through food she can make anywhere feel like home.

Reconciliation

In an interview following her receipt of the New Academy Prize for literature in 2018, Condé pointed to the need for the crossing of boundaries in a postcolonial context, and to the way in which literature can contribute to this: ‘That’s the power and the magic of literature: it knows no borders, it is the realm of hard to reach dreams, obsessions, and desires, which

unites readers through time and space.'[87] Literature, like cooking, can unite different cultures, people, and environments. In cooking different elements combine in a chemical and therefore physical way to form something new, and in literature this mixing is figurative and contained in the imagination, but it is also written physically on a page. Condé's *Mets*, shows how these two sites of mixing different cultures, languages and cuisines that exist in the Caribbean can be both physical and figurative at the same time and provide a powerful site of reconciliation, as well as representing a potentially never-ending process of change and exchange, evoking Glissantian *Antillanité*. In *Victoire*, and more so in *Mets*, Condé presents a multi-lingual and multi-geographical approach to culinary exploration. In comparing cooking to writing in a multi-lingual and multi-geographical way, the text can be read in a postcolonial ecocritical way.

In *Mets*, the kitchen is presented as a place of refuge and reconciliation: 'mon refuge favori était la cuisine' (*M*: 21). Condé's desire to have her food appreciated and accepted becomes a metaphor for the way in which she has felt the need to impress to fit into different societal groups and bring people together around her. Although Condé seems to argue throughout *Mets* that recipes are not necessary and only constrain the creator to be bound by certain rules, they appear to operate as a site of reconciliation between both different generations and different cultures. She seems to feel the most welcome and accepted into others' homes and cultures when they agree to share their recipes with her. Towards the end of *Mets*, there is a sense of urgency to record her recipes during her trip to Guadeloupe: 'Pendant ces dernières semaines je notai soigneusement sur un grand cahier

[87] Maryse Condé, 'Giving Voice to Guadeloupe', *The New York Review of Books* (6 Feburary 2019) <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2019/02/06/giving-voice-to-guadeloupe/> [accessed 22 November 2019].

les recettes que je risquais oublier: migan de racines, soufflé de fruit à pain, morue raccommodée, gratin de pommes cythérées vertes' (*M*: 321). However, the recording of recipes here is in contrast to her usual spontaneity: 'ce n'est pas chose facile de rédiger des recettes pour moi qui ne sais qu'improviser' (*M*: 376). This is significant as she seems to see other forms of writing differently, as expressed in the chapter 'No woman, no cry' when she attends the Calabash festival in Jamaica and is critical of the open mic sessions which focused on spontaneity and orality (*M*: 210). It seems that at this point in the text, Condé is presenting herself as someone who goes against prescribed rules at the same time as wanting to set rules. This rigid approach to writing alongside a need to alter others' recipes while cooking changes later in the book when she comes to terms with her lack of control over her own health. She meets Laura Adamson at this festival and they disagree about spontaneity being a positive thing for storytelling. Laura tells Maryse that she is 'élitiste' when Maryse tells her that writing demands carefully researching 'le choix de mots et des métaphores' and it is not enough to base work on emotions, as she witnessed during the open mic sessions (*M*: 213). This approach highlights Condé's French education and upbringing which can be opposed to the way in which the créolistes argue it is necessary to write. She meets Laura again, as mentioned in the chapter 'Soul Food'. This chapter focuses on an African American literature event which provides a potential way to connect with a part of her life she felt was missing but which proves to be disappointing. At the event, she and Laura become close friends and her recounting of their discussions acts as a vehicle for Condé's expression of her feelings in the book. When Maryse argues that she cooks because she likes to, Laura suggests to Maryse that perhaps she uses cooking as a form of resistance: 'Pour toi, cuisiner est une forme de résistance' (*M*: 308). Maryse responds by asking Laura,

‘Résistance à quoi? À ce monde conformiste dans lequel je m’enlisais malgré moi?’ (*M*: 308), suggesting that she is entering the next part of her life with more freedom.

Maryse is thrilled when her only grandson Mounir reveals that he wants to become a chef: ‘Mounir […] m’informa qu’il voulait devenir un chef cuisine et me demanda de lui écrire quelques recettes. Un chef cuisiner!’ (*M*: 376). This is in juxtaposition to the reaction we see from her mother Jeanne at the beginning of the book and in *Victoire*, when Maryse suggests to that she would like to be a cook. Although Mounir’s aims are to work as a top chef in a restaurant, which is far removed from Victoire’s position as a household servant for which Condé seems to ignore the gendered roles implied, this ambition provides a link between the generations and mirrors the link between Condé and her own grandmother. *Mets* ends with a sense of the importance of recipes and cooking to family heritage, reflecting on a disappointment in not being able to pass on her creativity through cooking or writing when Mounir changes his mind about his future profession: ‘Ainsi dans ce domaine non plus je n’aurais pas d’héritier?’ (*M*: 377). Despite arguing that food and recipes know no borders she still associates them with a sense of identity. She mentions ‘national dishes’ throughout the text, for example: ‘un colombo de cabri’ of Guadeloupe (M: 23), ‘romazava’ of Madagascar (*M*: 340) and she often links certain types of food to places: ‘la cuisine française’ (*M*: 30); ‘plats guadeloupéens’ (*M*: 88). Furthermore, she is keen here to pass on parts of her identity that her family have had to work hard for — that of an intellectual — and parts that some members of her family have worked to forget. She brings both parts of her identity together in the through the acts of writing about cooking in *Mets* and recording the recipes she is hoping to pass on.

Sarah Lawson Welsh has examined the links between identity and Creole food in Trinidadian literature,[88] and contrasts two different approaches towards food: firstly, cultural alienation, which leads to the protagonist in Merle Hodge's *Crick Crack, Monkey* (1970) seeing Indo-Caribbean foods as 'markers of class and ethnic identity', describing them as 'nasty' and 'peasant food'.[89] This is in contrast to the second approach which Lawson Welsh analyses as an embrace of 'coolie'[90] food and the cooking of it for others as a tool for social and economic upwards mobility in Rooplall Monar's short story 'Massala Maraj' (1987).[91] Both approaches are explored in *Mets* and *Victoire* as Condé alludes to the potential for cooking — particularly Creole food — as something to be ashamed of, as in the case of Jeanne. Yet Maryse uses this food herself, especially in *Mets*, to avoid cultural alienation in new locations and to embrace and promote a mixing of cultures through a mixing of culinary styles that centres the food that her grandmother cooked.

In *Victoire*, the written recipe seems less important to the characters. However, towards the end of the book the recording of a meal alongside Jeanne's school notes (*V*: 310) is used by Condé to show Jeanne's approval of an important part of her mother's identity. Thomas argues that this moment in the text brings the three generations together: 'It is interesting that Jeanne chooses to record this culinary experience in written form, in some way forging a bond between all three generations where the cook (Victoire) gradually becomes the writer (Condé)'.[92] Cope names this moment a 'scene of culinary reconciliation',

[88] Sarah Lawson Welsh, *Food, Text and Culture in the Anglophone Caribbean* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).
[89] *Ibid.*, pp. 110-111.
[90] A term used to describe indentured labourers; see the note in this thesis' conclusion about the expansion of this analysis.
[91] *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.
[92] Thomas, 'The Cook and the Writer', 9.

which is representative of a reconciliation between races and classes in Guadeloupe and which is symbolised by this meal which the narrator describes as Victoire's 'last will and testament', connecting cooking and writing again.[93] This meal physically brings together Jeanne, Victoire and the Walbergs and is described by the narrator as the '"Ultima Cena"' (*V*: 309), asserting Victoire's value as a creator. The meal is recorded as follows:

Tourte aux lambis et aux pisquettes de rivière

Chaud-froid d'oursins

Poularde caramélisée au genièvre

Riz blanc

Cochon découenné aux châtaignes pays

Purée d'ignames

Salade laitue

Flan koko

Sorbets variés (*V*: 310).

The way it is set out as a restaurant menu highlights its significance to the narrator in asserting her grandmother's importance (and contrasts with the more casual way of recording her own meals in *Mets* within the prose). As well as the meal experience itself bringing together generations, races, and classes, as identified by Cope, it is interesting to note the ingredients chosen by Victoire (or the narrator, as this could be fictitious) for this meal. *Lambis* is a mollusc from the Antilles and *pisquettes* are very small fish, also from the region. 'Chaud-froid d'oursins' is striking as it seems to have been invented here and could have been created using inspiration from the *chaud-froid oeuf* dish (*Arpège*), which is popular with French chefs, but with added *oursin*, providing a Caribbean twist. *Poularde*

[93] Cope, *The Pen and the Pan*, p. 194.

caramelised in juniper (native to Europe) appears to be a usual French dish, and white rice is common worldwide. 'Cochon découenné aux châtaignes pays' could have been included as a reference to food introduced to the region by colonisers. The pig, as already seen, is thought to have been introduced as a food source when the islands were first colonised, before taking over and causing the extinction of various native species.[94] *Châtaignes pays*, which is like breadfruit, was native to the Philippines before being brought over to the region around 1722 by Pierre Sonnerat. *Ignames*, of which there are different types, seem to be native to equatorial regions across the globe.[95] *Flan koko* appears to be the same dish that Maryse first learns, and to which she adds rum (demonstrating a link to her sense of family). Salad and sorbet seem to be included as standard dishes added to large European meals, and the same for the drinks of champagne, wine, and cognac, which are added in prose, and which highlight the French importation of these drinks. Therefore, the mixing of different foods in this menu could also be representative of the different identities and cultures that the narrator hoped one day would become more unified: 'Les uns et les autres pourraient s'entendre, se fréquenter librement, qui sait? s'aimer' (*V*: 309).

Fermi argues that in *Mets* '[l]es rencontres culinaires sont aussi, dans la plupart des cas, l'occasion de rencontres humaines, car partager la même table et les mêmes mets favorise souvent le partage des idées'.[96] In the second chapter, Condé uses the West African dish *mafé* as a metaphor for the way in which an individual and collective identity can co-exist within one person, or dish. She uses the dish to highlight plurality in West African

[94] See Paravisini-Gebert, 'Extinctions'; and Paravisini Gebert, 'Food, Biodiversity, Extinctions'.
[95] Antonio de Alcedo and George Alexander Thompson, *The Geographical and Historical Dictionary of America and the West Indies* (London: J. Carpenter, 1812), p. 199.
[96] Fermi, 'Maryse Condé', 578.

identity and dispel the notion that there is one monolithic West African identity, a misconception often perpetuated in European literature and media: ‘D’après, l’expérience que je venais de vivre, j’avais conclu qu’un même plat, en occurrence le mafé, diffère selon les peuples qui le préparent. Sur une base commune, arachide, tomate en boîte, viande, toutes les modifications sont permises’ (*M*: 49). This ‘base commune’ could be a general humanity that we all share, and the variations are the different parts such as languages. She goes on to compare the creation of this dish to art and literature to say that it can be whatever the inventor wants it to be. ‘Cuisiner est un art. Il s’appuie donc sur la fantaisie, l’inventivité, la liberté de chacun. Les livres de cuisine ne sont que des gadgets pour gogos. Il n’existe pas de règles immuables, pas de directives contraignantes’ (*M*: 49). The expression of creativity which holds a great importance in her cooking suggests a freedom from rules and an ability to express and (re)present the self without judgement. She seems to be suggesting that there should be no constraints on identity, much like her cooking, and that both identity and cooking are ever changing. In both cases, change is decided by the creator, or the self, rather than being constrained by what history, in this case colonialism, dictates.

As the reader approaches the end of *Mets*, there is a sense of slowing down, as highlighted by Condé’s discussion of the effects her illness (which is mentioned in her other works and interviews as hereditary and degenerative but is never named)[97] has on her life, and of reminiscence. In the sixteenth chapter, in which Condé discusses moving on to accommodate these changes — ‘Adieu foulard, adieu madras’ — Condé decides to sell her

[97] In a 2019 interview, Condé discusses her love of writing and how she continues to write, despite losing the ability to, through a friend who types out the words for her. She says that ‘It is impossible for a writer to stop. Stopping means dying.’ See: Peter Jordens, ‘Interview with Maryse Condé’.

house in Montebello, Petit Bourg, Guadeloupe, and begins to reminisce and inform the reader about what she liked most about it. She tells the reader about a garden she designed when they first moved in, which is full of childhood nostalgia:

> Mon premier souci fut de planter un ylang-ylang, arbre fétiche qui avait embaumé mon enfance. Petite fille je faisais macérer ses fleurs dans l'alcool et j'obtenais une lotion à l'odeur entêtante avec laquelle je parfumais mes poupées. Je fis aussi pousser un arbre de voyageur au milieu de la pelouse. Je tins à une haie de balaguettes jaunes et rouges, a des massifs de roses cayenne et de roses de porcelaine parce que ma mère les aimait (*M*: 313).

In a style similar to Chamoiseau, Condé has, perhaps deliberately, included plants that have been introduced to the region from elsewhere, possibly highlighting the varied strands of, and influences on, Antillean identity. The 'ylang-ylang' originates from India, East Asia and Australia; the 'arbre de voyageur' is also known as *ravenale* and is native to Madagascar; the 'balaguettes', which I interpret as *baraguettes* owing to her description of the yellows and reds and as it appears to be a regional variant — *Caesalpinia pulcherrima* — which are tropical flowers native to the Americas; and finally the 'roses cayenne' and 'roses de porcelaine' that originate from China and East Asia respectively. Another element of the trip that is reminiscent of Chamoiseau's style, particularly in *Chronique*, is Condé's visit to a 'sage quimboiseur' (*M*: 314) for alternative medicine, as suggested by Michelle who still lives in Marie Galante (one of the places she visits on her final tour of Guadeloupe). She describes the *quimboiseur* as 'un vieux nègre sec et noueux comme une baguette de goyavier' (*M*: 314), a simile which evokes a closeness to the land which can be found in *Chronique*. Furthermore, this section of the book, particularly the description of the garden, is rich in poetic prose which brings her descriptions to life and is suggestive of the creativity she draws from the Guadeloupean land. The physical replication of a place that signifies home in

garden form is something that can be seen in Kincaid's work. In her book *My Garden (Book)*, the protagonist produces a map of the Caribbean islands and sea as a nostalgic vision of home through the shape the design of plants in her Vermont garden creates. As Maryse does in *Mets*, the narrator in Kincaid's book links her constructed environment to both her direct and indirect memory:

> the garden I was making (and am still making and will always be making) resembled a map of the Caribbean and the sea that surrounds it, […] the garden is for me an exercise in memory, a way of remembering my own immediate past, a way of getting to a past that is my own (the Caribbean Sea) and the past as it is indirectly related to me (the conquest of Mexico and its surroundings).[98]

Boisseron has compared the two authors' approaches, noting the clear similarities in terms of their academic professions in the United States, in their discussions of mixed-race marriages in their works as inspired by their own lives, and in their strained relationships with their mothers. However, she argues that 'la véritable filiation entre ces deux auteurs réside dans leur nature inclassable, ce qui nous permet de présenter leur hybridité caribéenne et américaine en dehors de toute communauté et convention.'[99] There are also parallels to be drawn between the sense of home linked to the gardens in both *Mets* and Kincaid's book and Man Ya's garden in Gisèle Pineau's *L'Exil selon Julia* (1996). Antonia Wimbush points out that here, the garden can be read as an extension of Pineau's grandmother's identity which is closely tied to the Guadeloupean landscape,[100] much as it can be read this way in both *Mets* and *My Garden (Book)*.

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[98] Kincaid, *My Garden (Book)*, p.8.
[99] Boisseron, '"L'Amérique, je veux l'avoir"', p. 118.
[100] Antonia Wimbush, *Autofiction: A Female Francophone Aesthetic of Exile* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021), p. 112.

In another late chapter, 'Voyages en rêves, rêves en voyages', the places that Condé visits in her dreams seem to mirror the origins of the plants she has chosen to mention in her nostalgic garden — East Asia/Indonesia, Madagascar, South America, and China. The chapter also speaks back to the end of the previous chapter in terms of a sense of urgency to record information for future generations and her readers as she seems to be using these dreams as a way of recording many trips in one chapter; all are places she mentions in haste previously in the text as having also visited. This chapter functions as a way of reminiscing and re-creating her love of travelling at a time when she can no longer travel, and she describes the dreaming as 'un antidote inattendu' (*M*: 329). It could be argued that this is a reason for Condé writing the book, and that the text could have fiction interwoven throughout it in a similar way to dreams. This complicates the defining of her books that focus on her own life as either novels or as autobiographical texts, which is also highlighted in *Le Cœur* using the expression '*contes vrais de mon enfance'* in its subtitle. Looking back over the text after reading this dream chapter potentially alters the way in which the reader thinks about Condé's other trips as being truly autobiographical.

Moreover, the chapter allows Condé to discuss future environmental, social, and political problems. She writes that the practice of analysing dreams holds a particular significance in Guadeloupean culture and that she has grown up with the belief that dreams signify premonition, as demonstrated by both her mother and in a book entitled *La Clef des songes* 'qui ont la prétention d'anticiper l'avenir grâce aux signes du passe' (*M*: 329). She gives a few examples, such as: 'Dents qui tombent = Deuil; Chevelure abondante et mal peignée = Soucis' (*M*: 330). The use of dreams here is reminiscent of Chamoiseau's inclusion of '*paroles rêvées*' to educate protagonist Pipi in *Chronique*. It also is reminiscent of the

significance of the dream at the beginning of *Mets* in which the landscape changes following her consumption of Creole food that she was forbidden to eat. The link that she makes to prediction is significant as in the first *rêve de voyage*, Condé discusses a prediction of ever-increasing anthropogenic destruction as a result of capitalism, tourism, and pollution. The first dream takes place in Indonesia, where she is shocked by what she sees. On arrival, it was 'déjà défiguré par des hordes de touristes'; capitalism was affecting land prices: 'Des promoteurs immobiliers proposaient des villas de rêve à des prix dérisoires' and 'tout y était à vendre ou à acheter'; there was a lot of land pollution: 'nous étions tombés sur une immense décharge publique à ciel ouvert: ordures ménagères, détritus et objets usages, le tout dégageant une odeur pestilentielle sous le soleil'; and a lot of water pollution: 'l'eau à une ravine au flot brun et mousseaux, visiblement pollué' (*M*: 332). The next part of this dream is in juxtaposition to the destructive scenes she first describes. After taking a trip in a limousine (which acts as a device for the separation of poor from wealthy), she finds herself at the Sultan's palace and experiences a life of luxury (*M*: 333-334). This appears to be a comment on the deep wealth divides that exist in many societies, which she mentions again in a later dream about Madagascar: 'Je fus suffoquée, aveuglée par sa pauvreté […] Je voyais partout un dénuement bien pire que celui dont j'avais témoin en Guinée' (*M*: 340), pointing out that this inequality also exists in the United States, but that there, poverty is hidden in 'les ghettos où ils sont parqués' whereas in Madagascar 'elle s'étalait partout' (*M*: 341). She decides that '[v]raiment le monde était divisé en deux parts inégales: celle de nantis et celle des opprimés qui ne savourent aucun plaisir' (*M*: 341). On one hand, the wealthy who have the means and power to change what is happening to the environment seem to ignore it as it is hidden to them, as seen here in the sultan scene. On the other hand, the poor must live

with the consequences of this destruction of the environment due to a lack of action by those in power. In these *rêves de voyages*, her prediction for the future highlights her concern for the effects of over-tourism on the regions she visits and of anthropogenic destruction of the environment, themes which are explored in Chamoiseau's 'Le Diamant', examined in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Mets transports the reader around the world and traverses Condé's life, from growing up and discovering her identity via Guadeloupean experiences and international travel, to reaching old age with its material problems and nostalgia. The final chapters appear to give a more honest reflection of who Condé feels she is as a person, not just as a writer, academic and cook. Here, a sense of fear also develops regarding missed opportunities, mirrored in her concerns for the changing environment, juxtaposed with a sense of fulfilment in other areas of her life. As the reader approaches the end of *Mets*, the book reveals itself as a way for Condé to record and reminisce her former life travelling around the world, and her sense of sorrow is clear as she acknowledges that due to serious health problems, this period of her life is now over.

However, this melancholic tone is tempered by Condé's argument throughout *Mets* and at moments in *Victoire* that cooking and food offer opportunities for reconciliation as they know no borders and have no fixed nationality, much as there is no fixed version of identity or of any recipe. She argues for the delocalisation of dishes, as N'Guessan Larroux has pointed out: 'le culinaire le dispute à la politique, au voyage, rendant compte d'une

poétique de la relation fondée sur une cuisine "délocalisée".'[101] Condé discovers dishes and ingredients from many different cultures around the world, but not always in the places she expects. This allows her to demonstrate that her creativity and rebellion against order brings potential for culinary reconciliation as different cultures can not only discover each other but also combine and that there should be no fixed version of any dish, identity, or environment — these all are ever-changing.

Throughout *Mets*, meals and recipes are used by Condé to teach the reader and to learn for herself about different cultures. She argues, through her culinary rebellion, that there are no fixed rules and any alterations to a both a recipe and an identity are valid, much as she argues about her own identity being a valid form of French Caribbean identity. It is possible that some of the meals themselves have been invented by Condé to enable her to demonstrate this to the reader, but they provide a useful device for exploring food, cultures, and environments. The reader ends the book with a greater sense of different cultures' traditions but with a sense of these merging into one, evolving and overlapping, as seen in Glissantian *Relation* and in Chamoiseau's related writing on 'horizontale plénitude'.

In *Victoire* and *Mets,* Condé focuses on highlighting the similarities between cooking and writing, providing a semi-autobiographical summary of her life which brings the reader to appreciate the relationship between place, food, and identity. Condé repeatedly argues against the constraints she feels are imposed on both her cooking and writing, and links this to her grandmother's feelings in *Victoire*, writing that '[l]a cuisine, comme l'écriture, ne peut s'épanouir que dans la plus totale liberté et ne supporte pas les contraintes. Foin des règles, des traites, des manifestes et des arts poétiques' (*V*: 240). Yet *Mets* demonstrates that

[101] N'Guessan Larroux, 'Mets et merveilles littéraires de Maryse Condé', abstract.

Condé's creativity thrives within these constraints, as without such restrictions she would not be able to rebel. Furthermore, she argues in *Mets* that the most authentic and original cultures are those that have been constrained by history, linking oppression to creative freedom, and demonstrating the creative paradox of her own work, whereby she needs to feel constrained in order to produce creative authenticity, in both her writing and cooking. At the end of *Mets*, she writes that for her the main difference between cooking and writing is that while the writer is afraid to 'radoter, de répéter toujours', for cooking 'la répétition est gage d'excellence' (*M*: 375). She decides that her best dish, jambalaya, is such a success because she has cooked it so many times (*M*: 376). This repetition in writing was also seen in *Victoire*, *Le Cœur* and *Mets* in various stories about her childhood in particular and highlights the repetitive nature of memory as a human act; Condé herself often acknowledges when she is repeating herself in the book. However, in terms of the natural environment, Condé points out that the French Caribbean 'changeait constamment. Il fallait suivre son évolution, la comprendre et en anticiper les conséquences' (*M*: 90). In terms of nature, repetition is an essential part of life as the natural environment depends on cyclical or spiralling repetitions such as those found in ecosystems, life cycles, or in weather or migration patterns, as explored by Chamoiseau in *Les neuf consciences*. Highlighting the way in which repetition in the cooking of natural resources is linked to greater pleasure shows how a re-connection between humans and the way in which the world works naturally is a step forward, for Condé at least.

A deep emotional connection exists to the Guadeloupean land that Condé cannot fully explain, despite spending so much time in other places, including ones that she would now also consider to be 'home', such as New York and Paris:

> Par Guadeloupe j'entends une entité que j'ai beaucoup de peine à définir. Il s'agissait de la nature du pays, mer, plages forets, bananeraies, champs de canne à sucre, non pas à cause de sa beauté, d'ailleurs gâchée d'année en année par les efforts de promoteurs immobiliers, mais plutôt à cause d'un concert de voix subtiles, tenues, émises par ces divers éléments et qui ne s'adressait qu'a moi. Ce concert irriguait mon imagination, illuminait ma pensée (*M*: 132-133)

This 'concert de voix subtiles' is reminiscent of Chamoiseau's analysis of a re-connection to the land brought about by listening to the land and its stories to reconcile humans with the natural environment, and this forms the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

PATRICK CHAMOISEAU AND THE ROCHER DU DIAMANT

This chapter discusses Patrick Chamoiseau's little-studied essay 'Le Diamant: la beauté comme conscience', published in *Le grand livre de la biodiversité de Guadeloupe et de Martinique* in 2011,[1] an interdisciplinary book publication which sketches out contemporary debates around the Antillean environment. With this final section of analysis, this thesis moves towards examining ecoliteracy as a more direct way of approaching contemporary environmental issues, compared to ecocriticism. As will emerge throughout this chapter, with ecoliteracy, the emphasis is on lived experience of the natural world, with particular attention given to the understanding of natural cycles and processes, and as such, ecocriticism and ecoliteracy might be seen as part of a continuum or spectrum, running from ecocriticism's more academic articulations, to ecoliteracy's focus on sensory and emotional connections. This chapter examines the problems Chamoiseau identifies in 'Le Diamant', and how he addresses these through a suggestion to reconcile with the land through what might be understood as mindfulness, before questioning how this change can be made in 'real-world' terms, and the extent to which literature and poetry can bring about environmental

[1] Referred to hereafter as 'Le Diamant', with references given using paratheses in the main body of chapter, for example as (1).

change. Whereas the previous chapter argued that Condé uses the natural world in her literature as a way of locating herself within the world on an individual level, this chapter demonstrates how Chamoiseau turns again to the collective and withdraws from the self to locate himself in the world in relation to nature itself, as inspired by Glissant.

A heightened awareness of natural systems is central to ecoliteracy, which was developed by Capra in the 1990s. There are parallels between Capra's arguments for rethinking the systems that are found in society with regard to systems found in nature and Glissant's fundamental concept of *Relation*, which advances a framework for thinking about the world in a more horizontal and interconnected way to emphasise and celebrate connections found in difference. Capra was inspired by environmentalist David Orr; in 2011, he wrote the foreword to Orr's *Hope Is an Imperative*,[2] which brought together Orr's major articles, such as 'What Is Education For?' written in 1991, in which Orr identifies six myths in the understanding of ecological knowledge production, and six alternative principles with which to replace them within the education system;[3] all emphasise the need to take personal and collective responsibility for our interactions with nature and planet Earth.[4] A year earlier, Orr had published an article in favour of 'Earth-Centered learning' which emphasises the following: all education as environmental education; interdisciplinary environmental education; the understanding of the place which one inhabits and the

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[2] David W. Orr and Fritjof Capra, *Hope Is an Imperative* (Washington, D.C: Island Press, 2011).

[3] Formulated as follows (summarised): 1. Human ignorance is 'an inescapable part of the human condition'; 2. That we should not be attempting to 'manage' the planet and rather we need to manage ourselves to fit the planet; 3. That human goodness does not increase in parallel with knowledge production; 4. That we cannot restore that which we have dismantled; 5. That the purpose of education should not simply be for upward mobility or 'success' as Western cultures currently define it; and 6. That current Western culture, in terms of capitalism, is not the 'pinnacle of human achievement'.

[4] David W. Orr, 'What Is Education For?', *In Context, The Learning Revolution*, (27) (1991), 52-55.

dialogue with place as the 'Other'; the way education occurs (i.e. living differently, not just talking differently); experience in the natural world; and education for sustainability.[5]

The term 'environmental literacy' was first used by Charles Roth in 1968,[6] who questioned what it meant to be an environmentally literate citizen, and as Brooke McBride et al. point out the term has evolved to mean 'an awareness of and concern about the environment and its associated problems, as well as the knowledge, skills and motivations to work towards solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones',[7] according to the North American Association for Environmental Education. The term 'ecological literacy' was first used in 1986 by Paul Risser, in an address to the Ecological Society of America, urging ecologists to define and promote ecological literacy to students and the public.[8] The term developed over time and in 1992, Orr defined it as the ability to understand the complexity of Earth's natural systems.[9] McBride et al. provide tables of the frameworks for, and components and characteristics of, environmental literacy and ecoliteracy,[10] arguing that the main difference between these two approaches is ecoliteracy's emphasis on sustainability and spirituality, in terms of 'celebration of Creation', 'spirit', 'reverence for the Earth', and 'expansion of the soul',[11] which could also be interpreted as a move towards acknowledging a deeper emotional and spiritual connection with nature, as can be seen in Chamoiseau's essay and wider works.

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[5] David W. Orr, 'Environmental Education and Ecological Literacy', *The Education Digest*, 55(9) (1990), 49-52.
[6] Charles E. Roth, 'On the road to conservation' *Massachusetts Audubon*, 52(4) (1968), 38-41.
[7] Brooke B. McBride, C. A Brewer, A. R. Berkowitz, and W. T. Borrie, 'Environmental literacy, ecological literacy, ecoliteracy: What do we mean and how did we get here?', *Ecosphere*, 4(5) (2013), 1-20 (p.3).
[8] Paul G. Risser, 'Address of the Past President: Syracuse, New York; August 1986: Ecological Literacy', *Bulletin of the Ecological Society of America*, 67(4) (1986), 264-70.
[9] David W. Orr, *Ecological literacy: education and the transition to a postmodern world* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).
[10] McBride et al., 'Environmental literacy, ecological literacy, ecoliteracy', 7-16.
[11] *Ibid*. 14.

Chamoiseau's approach in 'Le Diamant' suggests an urgent need for humans to look more closely at the many different interdependent connections within natural ecosystems, and to become more aware of anthropogenic changes to our local environment. He encourages the reader to think in a manner akin to ecoliteracy, focusing on how humans fit into these systems and the forces that influence them, and how sustainability might be improved rather than focusing on how to dominate the natural world. Traces of spirituality that were seen in *Les neuf consciences* are also present in this essay, cementing strong connections between those texts. In 'Le Diamant', the focus is specifically centred on the Rocher du Diamant, an uninhabited island to the south-west of Martinique, and the white sandy beach of the Baie du Diamant that overlooks it. Loichot points out that this is 'the place where sea and volcano, the two forces that define the island itself, meet.'[12] The area of Le Diamant, including the Rocher du Diamant, is part of the PNRM,[13] created in August 1976, and is home to several protected species, according to the DEAL.[14] The PNRM list their main objectives as follows:[15] to protect the natural and cultural landscape and heritage, to contribute to land management, and to economic, social and cultural development, to distribute information and provide public education, and to contribute to experiments and research.[16]

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[12] Loichot, *Water Graves,* p. 32.

[13] Parc Naturel Régional de la Martinique, *le Diamant* (n.d), <http://pnr-martinique.com/visiter/le-diamant/> [accessed 21 June 2022].

[14] Direction de l'Environnement, de l'Aménagement et du Logement, *Commune du Diamant* (2022), <https://www.martinique.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/commune-du-diamant-a608.html> [accessed 21 June 2022].

[15] In accordance with France's article R333-1 du Code de l'environnement. See: Legifrance, *Article R333-1* (27 January 2012) <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000025201079> [accessed 22 June 2022].

[16] Parc naturel régional de la Martinique, *la Charte du PNRM* (n.d), <http://pnr-martinique.com/la-charte-du-pnrm/> [accessed 22 June 2022].

In *Le Grand Livre,* Chamoiseau's essay appears alongside interdisciplinary essays written by other Guadeloupean and Martinican writers including Joël Beuze, André Lucrèce, Daniel Maximin, Pépin and Simone Schwartz-Bart, and the anthropologist and sociologist Félix Ozier-Lafontaine, as well as a preface written by Eric de Lucy de Fossarieu, president of the Guadeloupe and Martinique banana producers' union (UGPBAN), which helped to fund the book's publication.[17] These essays appear alongside over twenty contributions written by scientists on topics such as marine life and the region's rich and important biodiversity. Chamoiseau's essay's focal point, the Rocher du Diamant, which, it should be noted, can be seen from the Cimetière du Diamant in which Glissant chose to be buried on the Rue des Arawaks in the town of Le Diamant,[18] is used by Chamoiseau to demonstrate the links that exist between the land, the past, and the future. There is limited scholarship on Chamoiseau's essay, the most significant work to date being Hardwick's 2018 article, 'Autour du Rocher du Diamant', a comparative study of depictions of the landmark in Zobel's first novel, *Diab'-là*, set in Le Diamant, and Chamoiseau's essay. This chapter extends and develops Hardwick's analysis, providing a close reading through the lens of the construction and consumption of the region, both literally and metaphorically. It also draws on analytical frameworks for approaching writing about the French Caribbean environment, particularly Chamoiseau's move towards Glissantian *Relation*, his recurrent trope of 'horizontale plénitude' and the Buddhist interpretation of consciousness which are all also prominent in *Les neuf consciences,* as explored in chapter four. This chapter also discusses the ways in which Chamoiseau suggests environmental 'reconciliation' and refers to connections with

[17] UGPBAN, *Notre Groupe* (n.d), <https://www.bananeguadeloupemartinique.com/notre-filiere/?cat=57#:~:text=Cr%C3%A9%C3%A9e%20en%202003%2C%20l'Union,30%25%20%C3%A0%20l'export> [Accessed 13 June 2022].
[18] Loichot, *Water Graves*, p. 27.

recent scientific research on the concerning changes that Chamoiseau details in his essay and provides up-to-date information about actions taken in the region to tackle the problems that he references.

The Problem — Human/Nature Disconnect

'Le Diamant' underscores that the Caribbean landscape, and the consumption of it, is not only a site of exploitation as seen in previous chapters, but primarily a site of refuge, memory, and reconciliation between people and their land across time. This approach raises the potential for the landscape to bring communities together to 'heal the wounds of history', much as in the previous chapter, where Condé's works provided an invitation to question how food can bring about human and environmental reconciliation. As demonstrated throughout this thesis, Chamoiseau's work has become increasingly preoccupied with ecological issues and he increasingly promotes a consideration of the self in relation to natural ecosystems. Yet his pre-occupation with the relationship between Antilleans and the land, and the link to history, and the beauty of the landscape, including the Rocher itself, is also in evidence in his earlier career. Chamoiseau's, *Trésors caches* (2007) focused on the ecology of Martinique alongside photographs taken by Anne Chopin and includes a poem by Chamoiseau about the Rocher du Diamant, in which he briefly brings together the different histories, or the *trace-mémoire*, of the rock, as indicated by the poem's title: 'Trace-mémoire du Rocher'. The term 'trace-mémoire' has become increasingly significant for the interpretation of Chamoiseau's work, and is explored further below.[19]

[19] Chamoiseau and Chopin, *Trésors cachés,* pp. 10-11.

Alongside an aerial photograph of the Rocher du Diamant, which shows the rock at an angle so that one side and part of the top of the rock is visible, the following poem is placed:

> On dit que des murmures s'échappent des cavités,
> que les ombres sont anglaises,
> qu'il y a là des os, des boulets et des mémoires qui dorment,
> et, qu'au long de la roche, la fiente blanche des oiseaux
> s'inscrit dans les coulées inconsolables des larmes amérindiennes.
>
> Rocher du Diamant — Le Diamant
> *Octobre*[20]

Here, the *trace-mémoire* appears in the English shadows, bones and cannonballs, in the Amerindian tears, in the bird's excrement and in the 'mémoires qui dorment'. Hardwick draws attention to the fact that not only are the rock and the seas around it remembered as the site of battles during the Napoleonic wars, but the town of Le Diamant is also the site of a forgotten history of poor Black workers who were massacred there in 1925.[21] The concept of *trace-mémoire,* which McCusker analyses as 'unfixed and multivalent […] collective memory' rather than the potentially individualistic and 'unitary signification' of monuments,[22] first appeared in Chamoiseau's collaborative text *Guyane*, *traces-mémoires du bagne* (1994),[23] in which text by Chamoiseau appears alongside photographs of the penal colony of Cayenne (including the location known as Devil's Island[24]) by Rodolphe Hammadi. It has recently been translated into English as *French Guiana: Memory Traces of the Penal*

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[20] *Ibid*.
[21] Hardwick, *Joseph Zobel*, p. 79.
[22] McCusker, *Patrick Chamoiseau: Recovering Memory*, p. 102.
[23] Patrick Chamoiseau and Rodolphe Hammadi, *Guyane*, *traces-mémoires du bagne* (Paris: Caisse nationale des monuments historiques et des sites, 1994).
[24] This became infamous as the setting of Henri Charrière's 1968 autobiographical novel *Papillon* (Paris: Laffont, 1969), in part due to the 1973 Steve McQueen and Dustin Hoffman English-language film adaptation *Papillon*, directed by Franklin J. Schaffner; see also the recent remake of the same name, directed in 2017 by Michael Noer.

Colony and in the English translation's foreword, Forsdick points out that the book was Chamoiseau's response to the lack of memorialisation of the penal colony (as also representative of a wider (post)colonial amnesia — a lack of records or understanding — for example of slave plantations) and that '[h]is response is the search for alternative "memory traces," presented by Chamoiseau as "broken, diffused, scattered," but stubbornly discernible to those willing to look more closely and listen more attentively.'[25] This mode of attentive looking is what Chamoiseau compels the readers of 'Le Diamant' to adopt, in both the context of the *trace-mémoire* of forgotten ancestors, and also in terms of the forgotten, or unnoticed and unappreciated, world beyond humanity. As well as being a key theme in *Les neuf consciences*, particularly linked to le Foufou, as explored in chapter four, this can be seen in multiple moments in 'Le Diamant' and will be explored in more detail later in this chapter.

Chamoiseau's essay in *Le Grand Livre* has a similar focus to that of *Trésors cachés* in terms of illustrating the beauty and fragility of nature to the reader alongside the importance of memory and *trace-mémoire*, by painting a picture with distinctive and poetic words, which are again presented alongside images in both the essay itself and in the wider book. In 'Le Diamant', he particularly encourages a focus on what we can understand as mindfulness through a deliberate focus on finding joy in seemingly insignificant details, such as noticing each 'moindre crabe' (119), in addition to questioning how humans fit into ecosystems and how we can be more aware and considerate of them, rather than dominating and exploiting them. It has emerged throughout this thesis that Chamoiseau

[25] Charles Forsdick, 'Foreword' in Chamoiseau, *French Guiana: Memory Traces of the Penal Colony*, trans. by Matt Reeck (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2020), p. xiv.

often emphasises the need for a collective approach, which he tends to express through abstract prose, and he discusses the production and agriculture of food as a site of current conflict and of potential rapprochement — yet now, this is pictured by him as a 'future' rapprochement, and as an as-yet unachieved goal.

Parallels can be drawn between Chamoiseau's *Les neuf consciences* and 'Le Diamant'. However, the essay develops abstract ideas that were presented in his earlier novel, such as finding important detail in the smallest things, into a more detailed and focused argument, in this case concerning another very specific location in Martinique. This time, Chamoiseau himself is openly the protagonist, without the poetic subterfuge the author often adopts, and he describes his everyday experiences, and criticises what he perceives as the increasing disconnect between humans and nature.

Hardwick points out that 'parce qu'ils sont de plus en plus urbanisés, les individus, y compris les Martiniquais, risquent de ne plus savoir comment établir des rapports avec leur environnement.'[26] She explains that this disconnect between humans and their environment as a result of urbanisation has been named 'extinction of experience' by researcher Robert Michael Pyle and is explored in his text *The Thunder Tree*.[27] This disconnect between environments and the humans inhabiting them is a recurring concern uniting all chapters in this thesis, and is developed with renewed urgency by Chamoiseau in 'Le Diamant'. Through references to doudouism, explored later in this chapter, he suggests links between environmental change and historical and current metaphorical consumption of the environment as well as the region's continued economic over-reliance on tourism. A

[26] Hardwick, 'Autour du Rocher du Diamant', p. 198.
[27] Robert Michael Pyle, *The Thunder Tree: Lessons from an Urban Wildland* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1993).

disconnect between people and their land was seen in *Chronique* and Condé's *Mets* through reliance on fast-food instead of cooking using ingredients found locally, and in those texts reconciliation was suggested through an increased knowledge of the land and food origins. In 'Le Diamant', Chamoiseau suggests that reconciliation can be achieved between people and land by changing our approach to nature by looking more closely and mindfully at biodiversity and ecosystems.

A key idea that emerges in 'Le Diamant' is of 'consciousness', a concept that is the major concern of *Les neuf consciences* (explored in chapter 4, where there is full discussion of the Buddhist concept of the nine consciousnesses). In a 2020 podcast by Hervé Kempf for *Reporterre* and Studio Ground Control, shared (retweeted) by Chamoiseau on his Twitter page,[28] Descola discusses the idea of nature as non-existent. Descola argues that instead, 'les Européens ont inventée l'idée d'une nature […] pour mettre en avant la distanciation des humains vis-à-vis du monde', and argues that nature, as an abstract concept, having a conscience is a fallacy which creates 'des interprétations romantiques'.[29] He argues that instead, the idea of non-humans having a conscience should be about respecting and maintaining ecosystems: 'l'attention que chaque être vivant requiert et le soin qui est nécessaire pour le maintenir en vie'.[30] Nature as an abstract concept with a conscience, through personification, could be found in Chamoiseau's earlier works, such as *Chronique* and *Texaco*. However, Chamoiseau appears to emphasise nature with a conscience in his

[28] Chamoiseau retweeted the following on Twitter from philosopher and psychoanalyst Cynthia Fleury (who features in Oublié's *Tropiques toxiques*), who provides a direct link to the podcast, in February 2020: Cynthia Fleury (@CynthiaFleury, 5 February 2020) 'La nature est un dispositif métaphysique, que l'Occident et les Européens ont inventé pour mettre en avant la distanciation des humains vis-à-vis du monde /Descola @cdf1530' (tweet) <https://twitter.com/CynthiaFleury/status/1225172935473876992> [accessed 3 July 2020].
[29] Hervé Kempf, 'Philippe Descola: "La nature, ça n'existe pas"', *Reporterre* (12 October 2021) <https://reporterre.net/Philippe-Descola-La-nature-ca-n-existe-pas> [accessed 20 May 2022].
[30] *Ibid*.

later work 'Le Diamant' as well as in *Les neuf consciences* as relating to their place within ecosystems, as Descola argued in his interview. As Kassab-Charfi points out, Chamoiseau himself 'déploie une attention intense à tous les détails de son entour. Cette vigilance aiguillonne l'écriture'.[31] Attention and seeing, and their transformative potential are key to both ecoliteracy and to Chamoiseau's approach in this essay, as well as being important in many of his other works.

In 'Le Diamant', the phrase 'la beauté comme conscience', which forms part of the essay's title, creates an echo with the ideas Chamoiseau explored in *Les neuf consciences* and the character of le Foufou who encouraged the Malfini's discovery of the 'beauté' found in life through a sense of ecological consciousness and the realisation of a 'horizontale plénitude du vivant', which included 'chaque *présence au monde*' [original emphasis] (173). At the end of *Les neuf consciences,* Chamoiseau wrote: 'Il n'y a de beauté que dans la divination d'une horizontale plénitude du vivant. Il n'y a de divination d'une horizontale plénitude du vivant que dans la beauté.'[32] In this essay, Chamoiseau returns to the concepts of 'une haute conscience' which, he writes, demands a move towards a 'horizontale plénitude du vivant' as a humbling move away from humans being placed 'à la verticale au centre de la nature' (119). He explains that '[l]a haute conscience est faite de bonne et de mauvaise conscience, ni béatitude, ni catastrophisme, juste l'alerte d'une poétique sensible alliée à ce que nous enseigne la science écologique' (119). Early in the essay, Chamoiseau explains the difference between his usage of the words 'beauté' and 'beau'. For him, 'beauté' is about renewal and change, or 'un surgissement toujours renouvelé';

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[31] Samia Kassab-Charfi, *Patrick Chamoiseau* (Paris: Gallimard/Institut français, 2012), p. 10.
[32] Chamoiseau, *Les neuf consciences*, p 229.

concurrently, '[la beauté est] toujours neuve, bouleversante toujours' (114). The repetition of the word 'toujours' here is key, as it is not a simple or negative change that Chamoiseau is describing. Rather, he is emphasising the cyclical notions of life cycles and ecosystems, and this approach is suggestive of the symbolism of a spiral found in both Glissant and Chamoiseau's work and which is linked to learning and *Relation* in *Les neuf consciences*. This description also echoes Glissant's concept of *Antillanité* in which he argues that a Caribbean identity is a never-ending process of *créolisation*.[33] This idea contrasts with the stationary 'beau', which Chamoiseau describes as 'une grâce ancienne, banalisé en convention, immobilisé en esthétique' (114), which is also negatively affected by tourism and a 'cliché touristique' (114). This echoes Chamoiseau's arguments against the rigidity of French colonialism and ongoing French domination through the imposition of neo-colonial structures including tourism. He uses this distinction to point out how the Rocher du Diamant is linked to *haute conscience* because it is 'une beauté' (114), constantly changing depending on the angle it is viewed from and revealing more about the Caribbean landscape than the *doudouist* images perpetuated by superficial package tourism, which he would describe using 'beau', and which he sees as being static. He writes that 'la splendeur de la baie se découvre dans l'alchimie d'une configuration immuable et d'une magnificence néanmoins toujours neuve' (114).

Consciousness is also suggested in terms of becoming more aware of our surroundings in order to preserve the Earth, and learning about ecosystems that make up the world for the sake of the world itself. This idea of Earth-centred mindfulness is found in Buddhist teachings of humanity and nature being, or becoming, one, and this informs

[33] Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*.

Chamoiseau's discussion of the Baie du Diamant. In terms of the gendered difference between the two words 'beau' and 'beauté', the *mornes* surrounding the rock, forming part of the landscape alongside the bay that he describes as 'une beauté' are compared visually to a 'une femme couchée' (114). The natural landmark that he is referencing here is Morne Larcher, located at the boundary between Le Diamant and Les Anses d'Arlet, and the location where the Larcher family — Barthélemy and Madeleine (a 'mulatto' *esclave affranchi*) — who are, as Hardwick points out, infamous for forming the first Martinican mixed-race marriage,[34] owned a house.[35] The *morne* is known locally as *la femme couchée* or *la femme endormie* due to the shapes evoking a woman's form that can be seen against the horizon when viewed from the Baie du Diamant. The female body and the gendered use of the word 'beauté' are linked here, evoking a sense of a gendered mother nature and a nurturing of the environment, which contrasts with the use of 'beau', suggestive here of colonial masculinity and destruction through the link to the doudouists and postcolonial over-tourism. Knepper highlights that Chamoiseau has been criticised for using binary gender stereotypes, and that 'Chamoiseau's gender politics are seen as problematic by those who argue that he advances an erotic, exoticizing image of the Caribbean, particularly Martinique',[36] and these themes seem evident in this section of his essay, despite his arguments that he is rejecting doudouist imagery of the Martinican landscape.

Chamoiseau also links 'beauté' to the concept of *trace-mémoire* through his argument that the landscape must '[rayonner] […] du plus profond', acknowledging culture

[34] In her monograph *Joseph Zobel*, Hardwick provides the following reference, which discusses an unusual inheritance trial: Émile Hayot, *Les Gens de couleur libre du Fort Royal (1679-1823)* (Paris: Société française d'histoire des outre-mers, 1971, re-edited in 2005), p. 115.

[35] Hardwick, *Joseph Zobel*, pp. 119-121.

[36] Knepper, *Patrick Chamoiseau: A Critical Introduction*, p. 49.

to avoid becoming frozen as ‘beau’, which he equates to becoming ‘insignifiant’ (117). This discussion of conscience in terms of the links to ancestors echoes the Malfini’s exploration of Alaya in *Les neuf consciences*. In ‘Le Diamant’, the author writes that the landscape is a monument in a ‘constellation de “Traces”’, and quotes Glissant: ‘les paysages sont nos seuls monuments’, to argue not only that the landscape contains the trajectories of those who have been there before, and no longer is it simply about statues and ruins that are only related to colonisation, but also that: ‘*C’est notre désir du pays, et l’exigence que nous en avons, qui définit le patrimoine. Et qui l’invente aussi*’ [original emphasis] (117). He continues by writing that the landscape for him, as it was for Glissant, is what the imagination makes of it, that is to say that if the imagination is dominated, it only (re)produces those images that are found in touristic depictions, as ‘beau’. However, if the imagination is ‘verticale a l’intérieure, sensible au lieu et attentive au monde’, it radiates with energy and ‘beauté’ (117). He links the aesthetics, politics and poetics of Aimé Césaire and Glissant’s writing on the landscape to state that it is now time to understand that the ‘beauté’ of the landscape relies on ‘connaissance’ and ‘savoir’ (117), linking his own writing to the scientific ecological writing that accompanies it within *Le Grand Livre*, thus arguing for an interdisciplinary approach.

Towards the end of the essay, Chamoiseau asks his reader: ‘La biodiversité participe-t-elle de la beauté d’un paysage?’, responding affirmatively and adding that ‘[d]ans toute beauté, il y a une plénitude de vie’ (118), thus linking his concept of ‘horizontale plénitude du vivant’ to biodiversity and the idea of ‘beauté’ as constantly renewing, changing and being more than visual. This question immediately follows a paragraph dedicated to describing what he has witnessed up to the time the essay was written in 2011 in terms of

the changing biodiversity and landscape of Martinique. He lists animals which are, or are becoming, extinct around Le Diamant and provides descriptions of them, which could be for the benefit of educating non-local readers as well as potentially evoking a sense of shared nostalgia with Martinican readers, enhanced by his use of 'nos' and 'nous'. First, he describes the 'crabes jaunes' of which there used to be so many that they looked like a carpet moving magically across the beach 'sous nos pas' (118). He then poetically describes 'la bacchanale rouge' of the 'touloulous' (118), which could be a reference to a drama or carnival in terms of the visual movement of the male crabs beating the ground during mating season. *Touloulous* are a red crab, also known as a blackback land crab, originating from the Caribbean region;[37] he writes that they are disappearing and that they used to be found in roots of 'mancenilliers',[38] in the 'amandiers-pays',[39] and under the 'raisiniers' (118),[40] and they gave the impression of fleeing from 'diablesses', a Caribbean folk figure. He also mentions another type of crab that has disappeared, the 'crabes zagayas',[41] which lived in the ocean spray/waves of *cayes* (a sandy surface on coral reefs). In addition, he mentions the 'colles-roches',[42] named after their suction cups, and the 'oursins noirs',[43] which use spikes as a defence mechanism, and are also no longer there (118). He adds that he no longer

[37] Aquarium La Rochelle, *Blackback Land Crab* (n.d), <https://www.aquarium-larochelle.com/en/species-encyclopedia/blackback-land-crab/> [accessed 14 June 2022].

[38] A toxic coastal tree called *Hippomane Mancinella*. Britannica, *Manchineel* (n.d), <https://www.britannica.com/plant/manchineel> [accessed 28 March 2023].

[39] An introduced plant native to Asia, called *Terminalia catappa*. Britannica, *Indian Almond* (n.d), <https://www.britannica.com/plant/Indian-almond> [accessed 28 March 2023].

[40] A native coastal tree called *Coccoloba uvifera*. Eric Schmidt, 'Seagrape (Coccoloba uvifera)', *Ornamental Outlook*, 18(5) (2009), p. 26.

[41] Martinique A nu, *Crabe Zagaya* (n.d), <http://martiniqueannu.com/faune-martinique/crabe-zagaya> [accessed 14 June 2022].

[42] A type of fish called *Sicydium*; see: Direction de l'Environnement, de l'Aménagement et du Logement, *Poissons d'eau douce* (23 August 2022), <https://www.martinique.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/poissons-d-eau-douce-a1497.html> [accessed 14 June 2022].

[43] The *Arbacia lixula*; see: Institut océanographique Paul Ricard, *Orsin Noir* (n.d), <https://www.institut-paul-ricard.org/especes_aquarium/oursin-noir/> [accessed 17 June 2022].

regularly sees an insect called 'punaises rouges',[44] which used to gather under the *catalpas* (a flowering tree native to the Caribbean, North America, and East Asia), and in the 'mangles-oseille' (dodonea, or varnish leaf). He continues, writing that 'les anolis' — a type of iguanian lizard native to the Americas, of which there are 379 extant species[45] — and 'les araignées dont les pièges remplissaient les sous-bois de féeries luisantes' are now rarely found (118). This description of magical spider webs is similar to that found in *Les neuf consciences*.[46] Much like in this earlier novel, in 'Le Diamant' Chamoiseau is describing animals and plants in an imaginative way to spark interest from the reader in the region's natural environment that moves beyond the images of clean, white, sandy beaches dotted with palm trees, and to show that looking closely at details can create an intense, almost magical, connection. He also writes that there are changes happening in the sea, such as on the seabed where 'une algue étouffe les roches' (118), which could be a reference to the Sargassum seaweed, discussed in chapter four. He also writes that 'les gorgones' (a type of soft coral, *Alcyonacea*[47]) 'sont tristes', and '[l]es coraux semblent pâlir' (118): coral bleaching, as a result of rising sea temperatures, was present in the list of changes given to le Foufou and the Malfini by the seabirds in *Les neuf consciences*. As for the incredible diversity of 'poissons de rochers' that 'assuraient le spectacle des plongées', he writes that they no longer have the same vitality, but he is unsure why (118).

[44] These are likely *Dysdercus andreae*; see: Association Martinique Entomologie, *A quelques détails près* (5 July 2015), <http://www.association-martinique-entomologie.fr/2015/07/a-quelques-details-pres.html> [accessed 20 June 2022].
[45] Steven Poe et al., 'A Phylogenetic, Biogeographic, and Taxonomic study of all Extant Species of *Anolis* (Squamata; Iguanidae)', *Systematic Biology* 66(5) (2017), 663-697.
[46] Chamoiseau, *Les neuf consciences*, p. 66.
[47] World Register of Marine Species, *Alcyonecea* (n.d), <https://marinespecies.org/aphia.php?p=taxdetails&id=1365> [accessed 20 June 2022].

In listing all these animals and plants and where they live in relation to one another, Chamoiseau points to the complexity and biodiversity of the region's ecosystem and capitalises on the unfamiliarity of their names and characteristics for visitors, as most are not found elsewhere. It is possible that many more animals and plants have disappeared from the region since he wrote this essay in 2011. In a 2000 article in *Nature*, Norman Myers et al. state that the Caribbean was one of the 'hottest hotspots' for biodiversity conservation priorities, pointing out that at the time of writing there were 7000 endemic plants, 779 endemic vertebrates, and 11.3% remaining primary vegetation (as a percentage of original extent).[48] The need for conservation has been partly responded to by the French government and organisations focusing on the Caribbean region. Conservation efforts are taking place in Martinique, as demonstrated in October 2019, under the leadership of Louis Boutrin, Franck Robine (Préfet de la Martinique between 2017-2020) and Patrick Falcone (a representative from the Office Naturel des Forêts (ONF)), when a proposition was made to the Comité Français au Patrimoine Mondial (CPFM), who agreed to put forward a proposal requesting UNESCO World Heritage status for some natural monuments in Martinique, including Le Diamant:

> Plusieurs sites naturels de Martinique sont concernés par cette démarche d'inscription. Il s'agit du mont Conil et de la Montagne Pelée, des pitons du Carbet, du Morne-Vert et du Morne Jacob, de la presqu'île de la Caravelle, de la presqu'île des Trois-Ilets et du Rocher du Diamant ainsi que de plusieurs aires dispersées du sud du territoire.[49]

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[48] Norman Myers et al., 'Biodiversity hotspots for conservation priorities', *Nature*, 403 (2000), 853-858 <https://doi.org/10.1038/35002501>.

[49] 'Unesco: la candidature de la Martinique est acceptée', *Martinique la 1ère* (22 October 2019), <https://la1ere.francetvinfo.fr/martinique/unesco-candidature-martinique-est-acceptee-763415.html> [accessed 17 June 2022]. For more information, see: #Martinique Merveille Du Monde, *Actualités* (n.d), <https://martiniquemerveilledumonde.com/actualites/> [accessed 17 June 2022].

The project for UNESCO candidacy started around the same time that Chamoiseau's essay was published, and an article in the Martinican weekly magazine *Antilla* commented that Chamoiseau himself launched the UNESCO campaign with a petition.[50] He appears to have been actively involved in this project between 2012-2015 as the Chef de projet Grand Saint-Pierre,[51] and has very recently written about the importance of Mount Pelée in relation to the UNESCO bid, describing it as 'le Volcan liberté', linking it to the poetry of Césaire and Glissant.[52] His links to this project demonstrate how Chamoiseau's conservation activism goes hand in hand with his literary output and academic engagement. A proposal for two of these locations to be added to the World Heritage list, Mount Pelée and des Pitons du Carbet, was submitted by the French government to UNESCO on 21 January 2021, and a decision was due to be made in June 2022 during the 45th session of the World Heritage Committee in Russia which was postponed due to the ongoing war in Ukraine,[53] and which will now be held in September 2023 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.[54] The team behind the UNESCO bid argue for Mount Pelée and les Pitons du Carbet to be recognised for their beauty and biodiversity, and suggest that tourism to Martinique will increase by 40% per year if these

[50] Antilla, *Patrick Chamoiseau lance sa campagne…* (2011) <https://antilla-martinique.com/patrick-chamoiseau-lance-sa-campagne/> [accessed 21 June 2022]; Chamoiseau has been a long-standing contributor to *Antilla,* as Knepper notes in her monograph *Patrick Chamoiseau: A Critical Introduction,* p. 12; 41; 190-191.
[51] #Martinique Merveille Du Monde, *Gouvernance — Pilotage* (n.d), <https://martiniquemerveilledumonde.com/gouvernance/> [accessed 17 June 2022].
[52] Patrick Chamoiseau, 'Pour Patrick Chamoiseau, la montagne Pelée est "un sanctuaire de la dignité humaine" qui mérite d'entrer au Patrimoine mondial de l'Unesco', *L'OBS* (2 April 2023), <https://www.nouvelobs.com/opinions/20230402.OBS71648/pour-patrick-chamoiseau-la-montagne-pelee-est-un-sanctuaire-de-la-dignite-humaine-qui-merite-d-entrer-au-patrimoine-mondial-de-l-unesco.html?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook#Echobox=1680421226> [accessed 5 April 2023].
[53] Parc Naturel Régional de la Martinique, *UNESCO: la Martinique reste mobilisée pour son inscription au Patrimoine Mondial*, (2022) <http://pnr-martinique.com/actualites/unesco-la-martinique-reste-mobilisee-pour-son-inscription-au-patrimoine-mondial/> [accessed 20 June 2022].
[54] Etienne, Guy, 'Patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO: la candidature de la Martinique sera finalement examinée en septembre 2023', *Martinique la 1ère* (30 January 2023), <https://la1ere.francetvinfo.fr/martinique/patrimoine-mondiale-de-l-unesco-la-candidature-de-la-martinique-sera-finalement-examinee-en-septembre-2023-1361342.html> [accessed 28 February 2023].

sites are added to the UNESCO list, while also insisting there is planning in place to ensure sustainable tourism.[55]

There are other significant conservation sites in Martinique. The creation of Le Parc naturel marin de Martinique was signed off by a group of French politicians, including then Prime Minister Bernard Cazeneuve and then Environment Minister Ségolène Royal on 5 May 2017. The aims of the marine park, which covers 48,900 km^2 and is the second largest natural marine park in France and overseas territories after one in Mayotte, are to improve knowledge of and to protect sea life, such as mangroves, sea grass and reefs, and to contribute 'au développement durable des activités maritimes', according to the Office Français de la Biodiversité (OFB), an organisation set up on 1 January 2020 to protect and restore biodiversity in France, including overseas territories.[56]

A large group of organisations work to protect the biodiversity of Martinique from within the PNRM[57] as part of a collaborative project called L'Observatoire Martiniquais de la Biodiversite (OMB).[58] Since May 2015, the organisation has been led by, and situated in, the PNRM, who estimate that within this area (which covers the majority of Martinique) there are over 3000 species of flora and over 230 species of animals.[59] The organisation is made up of 41 members based in both metropolitan France and Martinique and Guadeloupe. At a

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[55] #Martinique Merveille Du Monde, *Tourisme* (n.d), <https://martiniquemerveilledumonde.com/tourisme/> [accessed 17 June 2022].
[56] Office Français de la Biodiversité, *Le Parc naturel marin de Martinique* (n.d), <https://www.ofb.gouv.fr/le-parc-naturel-marin-de-martinique> [accessed 17 June 2022].
[57] Parc Naturel Régional de la Martinique, *Accueil* (n.d), <http://pnr-martinique.com/> [accessed 20 June 2022].
[58] L'Observatoire Martiniquais de la Biodiversité, (no title), (n.d), <http://www.biodiversite-martinique.fr/> [accessed 18 June 2022]. The members who contribute financially to the project are PNRM, CTM, DEAL, and ODE; see: L'Observatoire Martiniquais de la Biodiversité, *Brochure de présentation de l'OMB* (n.d) <http://www.biodiversite-martinique.fr/sites/default/files/omb-brochure_de_presentation_2017_parc_naturel_de_martinique_2017.pdf> [accessed 17 June 2022].
[59] *Ibid*.

pragmatic level, it is important to note the large number of organisations working on this project and to question the effectiveness of such a large group of differing organisations in terms of meaningful action. However, one of the greatest achievements of the OMB is providing an accessible and exhaustive digital resource, the *Bibliothèque numérique* (with corresponding links to resources) comprising over 1000 documents on Martinique's biodiversity, compiled by the members of the OMB and grouped into categories such as 'Géodiversité'.[60] The project corresponds to one of their main objectives to collect and distribute knowledge on the Martinique's biodiversity while raising awareness of the existence of different flora and fauna, the threats they face, and what can be done to protect them.[61] The PNRM has also launched Label Zéro Chlordécone, a project to improve traceability of *chlordécone* within the agricultural system, which they state will support their wider 'missions de valorisation et du protection du patrimoine naturel et culturel de Martinique', by allowing farmers to market produce to consumers as 'zero' *chlordécone*.[62] In 2019, the PNRM also announced that a mobile application was being launched to 'assurer la fiabilité de la distribution et la traçabilité des produits labellisés.'[63]

As well as the physical consumption of this environment in terms of the disappearance of species of plants and animals, in 'Le Diamant', Chamoiseau also discusses the metaphorical consumption of the region's environment which he appears to blame for

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[60] L'Observatoire Martiniquais de la Biodiversité, *Bibliothèque Numérique* (n.d), <http://www.biodiversite-martinique.fr/bibliotheque-numerique> [accessed 18 June 2022].

[61] L'Observatoire Martiniquais de la Biodiversité, *Missions* (n.d), <https://www.biodiversite-martinique.fr/article/missions> [accessed 18 June 2022].

[62] Parc Naturel Régional de la Martinique, *Label zéro chlordécone*.

[63] Parc Naturel Régional de la Martinique, *ZERO CHLORDECONE: Une application numérique pour les produits labellisés et disponibles en grande surface* (2019), <http://pnr-martinique.com/actualites/zero-chlordecone-une-application-numerique-pour-les-produits-labellises-et-disponibles-en-grande-surface/> [accessed 20 June 2022].

the way in which the physical environment has been threatened and for the lack of a relationship between Martinicans and their environment: 'Devant une telle splendeur, la littérature de notre génération défaille. Une fatalité pèse sur notre rapport à la beauté de nos paysages' (115). Chamoiseau writes about the 'discovery' of the region and the descriptions of the environment written by the 'doudouistes'. While Chamoiseau does not name any specific *doudouistes*, the *doudouisme* of the land, and people, was particularly pronounced in Antillean writing around the turn of the twentieth century and can be traced back to accounts of later colonial European voyages such as *Histoire générale des Antilles* (1654;1667-1671)[64] written by Du Tertre and Labat's *Nouveau Voyage aux îles de l'Amérique* (1722;1742),[65] amongst others. An example of the language used to describe the land, in a section of Du Tertre's *Histoire générale* from 1654 entitled 'Description de la terre toute nue' is: 'l'Isle, que les Sauuages [*sic*] appelloient [*sic*] *Karukera,* & que les Europeans [*sic*] nomment *Guadeloupe*, à cause de la beauté, & de la bonté de ses eaux.'[66] Kullberg recently wrote extensively about Du Tertre's work, pointing out that he was writing an account of 'l'ailleurs adapté aux goûts européens et intègre dans une harmonie codée par les normes de l'époque'.[67] Thus, while *doudouisme* began as a response to writers such as Du Tertre

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[64] Published first as Père Jean-Baptiste Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des Isles de Saint-Christophe, de la Guadeloupe, de la Martinique et autres dans l'Amérique […]* (Paris: Jacques et Emmanuel Langlois, 1954) <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9801488s?rk=42918;4> [accessed 30 June 2022]; and reissued (and expanded) as *Histoire générale des Antilles habitées par les François […]* (Paris: Thomas Jolly, 1667-1671) [https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1140206?rk=21459;2> [accessed 30 June 2022].
[65] Published first as Père Jean-Baptiste Labat, *Nouveau voyage aux Isles de l'Amérique Contenant L'Histoire Naturelle de ces Pays, l'Origine, les Mœurs, la Religion & le Gouvernement des Habitans anciens & modernes […]* (Paris: Guillaume Cavelier, 1722) <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k741010?rk=21459;2> [accessed 30 June 2022].; and reissued (and expanded) as *Nouveau voyage aux Isles de l'Amérique Contenant L'Histoire Naturelle de ces Pays, l'Origine, les Mœurs, la Religion & le Gouvernement des Habitans anciens & modernes […]* (Paris: Guillaume Cavelier, 1742) <https://archive.org/details/nouveauvoyageaux09laba/page/n7/mode/2up?view=theater> [accessed 30 June 2022].
[66] Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des isles de Saint-Christophe*, p. 14.
[67] Christina Kullberg, *Lire l'Histoire générale des Antilles de J.-B. Du Tertre* (Boston: Brill, 2021), pp. 186-187.

writing according to European 'norms' as Kullberg highlights, it became even more problematic when a process that can be understood as postcolonial mimicry, as explored in chapter two with reference to Bhabha, led to Martinican-born writers themselves presenting the landscape through the lens of *doudouisme*. In her analysis of Suzanne Césaire's staunch critique of doudouism in *Tropiques*, Curtius explains that:

> *Doudouisme* is this intertwining of exoticism, assimilation, political patriarchy, the male colonial gaze, and a feminized vision of the islands that Suzanne Césaire rebuffs as a deficient paradigm for the architecture of a new Martinican literature.[68]

Hardwick points out that the literary tradition of *doudouisme* originated from the word *doudou*, used to describe 'a stereotypically beautiful, desirable Creole woman', and the landscape was presented in a similar way — inviting, exotic, and a commodity.[69] She also quotes Pépin, who wrote that 'doudouisme conceals reality behind a mask that serves a poetics of deterritorialization',[70] thus it can be argued that in 'Le Diamant', Chamoiseau is urging for a new way of seeing and depicting the beauty of the landscape, which will run counter to and surpass the accounts found in *doudouisme*, through the acknowledgement of what lies beneath the landscape, both in terms of the *trace-mémoire* and natural ecosystems. Curtius states that Suzanne Césaire was already advancing a similar process in the following ways:

> by deconstructing the geography of utopia that is prevalent in the *doudou* ideology and that threatens to camouflage the colonial sociopolitical reality of the island, [Suzanne Césaire] offers a methodology that is deeply inscribed within the ecopolitical dimension of the *morne* so that the "great game of hide-and-seek" ("The Great Camouflage") does not prevail.[71]

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[68] Curtius, 'Cannibalizing Doudouisme', 518.
[69] Hardwick, *Childhood*, p. 133.
[70] Ernest Pépin, 'The Place of Space in Novels of the Créolité Movement', in *Ici-là: Place and Displacement in Caribbean Writing in French*, ed. by Mary Gallagher (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), pp. 1-23 (p. 2).
[71] Curtius, 'Cannibalizing Doudouisme', 528.

In ‘Le Diamant’, Chamoiseau deconstructs this ‘geography of utopia’ through his use of *trace-mémoire*. He argues that the true ‘beauté’ of the landscape needs to be reflected on alongside the uncovering of what (metaphorically) lies beneath and within it. This includes the ‘mémoires qui dorment’, as he described them in *Trésors Cachés,* and the ‘souvenirs perdus’ that make up part of the Rocher, as he writes in ‘Le Diamant’. He makes this argument alongside highlighting the difficulties that the non-human world is facing, thus deconstructing this image of the Baie and Rocher as ‘utopia’, or ‘paradise’.

For Chamoiseau, Aimé Césaire argued strongly against the doudouist writers because they ‘décrivaient un paradis là où la négritude dénoncera un enfer’ (116); against the backdrop of slavery, colonialism, and exploitation, the doudouists were celebrating the splendour of the very landscape they were exploiting. Regrettably, Chamoiseau does not engage directly with Suzanne Césaire’s equally pertinent analyses. Chamoiseau argues that there is now a lack of writing about the environment in Francophone Caribbean literature because after Aimé Césaire’s ‘anathema’, writers did not want to describe the beauty of the landscapes for fear of ‘la damnation doudouiste’ (116). He argues that no poet, painter, or photographer dared to write about:

> l’élégance stupéfiante des cocotiers, la grâce du sable qui fait blancheur ou qui scintille en de sombres secrets. Plus personne n’ose célébrer les bleus chauds et froids de la mer et du ciel, ou l’infinie merveille des fleurs et des verdures (116).

He compares himself to the ‘doudouistes aveugles’ as he stands and admires the Rocher du Diamant but comments that what he experiences is different as he is not looking with ‘désengagement’ or ‘aliénation’ (116), but with a deep appreciation. He uses *aliénation* here to differentiate between himself and the doudouists to highlight that they wrote as visitors

and for an outside audience, rather than writing about the landscape from an internal perspective and as someone who feels connected to, and engaged with, the land. He writes that despite being an *indépendantiste* and against industrial tourism, 'c'est là [au Diamant] que j'appris que notre amour du pays [. . .] pouvait et devait désormais *accueillir la pleine célébration de cette nature si généreuse*' [original emphasis] (116). For the author, the Rocher du Diamant is about more than visual beauty as it represents 'un indéniable bouleversement de conscience, au sens fécondant de ce terme' (116).

The beach itself, one of the central elements of Chamoiseau's essay, has been presented in the novels analysed in this thesis in many different ways. In *Texaco*, the sand of the beach, as 'alourdi de sel et travaillé de fer', was contrasted to the sand of the volcano, as 'déjà du bon sable',[72] to represent the fraught relationship between Martinicans and the beach due to the collective memory of the transatlantic slave trade. Evoking a similar tense relationship to the beach in *Le Cœur*, *Mets* and *Victoire*, the sea was presented by Condé as a peaceful place to observe, yet a frightening place to experience as a swimmer or on a boat. Here, in 'Le Diamant', the beach is presented as a site of reconciliation between Martinicans and their land. It is the starting point for Chamoiseau, demonstrating that the beach extends beyond the exoticised imaginary seen in colonial writings and post-colonial tourist depictions of the region. Its chaos can be seen as a positive element. Moreover, the sand is presented as a site of reconciliation in contrast to the way in which Chamoiseau described the sand of the beach in *Texaco*. He writes in 'Le Diamant': 'Au lever du soleil, son sable est une présence ardente, dont on ne sait plus si elle est blanche, grise ou noire, à croire qu'elle mélange des souvenirs de coraux à de sombres remontées d'une lave très ancienne' (115).

[72] Chamoiseau, *Texaco*, p. 56.

Here, the sand represents a mixing of memories and not being able to tell what colour the sand is shows he believes that within the beach there is universal memory and a *collectivité* uniting the islands and different groups of people who have lived there, and uniting nature and humanity.

The Solution — Conscious Reconciliation

Whereas, as seen in the previous chapter, Condé presented in *Mets* and *Victoire* a suggestion for reconciliation between humans and nature that involved the practice of cooking to bring together different ingredients, as well as demonstrating her own connection to the Caribbean land, in his essay, Chamoiseau focuses on a collective reconciliation with the land centred on mindfulness and awareness of the direct and indirect effects humans have on it. Explicitly referencing Glissant's influence, Chamoiseau writes that:

> Quand Glissant dit "les paysages sont nos seuls monuments" [...] Glissant le dit pour signaler que nous avons encore à nous en emparer, à les habiller de nos histoires, avec ou sans les historiens. *C'est notre désir du pays, et l'exigence que nous en avons, qui définit le patrimoine. Et qui l'invente aussi* [original emphasis] (117).

In *Le Discours antillais*, Glissant argued that land is essential in the process of creating history and thus the landscape in Francophone Caribbean literature 'est un personnage de cette histoire',[73] and therefore an integral part of understanding Francophone Caribbean postcolonial identity. Linking back to the distinctions he had drawn between 'beau' and 'beauté at the beginning of his essay, Chamoiseau writes:

[73] Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*, p. 343.

> Pour Glissant, le paysage est d'abord ce que nos imaginaires peuvent en faire. Si l'imaginaire est dominé, le paysage s'échoue dans les pellicules du touristique et les modifications du "beau". Si l'imaginaire est à vif, à la verticale d'une autorité intérieure, sensible au lieu et attentif au monde, le paysage alors se met à rayonner, à fournir de l'éclat, de la fierté, du sens, de l'énergie, et finalement de la beauté au combat que l'on mène (117).

Loichot has highlighted the importance of the Rocher du Diamant for Glissant, commenting that: '[it] became the epicenter of Glissant's fiction, poetry, and philosophy.'[74] It is highly significant, therefore, that Chamoiseau has chosen this site as the focal point of his discussion of memory, *Trace*, consciousness, his theory of 'l'horizontale plénitude du vivant', and biodiversity, especially as Glissant died just eight months before 'Le Diamant' was published, suggesting this historic landmark has taken on a symbolic function as a continuous connection between the two authors' works, despite Glissant's passing.

In terms of the landscape at Le Diamant, Loichot points out that visually it 'offers a striking contrast between the horizontal and the vertical', describing the site as follows:

> The dramatic abruptness of Diamond Rock, a formation of 175 meters, and the imposing Morne Larcher, a gigantic mount resembling the bust of a recumbent woman, break the horizontality of the longest beach in Martinique. The juxtaposition of these two opposites recalls the poetic taste for extremes Glissant has expressed, for instance, in *Poétique de la Relation.*[75]

This 'taste for extremes' can also be said of Chamoiseau, who regularly contrasts the vertical and the horizontal in his later writing. In 'Le Diamant', he associates the vertical with 'beau', and the horizontal with 'beauté', yet metaphorically for him, the *mornes*, the beach and the rock itself are all connected horizontally across time and space, and it is the touristic depictions of these sites that he sees as being associated with the vertical 'beau'.

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[74] Loichot, *Water Graves*, p. 32.
[75] *Ibid*.

In *Solibo Magnifique*, the Rocher du Diamant is presented as something that 'wants to escape the island' and is metaphorically inaccessible despite repeated cries:

> 'et sur ma gueule de sable à grosse bave je hèle je hèle je hèle sans débander un rocher qui veut nous échapper?
>
> *Diamant*!'[76]

Yet in 'Le Diamant', the rock is presented as a site of reconciliation between past and present, as a keeper of memories, and as somewhere that seems to respond to his calls. Although it has been shown throughout this thesis that a major argument in postcolonial scholarship about the Francophone Caribbean focuses on a disconnect between people and their land, both Chamoiseau and Condé demonstrate in their works that despite spending time abroad they have a strong and unexplained connection to the Antillean land. It appears that both authors imply that the land 'speaks' to them in a way that other places do not, echoing Glissant's argument that the land holds memory and history. In the previous chapter, it was evident that Condé feels a deep connection to the Guadeloupean natural landscape that she cannot explain, which is comparable to Chamoiseau's writing about Martinique. In 'Le Diamant' the same 'concert de voix subtiles'[77] that Condé linked to her connection to the land in *Mets* is expressed by Chamoiseau as he sits on the beach and looks at the Rocher du Diamant and 'le salue comme une grande personne', describing its *trace-mémoire* in the 'souvenirs perdus', 'os des vieux Anglais', fientes de sept peuples d'oiseaux', 'piquetages de la pierre' and 'coulees de cactus' that are mixed together to make up this 'Cathédrale minérale' (115). He describes these encounters as 'cérémonies secrètes' (115)

[76] Chamoiseau, *Solibo Magnifique*, p. 223.
[77] Condé, *Mets*, p. 133.

and 'liturgies en face du rocher' (119) which allow him to be attentive to his every step, as if he is in dialogue with the rock and listening to what it tells him, much as Condé has described the land speaking to her. There is also a religious link here in the terms 'Cathédrale' and 'liturgies', which could be linked to either Christianity or Buddhism, but that express the mindful consciousness that Chamoiseau promotes through this attention to detail which considers both the *trace-mémoire* of Le Diamant and the diverse ecosystems that live there, have lived there, and will live there. He states that these ceremonies 'aident ma vigilance, forcent ma concentration, me rendent à la fois soucieux et très heureux' (119), which is evocative of le Foufou's links to Buddhist mindfulness in *Les neuf consciences*.

The final paragraph of 'Le Diamant' explains that Chamoiseau has become more mindful and conscious of the landscape at Le Diamant and practical suggestions for how others can connect with the environment through processes highly evocative of ecoliteracy. He encourages his reader to become more actively attentive to the environment through his descriptions of counting bees and helping sea turtles who return to the beach at night to lay eggs, and their hatchlings who make their way to the sea (119). He also comments that this landscape enables him to feel a closeness with Amerindians, of whom he finds traces 'dans chaque grain de sable' (119), a link also expressed in *Les neuf consciences* through the Colibri and the plot of the story being related to a Quechuan fable (as discussed in chapter four). Another link to *Les neuf consciences* can be found in this final paragraph as Chamoiseau writes that the malfinis salute him from Morne Larcher, echoing his encounter with the Malfini which led to the novel's narrative. Chamoiseau ends his essay by stating that '[d]es politiques écologiques doivent se mettre en place pour sauvegarder les équilibres majeurs dans l'ensemble du pays, mais les petits équilibres quotidiens sont à la charge de notre seule

vigilance' (119). This, again, speaks back to the message in *Les neuf consiences* that every small action, and every small being, can make a difference and that all these differences can come together to enforce positive change.

Conclusion

Despite the lack of concrete examples of the environmental threats facing Martinique in much of Chamoiseau's work, in *Trésors cachés,* he does include a list, punctuated by full stops, describing what he sees when he looks more closely at his surroundings in 'Le Diamant' (much like the list found in the middle of *Les neuf consciences*). The heavy use of punctuation slows the pace and allows each threat to linger in the space of its own sentence:

> Déforestation. Agriculture à pesticides. Infestation des nappes phréatiques. Épuisement des eaux. Rejets de distillerie. Présence de métaux lourds dans les sédiments des baies. Dislocation insidieuse des mangroves. Érosion et épuisement des sols. Surpêche. Concentrations urbaines. Diminution rapide de la biodiversité. Progression de l'asphalte et du béton. Effets de réchauffement que nous contribuons à augmenter…[78]

Chamoiseau seems to blame this concerning situation on 'l'ivresse d'un "développement" aveugle…',[79] which speaks to the representation of the Malfini in *Les neuf consciences* as blind to everything around him up until his encounter with le Foufou, as well as echoing the lists of the migratory and sea birds in the middle of the book.

As discussed in chapter four, Chamoiseau highlights ecological issues in many of his novels and essays without offering concrete solutions. 'Le Diamant' is similar in this regard, yet it does move towards offering abstract solutions such as 'listening' to the Earth and

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[78] Chamoiseau and Anne Chopin, *Trésors cachés*, p. 7.
[79] *Ibid*.

'reading' the environment in a way that allows a better understanding of processes that occur in nature and our role as humans in those. He has also been actively involved in ecological issues; as already mentioned he was involved in the UNESCO Martinique project, and he was vice president of MODEMAS in the 1990s. He also regularly uses social media platforms Twitter and Facebook to disseminate his ideas about nature, consciousness, and the 'horizontale plénitude du vivant', as well as about colonialism, migration, and politics. In February 2020, Chamoiseau posted, alongside a photograph of palm trees, a *morne*, and the moon: 'La beauté est ce qui réinvente subitement le regard et qui, durant sans doute un bref instant, relie tout soudain la conscience à la totalité des ombres et des forces de l'esprit',[80] which echoes his words in 'Le Diamant'. In his latest book *Baudelaire Jazz*,[81] which sees another departure from his previous style, Chamoiseau brings together jazz music and the ideas he explored in *Les neuf consciences* and 'Le Diamant' around moving away from individualism and towards a sense of 'Person', in terms of consciousness as interconnectedness, and as such Chamoiseau is continuing the work of Glissantian *Relation.* The concept of 'Person', which Chamoiseau described in his 2022 article on Glissant as an 'entité de rencontres et de partages',[82] can be found in Buddhism — a concept of 'no-self' which has been discussed in detail by American philosopher Jay Garfield in his recent book.[83]

[80] Patrick Chamoiseau, (@PCHAMOISEAU, 2 February 2020) (tweet) <https://twitter.com/PCHAMOISEAU/status/1223883528057892864> [accessed 22 June 2022].

[81] Patrick Chamoiseau, *Baudelaire Jazz. Médiations poétiques et musicales avec Raphaël Imbert: partition pour chaos-opéra* (Paris: Seuil, 2022). The book is the result of collaborative performances between himself and Raphaël Imbert at le Musée d'Orsay in 2021 to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Baudelaire, in which Chamoiseau metaphorically invited the poet to reflect on the history of the slave plantations, where music was developed that would become Jazz, alongside oral storytelling, drums and dance. Also see: Musée d'Orsay, *Baudelaire jazz! Patrick Chamoiseau*, online video recording, YouTube, 18 October 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kK_kbdSga40> [accessed 22 June 2022].

[82] Chamoiseau, 'Toute la beauté relationnelle du monde', 126.

[83] Jay L. Garfield, *Losing Yourself: How to be a Person Without a Self* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022).

In his article, Chamoiseau writes that '[p]ar l'éthique d'un vivre-au-monde dans la rencontre et le partage, l'individu se construit sa Personne',[84] a way of living that was explored in *Les neuf consciences*. He argues that the alliances and networks of 'Persons' will contribute to, or replace, longstanding communities in which the identical was favoured over difference. Furthermore, he comments that this is what is meant by Glissant's term *Tout-Monde*,[85] as *mondialité*, and 'un imaginaire des flux relationnels en devenir bien plus proche des inaccessibles du réel et des modalités fondamentales du vivant', to include 'l'ensemble du vivant'.[86]

During a round-table discussion at Emory University in April 2017, Chamoiseau argued that we, as humans, need to find an alternative to capitalism and imperialism, but he says that he does not know why this cannot be found or what this will look like, or how it would operate in the 'real-world'. He presents many abstract suggestions: 'Aujourd'hui, nous devons construire des sociétés multi-trans-culturelles et des espaces multi-trans-culturelles donc des écosystèmes relationnelles',[87] which would preserve all forms of diversity and would exist without imperialism, in order to remove capitalism. This lack of 'knowing' suggests what Chamoiseau has previously discussed — that he is a poet and writer and that he sees his role as bringing problems to light and describing them, rather than solving them.

Chamoiseau presents many ecological problems, often in list form, to his reader, and does not tend to put forward any concrete solutions. As I argued in chapter four, this lack of

[84] Chamoiseau, 'Toute la beauté relationnelle du monde', 126.
[85] *Ibid*., 127.
[86] *Ibid*.
[87] Emory University, *Caribbean Discourses: A Roundtable with Patrick Chamoiseau*, online video recording, YouTube, 22 March 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHXFxf-tK4U> [accessed 19 May 2022], 78m10s.

solutions and lack of naming some of the processes behind the changes that he has noticed could be in part due to Chamoiseau's ecoliteral aims in encouraging his readers to become sensitive to these problems themselves and undertake their own journey of investigation: in that spirit, this chapter, along with previous chapters of this thesis, have tried to rise to Chamoiseau's challenge. He appears to argue that his role, as a poet and writer, is to bring these issues to the forefront of his readers' minds. Yet this is not to undermine the significance of his vision. In 'Le Diamant', as in *Les neuf consciences*, Chamoiseau encourages his reader to take small actions over which they have immediate control, and he argues for a shift so that both he and his readers can be understood as part of an 'écosystème relationnelle'[88] of life itself, thereby issuing a call for interdisciplinary collaboration to tackle the changing climate and appreciate, respect, and protect the Caribbean's — and the world's — biodiversity.

[88] IddriTV, *Dialogue avec Patrick Chamoiseau*, 40m16s.

CONCLUSION

The environment has proved a rich theme to investigate in works by Chamoiseau and Condé, and the semi-linear progression, in terms of publication dates of the texts, presented in this thesis has allowed an insight into the ways in which the authors' representations of the environment have evolved over time. Throughout the writing of this thesis, it has become clear that there are more connections between the two authors than it first appears. Although they are often written about in contrast to one another, there are distinct similarities that emerge over time in their works in relation to the sense of connection to the natural environment, and their efforts to highlight the importance of this connection in terms of the degradation of the environment. Furthermore, one of the important and original themes that emerges in the thesis is that of food, not only in terms of food security and sovereignty, but as a reminder of the construction of borders and boundaries that food does not know and the role food plays in the links between people and land as well as each other.

Both Chamoiseau and Condé's earlier novels, *Chronique* (1986) and semi-autobiographical *Le Cœur* (1999), discuss assimilation of identity in a postcolonial context, and they draw upon, and present, their consumption of the environment to explore ties to their places of birth and to the history of transatlantic enslavement in a Francophone colonial context. The authors have different messages in this regard; while Chamoiseau displays a militant representation of Creole identity as rooted in the history and land of

Martinique and the ways in which this has been repressed, Condé explores an alternative which allows a more nuanced approach to identity as a shifting phenomenon which also presents home as an unfixed location. In *Chronique,* Chamoiseau metaphorically consumes the land through personification to present it as a major, but often forgotten, part of history, and in *Le Cœur*, Condé presents a literal consumption of the land and the ways in which cooking plays a role in identity. The authors move further away from each other in terms of approaches to construction and consumption of their identities and the environment in their subsequent novels. In *Texaco* (1992), Chamoiseau presents an exploration of exile and home within the island of Martinique in terms of both natural (volcanic eruption) and anthropogenic (pollution and colonialism) destruction and obstruction of land. Condé cements her concept of the home as an unfixed location and explores the many different links that are contained within the construction and consumption of a meal with notions of home and a sense of identity linked to specific environments in her later semi-autobiographical books *Victoire* (2008) and *Mets* (2015). Meanwhile, Chamoiseau moves beyond the links between nature and humanity by presenting the natural world at the forefront of his narrative in *Les neuf consciences* (2009), alongside a Buddhist framework which encourages mindfulness. Subsequently in his essay 'Le Diamant' (2011), he develops the idea of mindfulness in a discussion of how humans can act with the natural environment to ensure it can thrive by looking more closely and acknowledging the importance of ecosystems. In all Chamoiseau's works studied here, he uses prose to engage the reader with environmental issues, although he tends to provide such information as a starting point, in a poetic and often abstract way, rather than proposing any specific solutions. His

novels also demonstrate a tendency to promote collective action, as opposed to the individualism that more often emerges in Condé’s work.

While the two authors’ approaches have tended to move further away from each other over the years, a similarity in their later outputs can be identified through the concept of ‘the horizontal’; while Chamoiseau directly engages with the idea and figures it as a ‘plénitude’ of life without boundaries, in which everything living — and beyond — is interconnected, Condé similarly argues that identity and particularly food and its associated environments are not anchored to any specific land, and are most potent when they extend horizontally across boundaries. The exploration of semi-autobiographical elements of Condé’s novels studied here stands in contrast with the exploration of Chamoiseau’s more fictional presentation of the Francophone Caribbean, yet both authors present their experiences of the construction and consumption of both the land and identities within the region in which they have roots. They both demonstrate that a deep connection to and a direct relationship with the land are already present, however much colonialism and its enduring structures in the post-colonial era have attempted to estrange Antilleans from their land, and they both discuss how to move forward to bring the region greater food autonomy and how to protect an already fragile environment.

In ‘Le Diamant’, Chamoiseau argues that it is necessary to move towards a reconciliation between humans and nature, and he returns to a concept of great importance in all the work studied here: ‘*une haute conscience*’. He writes that this demands ‘le geste respectueux, l’attention portée au moindre crabe, le souci du moindre raisinier, l’amour attentionné des touloulous, l’intérêt porté à la variété végétale et à l’emmêlement de leurs

histoires et de leurs origines', and is about 'l'alerte d'une poétique sensible alliée à ce que nous enseigne la science écologique'.[1] Throughout this thesis, it has been evident that both authors aim to bring political and ecological issues to the forefront, particularly regarding reconciliation between Antilleans and their land. While in *Victoire* and *Mets*, Condé pointed out the origins of many ingredients she uses and leads the reader away to research and reconsider where Caribbean food comes from and what a 'national dish' really is as a way of being more mindful of nature, it is clear in Chamoiseau's later work that he is suggesting going beyond this and encourages the reader to consider nature as an integral part of themselves.

A question raised by both authors is: How might gaps between humans and nature be bridged, thereby improving the relationship between both elements? For Chamoiseau, the focus seems to be about humanity moving forward with the environment and no longer alongside it or above it, and about finding and sustaining connections between all living things in the past, present, and future. For Condé, the focus has also been about connecting and embracing difference and change. It is clear from the scientific research interwoven throughout this thesis that the key to moving forward in 'real' terms is sustainability and education in an intergenerational, international, and interdisciplinary way that also focuses on inclusion. This includes providing access to nature and to learning about it in a way that will conserve it, across racial, financial, gender and other boundaries, rather than the continuation of a capitalist focus of domination and extraction.

Ecoliteracy in schools is a good example of this change, such as that promoted by the Center for Ecoliteracy in California, mentioned in chapter six. In the United Kingdom, where

[1] Chamoiseau, 'Le Diamant', p. 119.

this thesis has been written, there are several campaigns aiming to improve ecoliteracy in schools. An example of this is Nature Premium, which aims to secure access to nature for all school children.[2] They argue that access to nature improves mental health, resulting in happier children and better education outcomes. Furthermore, by educating the youngest in society about the importance of the environment, there is a better chance of fostering more care and understanding for the natural environment, and a better chance of preserving it and working with it in a horizontal *Relation*, to use Chamoiseau's concept. The UK Schools Sustainability Network have called for ecoliteral education to be included across the curriculum as part of the Department for Education's sustainability and climate change strategy, rather than only in science-based subjects and geography.[3]

There are many collaborative projects around the world focusing on sustainability, as well as those already mentioned. An example of particular interest, as it relates to a small-island context, is the Isle of Eigg, in Scotland, which currently runs almost entirely by renewable energy, and which was the first community to set up its own off-grid renewable energy system in 2008.[4] Another example to which this thesis has a specific relation is a major interdisciplinary project at the University of Birmingham, the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research (BIFoR), where scientists are carrying out experiments to pump carbon dioxide around trees to simulate the atmosphere that is predicted for 2050 to see how trees, soil and insects respond to predict the elements of the woodland that are most likely to

[2] A project led by the Forest Schools Association (FSA), which has over 2000 members; see: Nature Premium, *What is a Nature Premium?* (n.d.), <https://www.naturepremium.org/> [accessed 25 January 2023].
[3] Global Action Plan, *UK Schools Sustainability Network student and staff responses to the Department for Education's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy* (2022), <https://www.globalactionplan.org.uk/news/uk-schools-sustainability-network-student-and-staff-responses-to-the-department-for-education-s-sustainability-and-climate-change-strategy> [accessed 15 March 2023].
[4] Jennifer Green, *The island that's run almost entirely on renewable energy* (10 November 2021) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0b3dmdl> [accessed 6 April 2023].

survive and thrive in the future. This STEM-based science is complemented by a range of interdisciplinary approaches to environmental issues and trees more generally, to which this thesis makes its own modest contribution.[5]

Many projects and communities focus on building an improved connection to nature. In terms of mangroves, which provide an importance water defence to Caribbean islands, United States based non-profit organisation Mangrove Action Project works to restore mangroves through community-based action, focusing on restoration, education, and advocacy.[6] The organisation Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), which works to protect biodiversity pointed out that 'the Caribbean Islands support one of the highest numbers of globally threatened species of any hotspot in the world',[7] estimating that in 2019 there were 43 threatened species in Martinique and 72 in Guadeloupe,[8] highlighting that the region still needs urgent attention. The CEPF write in the report that their objective is to 'engage civil society in the conservation of highly threatened biodiversity through targeted investments'.[9] In India, the Khasi people continue to work closely and harmoniously with nature in ways that are beneficial for both nature and humans, for example using Fig tree roots to build 'living root bridges'.[10] In terms of metaphorical bridges, a United Kingdom based project called the Garden Museum, significant for its link to Caribbean heritage and the Windrush generation, based in a converted South London church aims to bridge

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[5] University of Birmingham, *BIFoR Face* (n.d.) <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/bifor/face/index.aspx> [accessed 22 July 2022].
[6] For more information, and a list of papers, about the importance of mangroves, see: Mangrove Action Project, *Resources* (2023), <https://mangroveactionproject.org/resources/> [accessed 22 July 2022].
[7] Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), 'Ecosystem Profile, The Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot', (research report, 2019), <https://canari.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/cepf-caribbean-ecosystem-profile-december-2019.pdf> [accessed 25 March 2023], p. ix.
[8] *Ibid*., p. 42.
[9] Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), 'Ecosystem Profile', p. x.
[10] Wilfred Middleton, Amin Habibi, Sanjeev Shankar, and Ferdinand Ludwig, 'Characterizing Regenerative Aspects of Living Root Bridges', *Sustainability*, 12(8) 3267 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12083267>.

intergenerational, and intercommunity divides alongside the disconnection between people and their land through the Sowing Roots project.[11]

However, despite initiatives such as the ones mentioned here, it cannot yet be said that connections to nature are improving overall, and that climate change is slowing; there are locations where the situation appears to be worsening, for example in the Amazon where a record high for the destruction of trees was recorded in January 2022,[12] despite agreements in 2021 at COP-26 to decrease deforestation.[13] Furthermore, women continue to be disproportionately affected by climate change, and under-represented in decision making that addresses the crisis.[14]

In terms of making environmental academic work more accessible to the public, beyond the novels and poetry that have been studied here, artists in the Caribbean have been working to raise awareness about ecological issues and inspire the public to learn more and make changes.[15] The UNESCO project is also an example of raising awareness about the

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[11] Garden Museum, *Sowing Roots: Caribbean Garden Heritage in South London* (n.d), <https://gardenmuseum.org.uk/sowingroots/> [accessed 22 July 2022].

[12] Georgina Rannard, *Amazon deforestation: Record high destruction of trees in January* (11 February 2022), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-60333422> [accessed 22 July 2022].

[13] UN Climate Change Conference UK 2021, *Glasgow leaders' declaration on forests and land use* (2 November 2021), <https://ukcop26.org/glasgow-leaders-declaration-on-forests-and-land-use/> [accessed 25 January 2023].

[14] The UK-based organisation Women's Environmental Network continues to work to fight against gender-based eco-inequalities through collaborative projects and campaigns, such as 'Environmenstrual', which raises awareness of plastics in some menstrual products and promotes reusable and organic alternatives. See: Women's Environmental Network, *Our Work*.

[15] *Tropiques toxiques* is an example of this as it is presented as a *bande dessinée*. A further example is the work of Patricia Donatien-Yssa, whose 2013 art exhibition *Soul amère* at CMAC, Fort-de-France highlighted the Caribbean's complicated relationship with the sea, as discussed by Valérie Loichot in her chapter: 'Blues Indigo, *Blès* Indigo', in *La Louisiane et les Antilles, une nouvelle région du monde*, ed. by Alexandre Leupin and Dominique Aurélia (Pointe-à-pitre: Presses universitaires des Antilles, 2019). Another example is Guy Gabon's 2016-2017 installation in front of Mémorial ACTe in Guadeloupe entitled *#Tous réfugiés climatiques,* see: Guy Gabon, *#Tous réfugiés climatiques* (n.d) <https://guygabon.com/portfolio/tous-refugies-climatiques/> [accessed 5 April 2023]. An example of the use of the medium of dance to highlight environmental problems in the Antilles is Annabel Gueredrat's videos 'Mami Sargassa' and 'Mami Sargassa 2.0' which are part of a wider futuristic project called 'Ensargasse-moi', a series of performances in which she buries herself in sargassum to

unique heritage and biodiversity of Martinique and Guadeloupe. 'The Blue Economy' is a relatively new concept concerned with sustainable development that uses the ocean's resources for economic activity whilst preserving the ocean. Peter Clegg et al's book, *The Caribbean Blue Economy*,[16] explores this concept in relation to the wider Caribbean region and provides detailed analysis of the initiative's planning and possible implementation through activities such as fishing, tourism, and providing renewable energy, as well as considering the political and technical requirements to make the initiate work.

During the writing of this thesis, the fields of postcolonial ecocriticism, ecoliteracy, and ecopoetics have progressed rapidly and as such there are many recent publications of note which are concerned with the themes and issues raised which would be well placed within further studies on this topic.[17] There is evident potential for future studies into wider Creole identity in relation to the importation of plants and people which was not fully explored in this thesis due to constraints, such as the concept of 'coolitude', which forms the focus of the Indian Ocean author (who also has Caribbean ancestry) Khal Torabully's *Cale d'étoiles: coolitude* (1992).[18] Furthermore, other Chamoiseau and Condé texts could be

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highlight its toxicity and its potential to overrun the Caribbean as a result of centuries of anthropogenic destruction, see: Artincidence, *Mami Sargassa* (23 June 2021) <https://artincidence.fr/mami-sargassa/> [accessed 5 April 2023] and Palais de Tokyo, *MamiSargassa 2.0* (n.d), <https://palaisdetokyo.com/en/evenement/mamisargassa-2-0/> [accessed 5 April 2023] . Lastly, an example from different island region is César Manrique, an artist from Lanzarote, who focuses on the links between humans and nature in his sculptural work around the Canary Islands: Hello Canary Islands, *The art of César Manrique* (n.d), <https://www.hellocanaryislands.com/experiences/the-art-of-cesar-manrique/> [accessed 16 March 2023].

[16] Peter Clegg, Robin Mahon, Patrick McConney, and Hazel A. Oxenford, *The Caribbean Blue Economy* (London: Routledge, 2020).

[17] Including: Hannes de Vriese, *Mobilités écopoétiques et écritures de la nature* (Geneva: Droz, 2022); Jean-Louis Cornille, 'Éc(h)o-textes: Man Grove et la Ville-Rhizome', *Relief*, 16(1), (2022), 166-176 ; Aude Jeannerod, 'La naissance de l'écologi(sm)e. Entretien avec Patrick Matagne', *Relief*, 16(1), (2022), 248-262; and Riccardo Barontini, Sara Buekens, and Pierre Schontjes, *L'horizon écologique des fictions contemporaines* (Geneva: Droz, 2022).

[18] Khal Torabully. *Cale d'étoiles: coolitude* (Saint-Denis, Réunion: Azalées éditions, 1992). Translated into English in 2021 by Nancy Naomi Carlson as *Cargo Hold Of Stars: Coolitude* (London: Seagull Books, 2021).

analysed ecocritically to provide further insight into how their environmental thoughts have progressed over time, for example Condé's latest novel *L'Évangile du nouveau monde* (2021),[19] translated into English by Philcox in 2023,[20] and Chamoiseau's *Baudelaire Jazz* (2022) and *Le vent du nord dans les fougères glacées* (2022).[21]

This thesis has shown that Condé and Chamoiseau demonstrate a deep connection to the land and encourage personal mindfulness of the way in which this connection can provide a means to move forward from the destruction arising from colonisation and its aftermath. In a 2015 interview, Condé discussed her love for Guadeloupe and her desire to return alongside an explanation that the reason she travelled was '[s]ûrement le désir de se connaître à travers les autres!'[22] This desire to know oneself while forging connections with others echoes Glissant's concept of *Relation* and resonates with the relational voyages of le Foufou in *Les neuf consciences*. Despite the authors' differences in style, form and content, a sense of belonging and their emphasis on relation to others through movement and evolution as a central component of identity construction is a remarkable similarity which emerges from the above analysis of the environment — in its many different forms — in their works. Both authors emphasise that the future of both humanity and nature depends

[19] Maryse Condé, *L'Évangile du nouveau monde* (Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 2021). The novel can be compared to *Texaco* in terms of the links to the Bible and a Christ-like figure at its centre. The book and its translation feature in a piece about Condé in *The New York Times* in 2023, see: Anderson Tepper, 'Maryse Condé, at Home in the World', *The New York Times* (6 March 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/06/books/maryse-conde-books.html> [accessed 4 April 2023]. The English translation of the book has also recently been announced as a finalist in a shortlist of six for the International Booker Prize 2023, due to be announced on 23 May. She is the oldest novelist to ever be shortlisted, highlighting once more that international recognition for her literary work is coming at the end of her career as this will be her final novel; see: The Booker Prizes*, The International Booker Prize 2023* (n,d), <https://thebookerprizes.com/the-booker-library/prize-years/international/2023> [accessed 30 April 2023].
[20] Maryse Condé, *The Gospel According to the New World*, trans. by Richard Philcox (New York: World Editions, 2023).
[21] Patrick Chamoiseau, *Le vent du nord dans les fougères glacées* (Paris: Seuil, 2022).
[22] Rebut, 'Maryse Condé'.

on redefining and strengthening the links between each aspect, in order to and work towards a state of 'horizontale plénitude' by valuing a new mode of interdependent and relational co-existence.

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